

# ADULT LEARNING IN ALBANIA

Factsheet

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# Introduction

This Factsheet was developed in 2025 by the European Training Foundation (ETF) as part of a mapping of Adult Learning (AL) in the<sup>1</sup> EU candidate and potential candidate countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

This project focuses on Adult Learning (AL) as a sector of growing importance, given ongoing societal and economic transformations and the increasing demand for monitoring and reporting on reforms aimed at upskilling, reskilling, and overall human capital development.

AL is understood as an important part of lifelong learning<sup>2</sup>. It includes formal (i.e. linked to formal qualifications) and non-formal learning (mainly in companies but also in other learning environments), including upskilling and reskilling activities, and learning aimed at developing a wide spectrum of skills<sup>3</sup>.

In Albania, recent legislation on Lifelong Learning (LLL) qualifications, Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL), and accreditation of providers has strengthened the country's regulatory framework for lifelong learning by enhancing quality assurance (QA), recognition, and access to adult education. Nonetheless, Albanian legislation does not provide a single, explicit definition of 'Adult Learning' as a standalone concept; instead, it is embedded within broader vocational, lifelong learning, and adult education objectives outlined in other laws and policies. The Law on Vocational Education and Training 15/2017 as amended by law 32/2024) and the Law on the Albanian Qualifications Framework 23/2018 form the legal foundation for adult learning by regulating access to vocational programs, setting qualification standards, and enabling recognition of learning from formal, informal, and non-formal routes. Collectively, these documents present adult learning as part of an integrated and flexible lifelong learning system that responds to Albania's evolving economic and social needs (Eurydice, 2024a; UNDP, 2022; Shehi, 2021).

For the development of this Factsheet, a systematic collection of information was conducted through desk research and fieldwork, which was concluded in September 2025. The analysis is organised around the analytical framework and guiding questions presented in [Annex I](#). Group and individual interviews were carried out in July 2025 with representatives of relevant institutions – key actors and stakeholders in AL in Albania, including formal and non-formal AL providers, such as the Public Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) in Shkodra and Tirana, private providers such as Murialdo Center in Fier, community centres led by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Durres, as well CSOs in Korca and Tirana involved in skills development for different target groups. The list of interviewees is enclosed as [Annex II](#). This report has been validated by the National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ), the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), and the Ministry of Economy and Innovation (MEI).

The information presented in this document reflects on, and offers insights into three important AL dimensions: 1. Strategic and policy frameworks; 2. Legal/institutional arrangements and 3. Types and forms of formal and non-formal provision, and it will serve as a basis for ETF and stakeholders involved to identify priority areas for possible future actions or policy advice.

This factsheet presents factual key-elements about Adult Learning (AL) in Albania, considering the three dimensions mentioned above.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Cedefop's glossary defines lifelong learning as 'any learning activity undertaken throughout life in a formal, non-formal or informal setting, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and qualifications for personal, social or professional reasons' [lifelong learning | CEDEFOP](#)

<sup>3</sup> Skills are understood in a broad sense, encompassing skills, knowledge and competences for life, well beyond the skills needed for the labour market.

## Country context

### Key Socio-Economic and Demographic trends

Albania<sup>4</sup> has undergone significant socio-economic changes since the 1990s, transitioning from a centrally planned to a market economy. While economic growth has improved overall stability, the country continues to face challenges such as low labour market participation, persistent youth unemployment, and ongoing regional disparities in infrastructure, education, and employment opportunities, with the Tirana-Durrës area concentrating much of the population (41.6%), economic activity (50.26%) and innovation<sup>5</sup> (INSTAT, 2025c; INSTAT 2025d; AIC, 2024; ITU, 2024).

According to the official 2023 Census and estimates by the National Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), Albania's population in 2025 is 2,363,314 inhabitants, marking a decrease by 1.2 % compared to 2024. The country is divided into 12 counties and 61 municipalities, reflecting considerable territorial and demographic diversity. Urbanisation has accelerated, with more Albanians moving from rural to urban areas (INSTAT, 2024).

### Key Country Insights

- **Demographics:** Albania faces rapid population ageing, persistent emigration, and low birth rates. In 2011, the share of the population aged 65 and over was 13.4%, while in 2023 it increased to 16.9%, according to INSTAT. Furthermore, this share of people aged 65 and older is projected to exceed 26% by 2050. The fertility rate remains at 1.2—among the lowest in Europe—and youth emigration continues to deplete the working-age population (INSTAT, 2025b; UNECE, 2024; UNFPA, 2024).
- **Labour Market:** The employment rate (20–64 years old) was 63.1% in 2023, with long-term unemployment at 12.7%, markedly above the EU6 average (EU: 75.3% employment rate; 2.1% long-term unemployment). Economic inactivity remains a key challenge, particularly for women<sup>7</sup> and youth. NEET rate for those aged 15–29 reached 24.6% in 2023 (EU: 11.2%) (Eurostat, 2024; OECD, 2025). Major employment sectors include trade, agriculture, industry, and public administration (INSTAT, 2025b; EU Commission, 2025).
- **Youth & Vulnerability:** The NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate for young people aged 15–29 was approximately 24.6% in 2023, significantly higher than the EU average of 11.2% (OECD, 2025; World Bank Gender Data, 2024). Youth unemployment remains a persistent issue, with a rate around 25% in 2024, reflecting barriers to labour market entry for young Albanians (INSTAT, 2024; Eurofound, 2024). Poverty affected 22.1% of the population in 2023—over 50% higher than the EU average (World Bank, 2024).
- **Digital & Education:** Internet use has risen to 90.1%, yet approximately 54% of adults lack basic digital skills (OECD, 2025; Eurydice, 2024b). Participation in lifelong learning for those aged 25–64 was 0.6% in 2022, reflecting gaps in skills upgrading (INSTAT, 2022).
- **Urbanisation:** Over 67% live in urban areas. The rural-urban divide amplifies inequalities in education and job opportunities, underscoring systemic challenges in inclusive growth (UNECE, 2024; OECD, 2025)

<sup>4</sup> Albania is a parliamentary democracy and a unitary state, having intensified its efforts for European Union (EU) accession since applying in 2009. Eligibility for negotiations was confirmed in 2014, and official talks opened in 2022, following sustained reforms focused on governance, rule of law, judiciary, public administration, anti-corruption and fundamental rights (European Commission, 2024b).

<sup>5</sup> Innovation activity in Albania is strongly concentrated in the Tirana-Durrës corridor, where the emerging Durana Tech Park is planned.

<sup>6</sup> EUROSTAT: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

<sup>7</sup> In the second quarter of 2025, the employment rate for women 15-64 years old is 62.6 %. In 2023, for women in Albania aged 15+, the economic inactivity rate was 41.9%. Please see: <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/statistical-literacy/the-labour-market-statistics/>

# Chapter I: Adult Learning strategies and policies

This Chapter offers insight into the main policy objectives of AL in Albania, and their alignment with EU goals and initiatives, national strategic and policy priorities, main indicators and targets to be achieved and their comparison to EU targets.

## Strategies

In Albania, AL is increasingly recognised as a crucial component of lifelong learning and workforce development, with the government embedding AL objectives within national strategies for employment, skills, and education reforms. Social partners and non-state actors actively advocate for advancing AL, emphasising its role in enhancing employability and social inclusion, aligning with Albania's broader economic and social development goals, and actively working to advance AL through stronger coordination, expanded lifelong learning opportunities, and validation of non-formal and informal learning. There is currently no dedicated, standalone national AL and/or LLL Strategy; instead, Albania's policies on AL are anchored in several major national strategies adopted in the last few years, most notably the "National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2023–2030" covering skills, employment and youth and the National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2022–2029 in Albania which underscores the importance of quality education and training as fundamental components of lifelong learning pathways for young people.

## Overview on relevant strategic documents

### National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030

NESS 2023–2030 explicitly integrates AL policies as a crucial component of its framework, recognising lifelong learning as essential for employability and social inclusion. NESS promotes flexible, accessible adult education opportunities to support upskilling and reskilling, addressing labour market needs and demographic challenges. This alignment ensures that AL is embedded in wider skills development efforts, fostering continuous learning pathways that enhance workforce adaptability and support sustainable economic growth in Albania. The NESS 2023-2030 is built on two main policy goals or pillars:

1. Skills Development and Better Matching of Demand with Supply in the Labour Market for More Employment

This pillar focuses on reducing skills mismatches, upskilling the workforce, and improving the functioning of the labour market. It includes measures such as developing a relevant and flexible vocational education and training (VET) system, involving the private sector in VET governance, fostering lifelong learning opportunities, recognising prior non-formal and informal learning, digital transformation of employment services and VET, establishing a skills intelligence system, and expanding tailored services for jobseekers and employers.

2. Enabling Decent Employment for Women and Men Through the Implementation of Inclusive Labour Market Policies

The second pillar aims to ensure effective employment mediation, inclusive programs, and decent work conditions for all. It includes measures such as delivering inclusive training and employment promotion programs, supporting school-to-work transitions for youth (NEET) through the Youth Guarantee (YG) scheme, increasing integration of persons with disabilities, enhancing women's inclusion in the labour market, strengthening labour inspection, promoting social dialogue, and improving policies for decent employment.

Overall, the strategy emphasises the importance of AL and includes measures to expand programs for rural and vulnerable groups, focusing on retraining and upskilling adults for emerging sectors such as green and digital economies. It also highlights the promotion and implementation of the European

Platform for AL in Europe (EPALE) at the national level to enhance AL opportunities. The strategy calls for targeted investments in adult training infrastructure and outreach to improve participation rates in lifelong learning programs. Challenges remain in fully operationalising inclusion goals and striking the right balance between formal and informal learning validation (Eurydice, 2025a).

### Reform Agenda for Albania 2024 – 2027

The Reform Agenda for Albania 2024–2027 sets out a comprehensive plan to transform the country's economy, governance, and human capital in line with the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. The agenda outlines reforms across five pillars: business environment and competitiveness, human capital development, digitalisation, green transition, and rule of law. Its implementation is coordinated under the Prime Minister's Office and monitored jointly by the National Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC) and the relevant ministries<sup>8</sup>. Major education and training reform measures are scheduled for delivery between 2025 and 2027, primarily through its second pillar on Human Capital, and specifically the reforms under section Education (2.1) and Labour Market (2.2). Directly linked to AL, the revision of the VET system (2.1.1) expands adult upskilling and reskilling opportunities, while updating the national Qualifications Framework (2.1.3<sup>9</sup>) enables the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning, micro-credentials, and quality assurance—all focused on improving access for adult learners. Labour market interventions such as strengthening unemployment policy and vocational training for jobseekers (2.2.1) specifically target adults, especially vulnerable and long-term unemployed, through diversified training and activation measures. Digital skills certification initiatives (2.1.4, Step 6) also benefit adult learners participating in recognised digital programs (European Commission, 2025).

Albania is politically and strategically committed to aligning with the *New European Agenda* for AL (NEAAL) 2021–2030<sup>10</sup>. This alignment is reflected through concrete system reforms rather than through formalised adoption, notably the integration of NEAAL priorities into the National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023–2030, the updated Albanian Qualifications Framework, new VET/AL accreditation standards, and unified VNFIL procedures (Council of the European Union, 2021; NAVETQ, 2025). Evidence of this alignment is visible in strengthened governance structures—such as the establishment of a permanent national AL coordination committee (NAALA)—and in ETF-supported policy learning that has informed QA, recognition, and targeted upskilling pathways for low-qualified adults (ETF, 2022; NAVETQ, 2025). While adult participation rates remain low, Albania demonstrates substantive progress in embedding NEAAL principles into its regulatory and institutional frameworks, supported by EU instruments such as Erasmus+<sup>11</sup> and IPA III.

### National Youth Strategy 2022–2029

The National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2022–2029 in Albania underscores the importance of quality education and training as fundamental components of lifelong learning pathways for young people. A central focus of the strategy is to equip young adults with the skills needed for successful integration into the labour market, with particular emphasis on science, technology, and entrepreneurship. One of its strategic pillars is the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills among all youth, ensuring that they are prepared for future career opportunities and can adapt to the rapidly changing demands

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<sup>8</sup> The line ministries appointed to implement the Reform and Growth Facility in Albania are:

Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior. These ministries are responsible for coordinating the delivery of reforms within their respective policy areas, ensuring effective implementation, monitoring, and adjustment to meet established goals and targets.

<sup>9</sup> More concretely Measure 2.1.3 is composed of: Step 1 - Regulate framework for the recognition/validation of previous non-formal and informal learning experience and include lifelong qualifications, including micro-credentials, in the AQF and adopt it (within June 2026); Step 2 - 90% of public and private VET providers go through the accreditation process (within June 2027); Step 3 - Partly implementing, the European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs) for QA in education, i.e. introduce clear references in the respective bylaws and regulations of QA as criteria for accreditation (within December 2025).

<sup>10</sup> The original European Agenda for Adult Learning 2011-2020 was the strategy adopted by the EU to promote adult learning across Europe. However, in November 2021, the New European Agenda for Adult Learning (NEAAL) 2021-2030 was adopted, setting new priorities up to 2030.

<sup>11</sup> The National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ), designated as the National Coordinator for AL under Erasmus+ Key Action 3.

of the modern workforce through lifelong learning and continuous skill development. (National Youth Strategy and Action Plan, 2022)

Within this broad framework of the NYS, the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (YGIP) acts as a concrete operational mechanism that directly implements several NYS priorities—especially those related to employability, lifelong learning, activation of young people aged 15–29 who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and improved access to quality training and employment services. This plan underpins the NYS by providing a concrete operational framework that connects youth skills development with active labour-market policy and youth support services. Albania has advanced the implementation of the YGIP 2023-2024, offering them timely access to employment, training or education within four months of registration (MoECI, 2024).

## Legal framework

Albania's legal framework for AL does not contain a dedicated law on AL, but it is built on multiple key laws and regulatory acts which provide a solid foundation for access, quality, and recognition of adult education, learning and training. The legal framework continues to evolve, and new sub-legal acts are being designed in a lifelong learning perspective encompassing all types and levels of qualification, with some secondary acts pending full implementation. The legal framework is not so much fragmented, and it reflects the objectives of the NESS 2023–2030.

### Overview of the relevant legal framework

#### Law on the Pre-University Education System

Law on the Pre-University Education System 69/2012 governs the pre-university education system in Albania, including both 9 years compulsory (primary and lower secondary education) and secondary (except for VET<sup>12</sup>) education. The law focuses on social inclusion and aims to reduce dropout rates for adults who did not complete primary education, hence supporting adult literacy and equity in education. It establishes opportunities for adults aged 16 and above to acquire primary education at evening schools and provides access to a second chance gymnasium (through part-time or remote attendance). Concretely, Article 16 on Types of Education stipulates in point b) Part-time education, and Article 22 on Initial Education<sup>13</sup>, point 4 c) 'The students having reached the age of sixteen years old not having completed the full-time initial education shall be registered with the part-time initial education schools' and Article 24 On Types of higher secondary education, point 2 states 'The students having reached the age of twenty one years old and not having completed the gymnasium shall be provided the opportunity of following the part time or distance gymnasium' (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, 2012). In this way, allowing adults to continue with their formal education, which eventually can lead to higher or university education.

#### Law on Vocational Education and Training

Law on Vocational Education and Training (VET) 15/2017 was recently amended by Law 32/2024. The VET Law guarantees the right to lifelong vocational education and ensures all adults have access to VET. Article 5 of the law sets its foundations on the principles of inclusion, autonomy, quality, collaboration, guaranteed participation, mobility and progress, and diversity of provision. (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, 2024). The ministry responsible for VET, NAES, NAVETQ and VET providers are the key institutions responsible for VET; however, cooperation with a wide variety of stakeholders<sup>14</sup> is also specified.

<sup>12</sup> In Article 1, point 3 it is stated 'The scope of application of this law is the pre-university educational system in the Republic of Albania, in addition to the aspects of structure, activity and governance of the vocational education, being regulated by a separate law'. Hence, Secondary Vocational Education is regulated more specifically by the VET Law 2017.

<sup>13</sup> The initial education encompasses primary education and lower secondary education, according to point 2 of Article 22.

<sup>14</sup> Article 6, point 2 Public authorities work in partnership with social partners and other key actors; Article 22 on Dual VET, point 2 The dual form of VET is provided through cooperation between employers and the institutions responsible for VET.

The law recognises that VET provision is not only for initial vocational education (VE) of youth but that vocational training (VT) (and retraining) is available for adults (for example jobseekers, unemployed) and supports access to training beyond the initial stage. It links to the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which explicitly includes “lifelong learning qualifications” in its scope (i.e., qualifications not only in formal initial VET but in continuing professional development, adult learning), so the law supports a broader conception of qualification beyond initial training. This law set the background for all the follow-up and most recent legal infrastructure on LLL qualifications<sup>15</sup>, RPL/VNFIL<sup>16</sup> and QA implementation<sup>17</sup>.

### Law on Higher Education

Law on Higher Education 80/2015 regulates higher education institutions and their academic offerings. It enables universities and colleges to offer continuing education, lifelong learning, and professional master’s programs designed for adults seeking reskilling or advanced qualifications. The law recognises various tertiary-level vocational certificates and degrees, supporting access to further education for adults at different stages of their careers (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, 2015).

### Law on Albanian Qualifications Framework

Law on Albanian Qualifications Framework 23/2018 (amended) organises all Albanian qualifications—including academic, vocational, and technical—according to the AQF, fully aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It institutionalises the recognition and validation of skills gained through formal, informal, and non-formal education (i.e. RPL/VNFIL), and supports AL pathways to acquire new skills and professions. The AQF is central in enabling flexible entry and progression for adult learners (Assembly of the Republic of Albania, 2018).

### Law on Employment Promotion

Law on Employment Promotion 15/2019 was recently amended with Law 47/2023. This law supports initial and ongoing vocational programs for adults, especially the long-term unemployed, NEETs, and marginalised groups. It defines responsibilities for active labour market programs, employment services, and professional retraining, strengthening the legal guarantee of lifelong learning for adults. Albania’s employment promotion programmes or Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs)<sup>18</sup> place a strong emphasis on adult learning, upskilling and reskilling for working-age adults (25–64), primarily through active labour market policies implemented by the NAES. These programmes are implemented through a set of dedicated Decisions of the Council of Ministers (DCMs), each establishing specific programme types, eligibility criteria and implementation arrangements.

Based on DCM 239/2024, the employment, workplace learning and professional practice programmes provide structured opportunities for unemployed adults, including those over 45 and the long-term unemployed, to acquire job-specific skills through subsidised employment, on-the-job training and mentored workplace learning. DCM 348/2020 and DCM 403/2025 provide for the self-employment promotion programme, which explicitly combines short-term entrepreneurial training with business planning and grant support, targeting unemployed adults seeking to reskill or transition into self-employment.

Similarly, in DCM 241/2024, community public works programmes integrate part-time employment with vocational training delivered by public or licensed private VET providers, enabling low-skilled and long-term unemployed adults to update basic, transversal and occupational skills. In addition, based on the

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<sup>15</sup> MoECI Oder 866/2024, On the regulation for the functioning of the Commission responsible for the inclusion of lifelong learning qualifications within Levels 2 to 5 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework.

<sup>16</sup> MoECI Instruction 1109/2024, On the procedures for assessing and certifying non-formal and informal prior learning within Albania’s VET system (Levels 2-5).

<sup>17</sup> Minister’s Order 845/2025 on the quality assurance and accreditation system in vocational education, training and lifelong learning.

<sup>18</sup> In Albania, employment promotion programmes correspond to ALMPs as defined in EU policy frameworks. While national legislation refers to “employment promotion programmes,” these instruments function as ALMPs, combining training, work-based learning, wage subsidies, self-employment support and public works to improve employability and labour market integration.

DCM 401/2024, the social reintegration programme offers tailored counselling, referral to vocational training and employment services, and individual reintegration plans, addressing skills deficits and employability barriers among disadvantaged adult jobseekers. Across these programmes, adult learning is predominantly non-formal and work-based, closely linked to labour market needs, and supported through training vouchers, employer-based mentoring and cooperation with VET providers, rather than through participation in formal adult education pathways.

The amended law introduced the concept of the Youth Guarantee (YG) into Albanian legislation and serves as the primary legal basis for active labour market programs, employment services, and vocational (re)training in the country. In 2023, further bylaws<sup>19</sup> were introduced to implement the YG, offering young adults 18-29 adult learning opportunities.

### Law on Handicrafts

Law on Handicrafts 70/2016 regulates the exercise of handicraft activities and establishes the National Chamber of Crafts<sup>20</sup> in Albania, as the professional body responsible for registering craftspeople, accrediting training programs, and certifying qualifications. Under Article 6 and Article 11, the Chamber is explicitly empowered to organise training and skills upgrading courses, facilitating adult learning for both existing and aspiring artisans. This law provides for the organization and certification of training courses aimed at both Master Craftsman ("Mjeshter") and Assistant Master Craftsman ("Ndihmës Mjeshter") levels, covering both traditional technical skills and pedagogical or mentoring capacities (Art. 12). These programs enable experienced craftspeople to gain additional qualifications for teaching or supervising apprentices, expanding their roles within the crafts sector and the adult learning system (Art. 11–20). The Chamber of Crafts sets and certifies the standards, curricula, and examination requirements for these advanced qualifications, ensuring quality and labour market relevance.

This law is operationalised by the DCM 3/2020, which specifies the required duration of practical training with a mjeshtër (master craftsman) and theoretical instruction at an educational institution for assistant craftsmen's qualification. This DCM aligns and integrates the assistant craftsmen's qualification within Albania's national qualifications system, governed by the AQF law, ensuring that craft qualifications correspond to standardised national and European qualification levels and lifelong learning principles.

## Adult Learning policies

Responsibilities for AL policies in Albania are shared among two Ministries and mostly defined by them at central level, i.e., the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for general education, as well as higher/ tertiary education; the Ministry of Economy and Innovation, which is responsible for secondary vocational education, vocational training and employment.; national level agencies and public and private providers of education, skills, and employment services. As will be described below, Albania has recently adopted several key policies related to AL and LLL, aiming to enhance access, quality, and relevance of adult education in alignment with existing strategies and legal frameworks.

### Lifelong Learning qualifications levelling to the AQF

DCM 427/2019 sets the criteria and procedures for including qualifications for lifelong learning in the AQF for education and vocational training. It defines the levels for lifelong learning qualifications based on detailed learning outcomes aligned with the AQF descriptors. Licensed and accredited providers

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<sup>19</sup> The 2023–2024 Youth Guarantee Implementation plan, introduced by DCM 173/2023, institutionalises mechanisms to provide education, training, or employment opportunities targeting also young adults 18-29 within four months of registration, focusing especially on the NEET population, and establishes inter-institutional coordination to ensure effective delivery of the YG scheme. DCM 264/2023 establishes procedures and criteria for implementing the YG scheme via workplace learning, thus creating a structured pathway that links adult learning initiatives with targeted youth employment promotion to address both immediate and long-term labour market integration challenges. It includes provisions for traineeship programs lasting three to six months, followed by six months of employment, and was piloted in three regions: Tirana, Shkodër, and Vlorë.

<sup>20</sup> Official website: <https://www.dhgz.org.al/>

who offer at least 125 hours or 5 ECTS credits deliver these qualifications, which must meet QA standards, including internal and external evaluation. The responsible ministries for education and vocational training oversee the process, including inspection and QA, ensuring transparency and compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs) for QA in education.

Most recently, operationalisation of this DCM began with the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MoECI) Order 866/2024, which establishes the regulation for the functioning of the Commission responsible for the inclusion of lifelong learning qualifications within Levels 2 to 5 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework. This order defines the roles, procedures, and responsibilities of the Commission in evaluating and integrating lifelong learning qualifications into the national qualifications system. It seeks to enhance recognition, QA, and equitable access to qualifications obtained through lifelong learning in alignment with national and ESGs.

### Validation of Non-formal, Formal and Informal Learning

Validation of Non-formal, Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) and/or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an element of the VET provision, as well as AL, that Albania has been trying to develop for quite some time. While VNFIL is recognised under Albanian VET Law (2017), it is not yet operational, with full implementation expected by 2026 as part of the NESS 2023-2030. The 2023 VNFIL Country Inventory highlighted the need for accreditation of VET providers, capacity building, and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure the system's success and expand its scope to other sectors (ETF, 2024b).

Most recently, in 2024, the MoECI approved Instruction 1109/2024, which established the procedures for assessing and certifying non-formal and informal prior learning within Albania's VET system (Levels 2-5). It defines the responsibilities of accredited providers, the NAVETQ, and the NAES in implementing the validation process. The instruction outlines a four-phase process—identification, documentation, assessment, and certification—leading to partial or full qualifications aligned with levels 2–5 of the AQF. It emphasises QA, individual rights, and the integration of adult learners into lifelong learning and the labour market. This act provides clear procedures to validate and recognise skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, improving adult learners' access to formal qualifications and the labour market. It supports the implementation of lifelong learning policies and aligns with the AQF, enabling flexible, inclusive pathways for adult upskilling and reskilling consistent with ESGs.

### Accreditation of providers and quality assurance

A major step forward in terms of legal infrastructure was the inclusion and implementation of QA and LLL provision in the country. The most recently approved Order 845/2025 governs the QA and accreditation system in Albania's VET and lifelong learning sector. It mandates accreditation for institutions offering full or partial qualifications at levels 2 to 5 of the AQF, including validation of non-formal and informal learning and lifelong learning qualifications. This regulation operationalises the principles set out in the 2017 VET Law, which defines quality assurance as a continuous process encompassing licensing, accreditation, inspection, provider self-evaluation, monitoring and reporting, as well as periodic system-level evaluation by the competent VET institutions. Therefore, it strengthens the comprehensive framework for QA, external evaluation, monitoring, and renewal of QA processes, reinforcing transparency, accountability, and alignment with labour market needs. Article 28 states that until 31 December 2027, all public and/or private providers of vocational education offering qualifications at levels 2–5 of the AQF must undergo the accreditation process. [Annex IV](#) shows the progress since 2022, in terms of the number of accredited providers and the qualifications they offer. However, the process is still in its initial implementation years, and it is still a very small number of only 9 providers (8 public schools and 1 private VET provider) accredited up to now. In addition, licensing mechanisms for private VET and adult learning providers were revised through secondary legislation adopted recently, strengthening entry requirements and compliance criteria. Specifically, the DCM 514/2024 strengthens the national licensing framework by tightening criteria, updating procedures and requiring re-licensing of vocational training and labour-market intermediation providers, with non-compliant licences revoked.

The renewal and licensing process was initiated in 2024, accompanied by the establishment of a formal deadline for all existing providers to renew their licences. Initial uptake was limited, with only a small number of providers submitting applications within the prescribed timeframe. Following an extension of the deadline, the number of applications increased. However, a significant proportion of providers were required to apply for entirely new licences rather than simple renewals, due to changes in regulatory requirements and compliance criteria.

In 2025, the Ministry examined approximately 500 applications submitted by entities seeking authorisation as training providers, including 142 applications for new licences. Of the total applications reviewed, 154 were deemed compliant with documentation requirements and were subsequently authorised to proceed to the inspection phase conducted by NAES. Of these 154 applications, 34 concerned new licences. This structured review and inspection process contributes to strengthening quality assurance and regulatory compliance.

## National performance against key EU targets on adult learning

In this section, the current data on participation of adults in learning on national level will be compared to the EU-level ones, by taking in account the following reference targets set in EU.

### Participation of adults in learning

EU Targets by 2025 and 2030	National ALB Target
At least 47 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2025.	The official national target announced in 2023 in the NESS 2023-2030 aims to increase participation to 15% by 2026.  According to the latest data from INSTAT (2025), participation in education and training among adults aged 25-64 <sup>21</sup> is 1.6% (total) in 2024, far less than the EU's 47% target for 2025.
At least 60 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2030.	The official national target announced in 2023 in the NESS 2023-2030 aims to increase participation to 25% by 2030.  Taking into consideration the 2024 situation, with only 1.6% of AL participation, it is far from the 60% objective for 2030.

Table source: Author

While Albania's NESS 2023-2030 aims to increase participation in lifelong learning to a higher level, however the official national target of 15% and 25% are not aligned with the EU's 47% or 60% goal by 2025 or 2030.

### Underachievement in basic/digital skills and top performance in basic skills

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Albania
1. The share of underachievement in literacy, mathematics, science and digital skills should be less than 15%, whereas the share of top performance in literacy, mathematics and science should be at least 15%.	Albania's performance in literacy, mathematics, science, and digital skills remains well below the 2030 targets set by the Union of Skills. The latest PISA 2022 results show Albanian 15-year-olds scored 368 points in mathematics (69 points less than in 2018), 358 points in reading (47 points less), and 376 points in science (41 points less), ranking among the lowest globally. The share of students underperforming in these areas is significantly higher than the desired threshold of less than 15%, while the proportion of top performers is far below the 15% target.

Table source: Author

Current data from national assessments and international sources indicate that Albania faces significant challenges, with low literacy and digital skills performance relative to EU averages. PISA results reveal high levels of underachievement in literacy and mathematics, and digital skills remain insufficiently developed, with no official national target set to achieve the EU benchmarks by 2030 (NESS 2023–2030; OECD, 2025; Eurydice, 2025b).

<sup>21</sup> INSTAT defines Lifelong learning as the percentage of youth and adults in a given age range (15-24 years, 25-54 years, 55-64 years, 15-64 years) participating in formal or non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months and collects this data through the periodical Labour Force Survey (LFS).

For the population of age 25–64 years and 2024 data, please see [Annex V](https://www.instat.gov.al/en/sdgs/quality-education/43-ensure-equal-access-for-all-women-and-men-to-affordable-and-quality-technical-vocational-and-tertiary-education-including-university-by-2023/431-participation-rate-of-youth-and-adults-in-formal-and-non-formal-education-and-training-in-the-previous-12-months-by-sex/) and the interactive graph on: <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/sdgs/quality-education/43-ensure-equal-access-for-all-women-and-men-to-affordable-and-quality-technical-vocational-and-tertiary-education-including-university-by-2023/431-participation-rate-of-youth-and-adults-in-formal-and-non-formal-education-and-training-in-the-previous-12-months-by-sex/>

Recent studies and policy reports also confirm that digital learning in pre-university education in Albania is critically underdeveloped, with significant deficits in digital classroom availability, internet access, and teacher training for technology-enhanced instruction. Albania’s considerable gaps in foundational academic and digital skills represent a critical bottleneck for achieving national and EU skill ambitions.

### STEM in VET

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Albania
2. The share of students enrolled in STEM fields in initial medium-level VET should be at least 45%, with at least 1 out of every 4 students female	Only about 20% of students in upper secondary education in Albania are enrolled in VET programs as of 2025. STEM-specific enrolment rates and gender breakdown data are not systematically published, but previous studies indicate that female participation in STEM within VET remains significantly below 25% (around 16.6%), indicating gender disparities in STEM education enrolment (INSTAT, 2023; ETF, 2024a).

Table source: Author

Although reforms and investments have improved access to vocational schools and increased enrolment over recent years, the share of students in STEM fields remains below the targeted 45%, and female participation has yet to reach the EU goal of one in four students. Persistent gaps include limited alignment between training provision and labour market needs, underdeveloped guidance and outreach for female students, and the need for curriculum modernisation and improved infrastructure. Addressing these issues is critical for meeting 2030 EU STEM and gender participation goals and ensuring that VET pathways contribute effectively to Albania’s economic development.

### STEM in higher education

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Albania
3. The share of students enrolled in STEM fields in third-level education be at least 32%, with at least 2 out of 5 students female	As of the 2024-2025 academic year, approximately 21.5% of students in Albanian tertiary education are enrolled in STEM fields such as natural sciences, ICT, and engineering, according to Euridyce data. Female participation in these fields remains below the target of 40% (roughly less than 2 out of 5), reflecting ongoing challenges with gender balance and STEM uptake. Challenges include limited STEM preparedness in earlier education, like the lack of STEM-related resources, i.e. outdated lab equipment, and a lack of technological infrastructure, which currently hinder progress toward these targets (Eurodyce, 2025b; INSTAT, 2025a; Kosova et al., 2025).

Table source: Author

Female participation in STEM fields in Albanian tertiary education remains significantly below targets, highlighting persistent gender disparities that require enhanced policies to increase gender inclusion and support early STEM engagement.

## ICT PhD programs

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Albania
4. The share of students enrolled in ICT PhD programs should be at least 5%, with at least 1 out of every 3 students female.	Data not available.

Albania reported **116 doctoral graduates** (59 women, 57 men – ISCED 8) in 2022–23, but INSTAT’s published tables do **not** disaggregate doctoral graduates by field, so the exact share of PhD students enrolled in ICT and the female share among ICT PhD students are not available from the official statistics (INSTAT, 2024; Eurydice, 2025b).

## Conclusions

### Strengths

- Albania possesses a coherent legal and strategic framework for AL on VET, on Pre-University Education, on Albanian Qualifications Framework, on Employment Promotion and a set of strategies extended through 2030 targeting lifelong learning, inclusion, and skills alignment with labour market needs
- This legal framework strengthens lifelong learning by formally integrating adult training, upskilling, and skill recognition in the handicrafts sector through the handicraft law, supporting both social inclusion and employability for adults.
- A key strength of the Albanian system is its level of integration of skills development and employment policies, including AL policies at strategic, policy and legal levels. This is something specific in the region and in the enlargement countries.
- Albania’s NESS 2023–2030 integrates AL as a key instrument for employability and social inclusion, seeking alignment with EU policy priorities on lifelong learning and skills development.
- Recent legal instruments (by laws developed and approved (Instruction 1109/2024 and Order 845/2025) strengthen AL by introducing quality standards for lifelong learning qualifications, provider accreditation, and VNFIL, as well as further enriching the AQF.

### Challenges

- According to the 2025 INSTAT data AL participation rates remain low, with less than 2% of adults aged 25-64 engaged in education or training, specifically 1.9 for females and 1.3 for males —far below the EU targets of 47% by 2025 and 60% by 2030.
- There is alignment with EU targets but the achievements in digital, STEM, ICT doctoral programs and gender inclusion targets remain too low. Despite progress, underachievement in literacy, mathematics, science, and digital skills is still high.
- Underachievement and a lack of boost top performers (i.e., high achievers, talented learners) highlight an urgent need for investments in digital infrastructure, curriculum modernisation, professional development, and targeted interventions to close achievement gaps and improve educational outcomes and keep up with the EU targets level.

- Despite reforms, monitoring and evaluation of adult participation rates and impact on employability require further improvement and regular monitoring (e.g. Adult Education Survey).

### State of play<sup>22</sup>

- AL priorities in Albania are embedded within the NESS 2023–2030 and the Reform Agenda 2024–2027, focusing on improving employability, lifelong learning participation, and alignment of education with labour market needs. The NESS 2023–2030 in Albania is an integrated policy agenda that jointly covers education and training, employment, social inclusion, and lifelong learning, including adult learning, within a single strategic framework and results matrix. This cross-sectoral design, directly linked to EU commitments, is unique in the Western Balkan region, as it addresses these areas through a unified employment–skills–LLL–social inclusion agenda. AL is a national priority, and both government and social partners actively promote its advancement through stronger coordination, upskilling, and inclusive learning pathways.
- Albania has developed coherent legal and strategic frameworks. The legal framework—anchored in the VET Law (2017 amended in 2024) and the AQF Law (2018)—are fully **aligned** with EU and national strategies addressing AL and LLL (i.e. the EU Growth Plan and the National Reform Agenda).
- AL policies are **not so much fragmented** across as policy design lies with two ministries (MoEI and MoES) and their subordinate institutions (NAVETQ, NAES, AQAPE), which are the main responsible institutions for education, skills, and employment sectors. Recent reforms and new legal instruments (such as DCM 427/2019, Instruction 1109/2024, Order 845/2025) aim to reduce fragmentation and strengthen coordination among them.
- While the NESS 2023-2030 emphasises the need to improve adult participation in learning, improving provider accreditation rates, and expanding recognition of prior learning, key indicators and targets include increasing adult participation in learning to 15% by 2026 and 25% by 2030. Current participation remains below 2%, showing significant gaps compared to EU averages.
- Albania has strengthened its legal and quality-assurance framework for VET and lifelong learning provision through Order 845/2025, reinforcing the role of institutional accreditation and self-assessment mechanisms. However, progress remains limited, with only nine providers accredited to date.

<sup>22</sup> This section is built around the guiding questions presented in [Annex I](#).

# Chapter II: Institutional arrangements and governance of Adult Learning

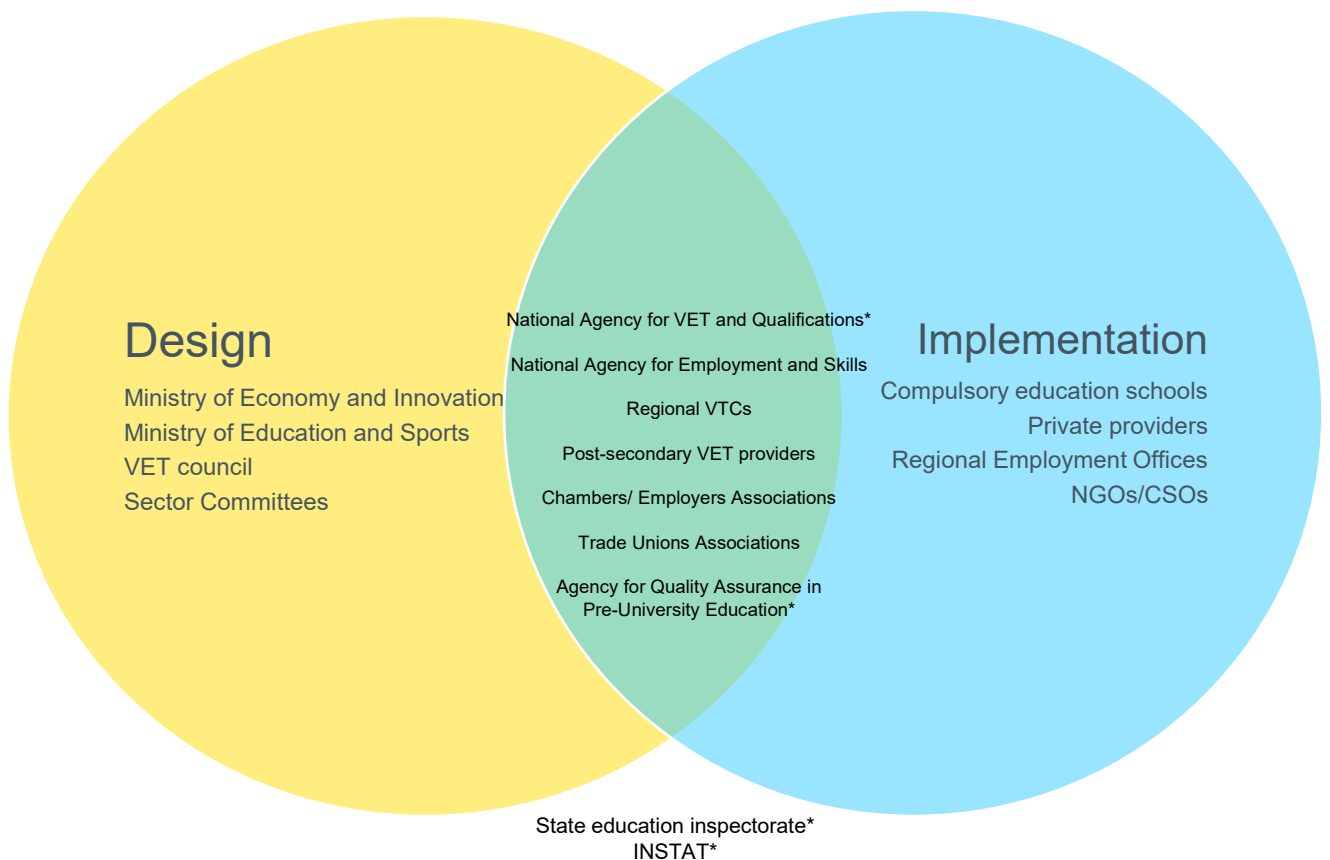
This Chapter analyses and presents the division of roles and responsibilities among the institutions in charge as well as the main features of the governance model in place for the AL sub-sector.

## Institutional arrangements

Albania’s institutional arrangements for AL coordination encompass multiple stakeholders engaged in design, implementation, and monitoring. The governance system involves ministries, national agencies, local authorities, social partners and private sector actors, reflecting a multi-layered approach.

## Roles and responsibilities in AL

Albania’s AL institutional framework shows a mix of centralised policy management and decentralised implementation, with a growing role for private sector engagement. Key features include to a certain extent decentralisation, such as local governments handle some school infrastructure but not policy-making, public VET providers are responsible for delivering VET programs, including AL initiatives matching the regional needs, participative elements through social partners like employers' and employees' organisations in advisory bodies such as the National VET Council or Sector Committees, Supervision occurs via central inspectorates and agencies, with coordination attempted through inter-ministerial dialogues, and social partnership influence remains consultative and advisory. (ETF, 2022; Eurydice, 2025a; GFEB, 2025).



\* Monitoring & Evaluation

## Adult Learning governance model

Albania's institutional framework for AL coordination involves multiple actors engaged in policy design, implementation, and monitoring. The Ministry of Economy and Innovation (MoEI)—formerly the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE) and later the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MoECI)—holds overarching responsibility for VET, skills, employment, and AL policy development, working through its agencies, NAVETQ and the NAES. NAVETQ oversees standards, curricula, certification, teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and QA in vocational education and vocational training (GFEB, 2025), while NAES links AL with employment policies and active labour market measures targeting disadvantaged groups (UNDP, 2019). NAVETQ coordinates the development of VNFIL services. (Eurydice, 2024b; NAVETQ, 2024b; RISI Albania, 2025). The Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) leads policy design and coordination in formal education and lifelong learning (Eurydice, 2025a), supported by the Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (AQAPE), which monitors part-time and second-chance basic education programs. Coordination among these institutions—together with local authorities, VET providers, and private sector partners—ensures policy alignment and continuous improvement through shared monitoring mechanisms led by INSTAT and the responsible ministries (European Commission, 2025; OECD, 2020).

Local government authorities in Albania play a key role in facilitating the delivery and outreach of AL at the community level. They collaborate with private training providers, employers, and civil society organisations to expand educational opportunities, support informal learning pathways, and align training with local labour market needs (MoFE, 2022). Through partnerships with local businesses and community initiatives, municipalities help coordinate and deliver AL services that address regional skills gaps and promote inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged and rural populations. Law 139/2015 (as amended with Law 38/19) on Local Self-Government assigns municipalities responsibility for delivering social services, supporting vulnerable groups and coordinating local inclusion and employment-related services, providing the legal basis for outreach, activation and referral of NEETs at the community level. Complementing this, Law 75/2019 on Youth mandates local government units to establish youth structures, councils and programmes, which play a key role in identifying, engaging and supporting young people—particularly NEETs—thereby underpinning municipal involvement in Youth Guarantee outreach and implementation.

The private sector and civil society actors are active partners in the AL system. Employers' organisations and chambers, such as the National Chamber of Handicrafts, contribute to policy dialogue, curriculum design, and often serve as direct providers of lifelong learning and vocational qualifications. Civil society organisations (CSOs) play an essential role by offering non-formal and informal learning opportunities, implementing skills development projects, and engaging in advocacy and capacity-building efforts. They act as a bridge between vulnerable groups and public institutions, complementing state-led initiatives; however, stronger and more systematic cooperation between government bodies, social partners, and CSOs is needed to maximise their collective impact on lifelong learning and human capital development.

Overall, the AL policy design or management in Albania is to a certain extent centralised and coordinated mainly through the MEI and the MoES in line with existing legal frameworks. While policy management responsibilities are shared with agencies such as NAVETQ and NAES, regional and local institutions (like regional VTCs) remain focused on implementation according to the regional needs, social partners have consultative rather than co-decision roles in bodies like the National VET Council. Lastly, governance in Albania involves a moderately diverse range of stakeholders—including government ministries, employers' organisations, trade unions, civil society, and even learners—participating mainly in policy dialogue and implementation, especially at the national level, though less so at the regional and local levels. Though their engagement in planning and monitoring remains limited. Further details on stakeholder roles are provided in [Annex VI](#).

## Intra-sectoral cooperation and coordination

Intra-sectoral cooperation in Albania's AL system is facilitated through the integration of different sectors within the government, especially between the Ministry responsible for VET and the Ministry of Education, which jointly oversee the strategic planning and resource allocation.

Central level coordination occurs through advisory and consultative bodies such as the National VET Council, National Labour Council and inter-ministerial committees. These bodies foster policy coherence, labour market responsiveness, and the integration of AL with broader socio-economic development goals (OECD, 2020; Eurydice, 2025a). Coordination mechanisms also include the involvement of sector-specific advisory committees and the integration of reforms into the national development strategies, such as the "Albania 2030" program, which aims to link skills development directly with economic growth priorities (Ministry of Education and Sport, 2021; EU, 2025). The governance system includes formal consultative bodies such as the Sectoral Committees, which ensure sectoral alignment (OECD, 2020; European Commission, 2024b).

Local level governance includes boards of VET providers, which involve local government representatives, employers, social partners, and community stakeholders to oversee program implementation and alignment with local labour market needs (ETF, 2025). Steering boards<sup>23</sup> at the institutional or VET providers' level have governance roles including strategic planning, financial oversight, and QA, supported by a centralised legal and policy framework regulating AL and VET domains.

This multi-tier governance model combines centralised coordination with stakeholder engagement at local and institutional levels. Yet coordination and institutional capacities remain areas for further development to enhance AL outcomes in Albania, toward a more coherent, integrated and performance-oriented governance model (Gishti, 2021; Eurydice, 2024b; ETF, 2025; European Commission, 2024b). **Annex VII** shows the Institutional representation in governance, steering and coordination bodies in the sub-sector AL.

## Network of providers of formal and non-formal Adult Learning

Albania's network of AL providers comprises a diverse and expanding mix of public institutions, private entities, and non-governmental organisations operating nationwide.

Main Types of AL Providers:

- Public Secondary Vocational Education schools (31 institutions<sup>24</sup>), offering upper-secondary vocational programmes and some short-cycle postsecondary options, mainly in larger urban centres and aligned with AQF levels (Gishti, 2021; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2022; Eurydice, 2025a, European Commission, 2024b).
- Public Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) (10 institutions), providing short-term, modular and often employment-oriented adult training courses, usually 3–6 months in duration (Gishti, 2021; UNESCO, 2024; European Commission, 2024b).
- Licensed private training providers, companies or individuals are approximately 150. Numbers significantly shrunk (from more than 800) as a consequence of the new 2024 DCM introducing stricter criteria, revised procedures and mandatory re-licensing deadlines for providers of vocational training and labour-market intermediation services, with non-compliant licences subject to revocation. The 150 licensed providers are concentrated in major cities such as Tirana, Durrës and Vlora, delivering non-formal training in foreign languages, ICT, services, tourism and personal services (Gishti, 2021; MoFE, 2022; ETF, 2022; ETF 2025).

<sup>23</sup> The Board of public VET providers is a collegiate body responsible for making decisions on overall strategic direction, general planning, and the use of human, financial, material, and physical resources, as well as for supporting the management activities of public VET providers, in accordance with the applicable legislation.

<sup>24</sup> Source: <https://aftesi.puna.gov.al/arsimi-i-mesem>

- Higher education institutions (public and private universities) offering part-time, continuing education and professional development programmes for adults, including postgraduate and specialised courses (UNESCO, 2024; Eurydice, 2024a).
- Non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations implementing targeted training, outreach and inclusion-oriented projects, often funded by donors/EU, with a focus on disadvantaged groups and local community needs (Gishti, 2021; MoFE, 2022; RISI Albania, 2025).
- Social partners like the trade unions and regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CCI) or the business associations provide outreach, awareness-raising, and some form of recognition of prior learning<sup>25</sup>.

Despite this diverse provider landscape, Albania faces some key challenges. Ensuring permeability between formal and non-formal learning pathways, as recognition and validation of skills acquired outside formal VET and higher education are still being developed and not yet widely implemented (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2022; Eurydice, 2024b; ETF, 2024a). Geographical imbalances persist, with public and private provision heavily concentrated in key economic urban centres, while rural areas have fewer offers and weaker access (UNESCO, 2024; INSTAT, 2025). Coordination mechanisms, quality assurance and data systems do not yet fully integrate private and NGO providers into a coherent national AL system, constraining comprehensive monitoring and strategic planning (MoFE, 2022).

## Funding of Adult Learning

Public expenditure on education in Albania has remained stable at around 3.0–3.3% of GDP, below the EU average, with no dedicated budget line for AL. AL in Albania is primarily funded through public expenditure allocated by the state budget under the MoEI and the MoES, complemented by donor assistance from the EU or individual countries (ETF, 2024a; European Commission, 2025). However, AL funding is embedded within broader VET, employment, and social inclusion programmes, making the specific national AL allocation impossible to calculate (ETF, 2025; European Commission, 2024b). Municipalities have no formal obligation to finance AL provision and, unlike in compulsory education, there is no evidence of systematic local-budget contributions to VTCs or adult-learning outreach initiatives. As a result, the state budget remains the only legally guaranteed funding source, while other mechanisms—such as employer co-financing, participation fees, or donor support—are used inconsistently or on a project basis. Donor financing, including EU IPA, remains significant but information is fragmented, and Albania lacks a consolidated reporting system that would allow full insight into total AL expenditure (ETF, 2025; Eurydice, 2024a). The following are the main funding sources:

**State Budget (MEI):** The principal source, supporting Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), public adult education institutions, infrastructure modernisation, professional development, and strategic projects. However, AL is often part of broader VET and employment budget lines, making specific volume allocation and GDP share unclear (ETF, 2025; Eurydice, 2024a).

**Regional/Local Government Budgets:** Municipalities occasionally allocate supplementary resources to local VTCs and outreach initiatives, depending on local priorities and EU project participation. Funding volumes are usually small and variable.

**Learners or AL participants:** Participants contribute financially through course fees, especially in private providers, but also in public ones if they are not registered unemployed jobseekers. Fees vary by provider and qualification level. The public VTC's fees are defined in the relevant Instructions or bylaws accordingly.

**International Donors and EU Funds:** Donor support from the EU, bilateral cooperations (such as Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy, etc.), World Bank, and UN agencies as implementers, is significant, often through competitive grants and regional development projects targeting adult

<sup>25</sup> Such is the case of the Handicrafts Chamber [www.dhkz.org.al](http://www.dhkz.org.al)

upskilling, digital literacy, and inclusion. Funding is project-based and includes investments for equipment, infrastructure, work-based learning and targeted skills initiatives. and difficult to aggregate nationwide. There are no reliable, up-to-date figures that break down the *percentage* of Albania's VET or AL budget coming from each donor in a consistent, nationally consolidated way, and recent country reports explicitly note that donor and project funding for VET and adult learning is difficult to aggregate across programmes and instruments, as they are reported as individual project amounts (ETF, 2025; European Commission, 2024b). In practice, the state budget remains the primary source of reliable VET funding,

**Private Sector and Employers:** Private training providers, enterprises, and chambers of commerce invest in upskilling and reskilling their workforce, mainly via internal training programs and sectoral partnerships. No national reporting system captures the full scale of these expenditures (Eurydice, 2024a).

**Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society:** NGOs mobilise domestic and international resources for non-formal AL, focusing on marginalised groups and skills for employability. Funding volume is sporadic and measured per project or target group, without systematic national tracking (European Commission, 2024b).

Lastly, funding for AL comes from several sources but Albania does not yet maintain a consolidated reporting mechanism for AL funding across all sources, nor a methodology for calculating its percentage share in GDP, due to fragmented reporting and undefined budget categories. Budget items are often integrated within broader education, employment, and social inclusion programs, making transparent and comparable data collection challenging (ETF, 2025). [Annex VIII](#) gives an overview of public sources of funding.

Overall, the financing model is only moderately adequate, as funding remains fragmented, project-dependent, and insufficient to ensure equitable and sustainable access to adult learning opportunities across all regions.

## Monitoring and Quality Assurance

### Institutional roles and responsibilities

QA for AL in Albania is managed through a comprehensive framework involving several key institutions and clearly defined roles. The MEI establishes national policy and approves standards for adult education and vocational providers, while the NAVETQ develops accreditation models, quality standards, and manages the implementation of the AQF, encompassing both formal and non-formal AL programs. NAVETQ manages standards and external monitoring, and the NAES tracks qualification registries and graduate outcomes to ensure effective QA practices (NAVETQ, 2025). Monitoring and inspection responsibilities<sup>26</sup>—particularly in relation to programme delivery and compliance with employment and training measures—are exercised by the NAES, such as licensing requirements that apply to private adult learning and VET providers (while public providers are regulated through separate public-law arrangements).

Recent advancements, including accreditation and self-assessment processes for VET providers and LLL qualifications' introduction in the AQF, have strengthened the QA system—NAVETQ has led these initiatives, supporting capacity building, monitoring, and continuous improvement at the provider level. Individual AL providers must implement internal QA mechanisms, conduct regular self-assessments, and report to the relevant agencies, supporting continuous improvement and accountability across the sector (Eurydice, 2024c).

This comprehensive QA framework hinges on ongoing self-assessment by providers, external evaluation, and systematic monitoring by NAVETQ and NAES to ensure education and training

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<sup>26</sup> In cooperation with the National Business Centre (NBC) or formerly the National Licensing Centre, the responsible Ministry, and other relevant institutions. NAES acts as one of the cooperating institutions within this framework, particularly in relation to inspection and verification procedures for private providers.

remains relevant to labour market needs and aligned with the AQF and ESGs. This integrated approach marks the latest development in Albania’s VET system, reinforcing institutional accountability, enhancing educational outcomes, and supporting continuous improvement.

The quality of trainers and facilitators is ensured to a certain extent through qualification requirements and training, but challenges remain in consistency and coverage across all regions and programmes. Overall, QA in AL is covered to a moderate degree, with ongoing efforts to strengthen systematic monitoring and trainer development. The country demonstrates growing development in VET and AL programs specifically, extension of reform strategies to 2030, and modernisation efforts in educational infrastructure, but faces ongoing challenges with funding, data integration, and comprehensive implementation of CPD for all AL practitioners (ETF, 2024a).

### Teaching staff of special adult education programs

CPD for teaching staff in Albania’s AL—including general educators (in basic education), validation practitioners, and vocational trainers—is mandated by national legislation and coordinated by the NAVETQ and the AQAPE. Teachers and AL practitioners must regularly engage in CPD covering pedagogical innovations, digital skills, inclusive methodologies, and labour market-oriented approaches. These structured programs are delivered through NAVETQ, regional vocational centres, and accredited providers (NAVETQ, 2024a; ETF, 2025). CPD for all professionals includes self-assessment, peer review, and external monitoring to guarantee quality, foster adaptability to reforms, and enhance institutional effectiveness. One recent example is that practitioners involved in the VNFIL benefit from targeted capacity-building, workshops, and certification programs supported by EU and donor initiatives to ensure alignment with national and international quality standards (NAVETQ, 2025; ETF, 2025; UNDP Albania, 2024).

## Conclusions

### Strengths

- Albania has a clearly defined institutional framework with the two leading ministries, MEI and MoES, and their agencies, NAVETQ, NAES and AQAPE, aiming at coordinated policy design, implementation, and monitoring of AL.
- Existence of multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms—such as the National VET Council, National Labour Council, and Sector skills councils—fosters cross-sectoral dialogue and policy coherence.
- Albania’s AL system is evolving towards broader collaboration with private providers and sectoral committees for industry alignment.
- The AQF provides a structured foundation for aligning AL programmes with ESGs and supporting QA and recognition of learning outcomes.
- Accreditation and monitoring roles are clearly delineated, ensuring regular self-assessment, external review, and transparent governance practices tied to ESGs for both formal and non-formal AL.

### Challenges

- Coordination between national, regional, and local levels (with non-governmental entities such as CSOs) remains limited, with a predominantly top-down governance structure and weak integration of local actors and data systems. This fragmentation in coordination and reporting—especially for non-formal providers—creates bottlenecks in

data reliability, tracking of participation rates, and outcome monitoring, thereby affecting system responsiveness to skills gaps and labour market demands.

- Fragmented funding mechanisms and dependence on donor projects undermine sustainability and equitable access to AL opportunities. Persistent underfunding of public VET, including AL, remains a core challenge, impacting teaching conditions and limiting the reach of modern infrastructure and digital resources.
- Stakeholder engagement, especially from employers and employees' organisations and civil society remains inconsistent and insufficient at regional and local levels.
- Despite progress, the capacity to deliver CPD for teachers and support for validation practitioners require further strengthening to fully implement recent reforms (such as VNFIL) and to meet the needs of marginalised groups and upskilling in emerging sectors (UNDP Albania, 2022; OECD, 2025).

### State of play<sup>27</sup>

- AL policies are coordinated mainly by the MEI (through NAVETQ and NAES) and MoES (through AQAPE), supported by inter-ministerial councils and social dialogue platforms at the central level that serve advisory and consultative functions.
- Funding comes primarily from the state budget, complemented by donor/EU funds, municipal contributions, and limited private-sector support; public–private partnerships exist but remain project-based—financing model: **moderately adequate**.
- Stakeholder participation includes government bodies, employers, trade unions, civil society, and learners—diversity of stakeholders: somewhat diversified, with stronger involvement at the national than local level.
- Albania has a centralised governance system for VET and AL led by MEI, NAES and NAVETQ, supported by national strategies that ensure vertical consistency across legislation. While implementation is decentralised, based on autonomy and responsibilities at the regional or provider level.
- Recognition and portability of AL qualifications are integrated to a certain extent through the AQF, with ongoing operationalisation and recognition-of-prior-learning reforms.
- QA mechanisms are established nationally (NAVETQ, AQAPE) and at provider level through accreditation, self-assessment, and monitoring of formal and non-formal programmes; trainer quality is supported by CPD and certification but covered to a certain extent.
- Overall, Albania's AL ecosystem is evolving to better meet labour market demands and promote lifelong learning. Coordination is supported by national strategies and the oversight of the MoEI and NAVETQ, but the reach and integration of private and non-formal providers require enhancement.

<sup>27</sup> This section is built around the guiding questions presented in [Annex I](#).

## Chapter III: Adult Learning provision

This last Chapter describes the existing programmes and types of provision of AL, including information on any related support services in place for adult learners to access and participate in lifelong learning opportunities.

### AL types and programs

In Albania exists a broad range of AL programs, including formal, non-formal, and informal pathways, aligned with national VET and employment policies, active labour market measures, and broader inclusion strategies. Formal programs include evening schools, second-chance education for adults aged 16+, secondary vocational education schools, public VTCs, and private providers, higher education modules for professional reskilling, and LLL specialisation certificates. Non-formal programs cover traineeships, entrepreneurship schemes, subsidised short courses, and digital literacy/upskilling initiatives, delivered by public Regional VTCs, NGOs, and employers to unemployed adults, youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs), returning migrants, and marginalised populations. As mentioned in previous chapters, opportunities for LLL qualifications and VNFIL pathways have recently been developed and are awaiting implementation. In Albania, informal AL occurs mainly through workplace experience, volunteering, and self-directed learning. The AQF, provides a comprehensive national framework with eight levels aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), encompassing general qualifications, vocational or professional qualifications, as well as LLL qualifications. Hence, the quality and classification of AL programs are ensured via the AQF.

Still, many adults in Albania who have low levels of education, face long-term unemployment, or live in remote and rural areas, are still not being reached by current adult learning opportunities, which largely focus on younger participants and programmes leading to formal qualifications. While international partnerships and donor-funded initiatives further expand AL opportunities, NESS 2023–2030 underlines the need to strengthen adult skills to address the twin digital and green transitions, and develop more systematic upskilling offers for adults in work (MoFE, 2023, Eurydice, 2024a, RISI Albania, 2025).

Hence, while many programs link with the AQF and support active labour market objectives, AL provision only partially meets the diverse needs of adult learners. Overall, programmes are moderately attractive, as coverage is concentrated in urban areas and not all municipalities, and participation remains low, particularly in rural areas, highlighting gaps in accessibility. This highlights that in these areas' adult participation in formal and non-formal learning is extremely low, and it signals that a large share of adults remain outside lifelong learning (ETF, 2024a).

### AL types and programs

Type of program	Provider(s)	Target group	Final certification/ qualification
Remedial education for adults – Part-time Completion of Initial Compulsory 9-years education	Initial or Compulsory education schools (part-time or evening)	16+	Diploma for completed compulsory education (Dëftesë Pjekurie), AQF Level I / general qualification
Remedial education for adults – Part-time Completion of secondary general education	General secondary schools (part-time or evening)	All persons who completed compulsory education	State matura diploma ((Diploma e Maturës Shtetërore), AQF

			Level IV / general qualification
Bridging courses	Not specified	Not specified	AQF Level IV / LLL qualification
Vocational Training courses	Public VTCs, licensed private providers	16+, who completed compulsory education	AQF Level IV / LLL qualification
Specialisation courses based on professional requirements	Not specified	Not specified	AQF Level IV / LLL qualification
Vocational certificate	Public and private providers	16+	AQF Level V / vocational qualification
Professional non-university study programme after secondary education	Not specified	Not specified	AQF Level V / vocational qualification
Post-secondary study programme of a professional type	Public (Vocational schools) and licensed private providers	All persons who completed secondary education	AQF Level V / vocational qualification
Bridging courses	Not specified	+16	AQF Level V / LLL qualification
Specialisation courses based on professional requirements	Not specified	Not specified	AQF Level V / LLL qualification

### Part-time Initial Compulsory Education for Adults

This program allows adults aged 16+ who did not complete initial compulsory (i.e. primary and lower secondary) education to acquire this level of education qualification. It emphasises literacy, numeracy, and key competences for social inclusion and labour market entry (Law 69/2012). The target groups are all individuals 16+ years old without a completed 9-year cycle of compulsory education, including early leavers and marginalised groups. The providers are public so-called ‘evening schools’ (often located within regular 9-years education schools) under the coordination of regional or local education offices. The certificate of completion of compulsory education is nationally recognised.

### Part-time Secondary general education

This programme enables adults aged 16+ who have completed compulsory (9-year) education but did not complete secondary education to obtain a **general secondary education diploma**. Adults who complete the part-time secondary cycle must also **sit** the State Matura examinations if they wish to acquire the Matura certificate (*Diploma e Maturës Shtetërore*), which is required for access to higher education. The programme focuses on key academic competences, general culture and preparing adults for further education or improved labour-market opportunities, in line with Law 69/2012 and relevant secondary legislation. Target groups include early leavers, young adults wishing to re-enter education, and adults from vulnerable backgrounds who require a recognised secondary education qualification. Provision is delivered through public evening or part-time schools and classes within regular secondary schools, coordinated by regional or local education offices.

## Vocational Training (VT) for Adults

VT programs for adults in Albania offer occupational, technical, and professional skills for initial entry, upskilling, reskilling, and adaptation to labour market needs (Law 15/2017; Eurydice, 2024a). Short/modular courses typically last between two and six months and lead to VT certificates (not yet linked to AQF; they would be EQF level 2-3).

The target groups are young adults, unemployed, NEETs, those needing retraining, including adults previously active in other sectors. The providers are public vocational schools, Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), and accredited private providers, coordinated by NAES.

## Post-secondary VE Programmes

Post-secondary VET is also available, with a duration of approximately 1 to 2 years, depending on the qualification type, and leading to post-secondary VET certificates (AQF/EQF 5). These programs are relatively new in the country and target adult upskilling, reskilling, and specialisation beyond upper secondary, focusing on advanced technical, digital, or managerial competencies (OECD, 2025; Europass, 2022). Offerings are often modular and linked to the labour market. The target groups are graduates from upper secondary/VET, employees seeking advancement, unemployed adults, and sector-specific professionals. The providers are Vocational Secondary schools or professional colleges, higher education institutions (universities), and donor/ partnerships that support the development of post-secondary offers in public VET providers. Post-secondary VET Diplomas (AQF/EQF 5) are recognised in the AQF.

## LLL qualifications and the VNFIL provision

Albania's qualifications system has been progressively modernised to support LLL and the recognition of diverse learning pathways. Bridging courses, Vocational training course and Specialisation courses based on professional requirements, of levels IV and V of the AQF, are all LLL qualifications which are designed to support AL, flexibility, inclusivity, and access. LLL qualifications are specifically distinguished in the AQF and are included across AQF levels based on learning outcomes, enabling adults and non-traditional learners to have their competencies certified with a nationally recognised level, provided such programmes meet defined quality and credit criteria.

This process was enabled by the DCM 427/2019, "On approval of criteria and procedures for the inclusion of LLL qualifications in the AQF", which sets out procedural and quality criteria for assigning AQF levels to LLL qualifications, including minimum workload and learning outcomes assessment. This regulation represents a key step towards operationalising LLL inclusion and increasing the visibility and value of lifelong learning pathways within Albania's education and qualifications system. Parallel to this, Albania is developing a VNFIL system under the Law on VET and the Law on AQF, which allow prior non-formal and informal learning to be identified, documented, assessed and recognised for vocational qualifications at AQF levels 2–5; this mechanism is gaining slowly gaining momentum as part of broader employment and skills strategy goals, although full operationalisation continues to evolve and it is expected to be operational by 2026.

## Support measures and services to adult learners

A broad spectrum of support measures and services are available to adult learners in Albania, aiming to ensure access, guidance, validation, and integration into the labour market. Adult learners receive tailored support through fee reductions for vulnerable groups, flexible schedules (evening or part-time provision), modular course structures, and financial aid or scholarships in certain donor or government projects. In selected public providers, there are accessibility adaptations for learners with disabilities; however, this is still a limited occurrence (Eurydice, 2024b; OECD, 2025; RISI Albania, 2025).

### Outreach, information and validation services

Dedicated outreach includes online portals (e.g., national VET and employment service websites<sup>28</sup>), in-person information days, and open events. E-Albania, the Public Services Portal (in Albanian "Portal i Shërbimeve Publike<sup>29</sup>") serves as a comprehensive digital platform for information about all public education opportunities. Furthermore, also under the framework of the YGIP implementation, another dedicated website was created, the National Youth Guarantee Digital Portal, to serve the outreach and information needs of the NEETs target group for employment, vocational training and education opportunities<sup>30</sup> (MoECI, 2024). Similarly, the youth portal<sup>31</sup> managed by the **National Youth Agency** is available and offers a number of opportunities for young adults.

The approval of the Minister's 2024 instruction "On the procedures for assessment and certification for the implementation of the system of validation of prior non-formal and informal learning" opened the way to VNFIL for adult learners. However, such services are not yet available for the Albanian population.

### Active labour market programs and services

Active labour market programs (ALMPs) for adults in Albania encompass a diverse range of measures, including wage subsidy programs, internships/traineeships, job matching services, entrepreneurship schemes, and public works or self-employment initiatives. These programs are managed by the NAES and local employment offices, with a focus on unemployed adults, NEETs, and marginalised groups. Importantly, many of these ALMPs are integrated within the YG scheme, which ensures that young people under 30 receive timely support through quality employment, education, or training opportunities. The YG framework strengthened the link between ALMPs and AL by providing structured pathways such as apprenticeships, traineeships, and on-the-job training, all designed to improve skills and employability in line with labour market demands. The Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan emphasises adult learning through initiatives like offering short-term vocational training courses aligned with labour market demands. Priorities include strengthening continuous education and training, enhancing second-chance opportunities, and integrating soft and digital skills to improve employability. This comprehensive approach enhances the inclusiveness and responsiveness of Albania's labour market services, supporting both immediate employment and longer-term learning and career development (OECD, 2025; RISI Albania, 2025).

### Career guidance and counselling services

Career guidance and counselling services for adult learners in Albania operate through a combination of public employment, education and training, municipal, and donor-supported structures that together form a fragmented yet expanding system. At the national level, the NAES is the primary public provider, offering vocational guidance, career counselling, and job-matching support to registered jobseekers through Regional Employment Offices (REO). Recently, under the YG framework, implemented with support from the EU-funded programs, young adults (especially those under 30)

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<sup>28</sup> NAES website serves as a hub where job seekers can find jobs or vocational training opportunities, and employers can register vacancies, apply to be part of ALPMs, etc. Please see: <https://www.puna.gov.al/>

<sup>29</sup> Please see: <https://e-albania.al/>

<sup>30</sup> Please see: <https://garanciarinore.puna.gov.al/>

<sup>31</sup> Please see at: <https://rinia.gov.al/>

receive improved services of personalised career counselling, skills assessments, referrals to training, and job placement services after registering via the e-Albania platform.

At the VET providers' level, based on the VET Law 2017 (as amended in 2024), all the public providers – among which Public Vocational Training Centers (VTCs), which offer VT for adults mainly - are obliged to offer Career Counselling and Guidance (Article 23) and to have a Development Unit, which includes career guidance services for students and trainees (Article 15, point c). Furthermore, at the municipal level, cities such as Tirana, Elbasan, Lushnjë, and Berat have established or are developing Career Guidance Offices—initiated by the RisiAlbania project (funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation)—to offer guidance and counselling for both youth and adults, integrating local labour-market needs. Several NGOs and donor-funded initiatives also complement public services by targeting adult learners with broader employability and inclusion goals. For example, the Centre for Competitive Skills delivers career guidance alongside digital and literacy training for adults and people with disabilities. Several programs specifically target returning migrants and women seeking to re-enter the labour market. Despite these efforts, services remain mostly urban-based and project-driven, with limited rural coverage and no unified national framework for lifelong career guidance (RISI Albania, 2025).

## Conclusions

### Strengths

- AL offers in Albania comprise a wide range of programs, including formal, non-formal, and informal pathways, linked to employment policies and lifelong learning strategies. There is diversity and flexibility in available programmes, with multiple entry points, modular structures, evening courses, hybrid learning formats and specialised programs for different groups (unemployed adults, NEETs, women, marginalised communities).
- There is ongoing progress in integrating non-formal learning into LLL qualifications (less than 125 hours) and through VNFIL, fostering green and digital skills, and connecting training offers with labour market requirements, as well as improving accessibility and QA through national strategies.
- The implementation of the YG in Albania is a key strength in that it offers young adults quality employment, education or training, linking ALMPs with adult learning. It also improves the chances that young adults can upgrade their skills and secure sustainable employment.
- Increased opportunities for adult learners to benefit from active support services, outreach initiatives, and career guidance through employment offices, education institutions, and targeted programs—increasing both accessibility and relevance.
- Many programmes are quality-assured and classified through the AQF, which supports an increase of participation in upskilling.
- The opportunity to use VNFIL will help adults who already have skills but need a qualification to improve their employment prospects or enter the labour market.
- International partnerships and donor-funded initiatives expand access to digital, green, and entrepreneurship skills for diverse adult populations.

### Challenges

- Existing provisions only partially meet the diverse needs of adult learners, with gaps for marginalised groups, early school leavers, and returning migrants, leading to uneven

access possibilities. Many adults in Albania with low educational attainment, long-term unemployment, and those residing in remote or rural areas remain outside the reach of existing adult-learning provisions, which are heavily oriented toward younger learners and formal qualification pathways.

- VNFIL is not yet available, reducing the overall AL offers' attractiveness.
- Moreover, continuing adult upskilling and reskilling opportunities—particularly for employed adults needing digital or green-economy competences—are underdeveloped and often lack targeted outreach or incentives.

### **State of play<sup>32</sup>**

- AL programs include formal and non-formal provision including part-time initial compulsory and secondary general education, post-secondary vocational training, and specialisation certificates, short-term vocational training, short modular upskilling courses, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and sector-focused courses. The key difference between formal and non-formal provision in Albania is that formal programmes automatically lead to nationally recognised qualifications placed in AQF, whereas non-formal programmes only result in recognised qualifications when they have been explicitly levelled in the AQF or linked to validation procedures; many short courses and trainings remain unrecognised or yield only provider-level certificates.
- Given the low participation in AL, these programmes partially match the diverse needs of adult learners, especially for certain vulnerable groups (like people with disabilities or from highly disadvantaged social backgrounds), and significant gaps remain in rural outreach, gender equity, and inclusion.
- AL is delivered through public secondary vocational schools, VTCs, private professional colleges, universities, employers and employees associations (Chambers and Trade Unions), NGOs working with specific target groups, and donor projects.
- Even though there are a lot of improvements in terms of support measures and services to adult learners, such as the implementation of YG, diversification of ALMPs, increase of career counselling and guidance services, outreach through various means the attractiveness can be considered still moderate.

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<sup>32</sup> This section is built around the guiding questions presented in [Annex I](#).

# Conclusions

Taking into consideration all the information collected and analysed for the preparation of this Factsheet, the following conclusions can be highlighted:

## Dimension I

Albania's policy on AL is primarily inspired by EU frameworks, particularly through alignment of national policy and strategy, such as the NESS 2023-2030, with the Growth Plan, NEAAL 2030, EU initiatives on skills and accession-driven reforms. Additional learning comes from regional cooperation within the Western Balkans and donor-supported pilot projects, which provide practical examples for improving various aspects of AL and local skills development.

Strong political commitment, alignment with the EU, and strategic integration of AL within national priorities can be considered strengths of the country's AL system. The overall evidence indicates clear political commitment and strategic alignment with EU lifelong learning priorities, marking steady progress in legislation, governance, and system design. However, the main challenge remains translating reforms into practice, ensuring wider participation, as AL participation rates remain low, with less than 2% of adults engaged in education or training—far below the EU targets of 47% by 2025 and 60% by 2030.

## Dimension II

Albania's AL governance is led primarily by the MEI and MoES through agencies like NAVETQ, NAES, and AQAPE, aiming at coordinated policy design, implementation, and monitoring of AL, with multi-stakeholder bodies such as the National VET Council and Labour Council promoting policy dialogue, while the AQF ensures structured alignment of programmes with ESGs and quality assurance via clear accreditation and monitoring processes. AL responsibilities are not so much fragmented across the two ministries and agencies.

Key strengths include a defined institutional framework, cross-sectoral collaboration with private providers and sectoral committees, and evolving recognition of prior learning reforms that enhance qualification portability and labour market responsiveness. Challenges remain, however, in limited coordination across national-regional-local levels, donor-dependent funding, especially locally, and insufficient capacity for teacher CPD and VNFIL implementation, which hinder equitable access, data reliability, and adaptation to emerging skills needs.

## Dimension III

AL in Albania encompasses formal, non-formal, and informal pathways delivered through public schools, VTCs, private providers, employers, NGOs, and donor projects, with formal programmes leading to AQF-recognised qualifications, while many non-formal ones are not yet included in the AQF. Key strengths include diverse, flexible programmes linked to employment policies like the YG, which operationalises apprenticeships and traineeships for young adults under 30, alongside progress in adopting a model and legal framework for VNFIL implementation as well as a roadmap for its piloting, green/digital skills integration in the curricula, quality assurance via AQF developments on vocational qualification standards modularization and accreditation processes for VET providers, and expanded donor-supported outreach.

Challenges persist, however, as provisions only partially reach low-educated, long-term unemployed, or rural adults, with underdeveloped upskilling for employed workers in digital/green competences, low overall participation, and moderate attractiveness due to more focus in urban areas and gaps for marginalised groups.

# ACRONYMS

AIC	Albanian Investment Corporation
AL	Adult Learning
ALMPs	Active Labour Market Programs
AQF	Albanian Qualifications Framework
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ETF	European Training Foundation
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
ESGs	European Standards and Guidelines
HE	Higher Education
INSTAT	National Institute of Statistics
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEI	Ministry of Economy and Innovation
MoECI	former Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation
MoES	former Ministry of Education and Sports
MoFE	former Ministry of Finance and Economy
NBC	National Business Centre, formerly National Licensing Centre
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills
NAVETQ	National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications
NEET	Young people Not in Education, Employment and Training

NESS	National Employment and Skills Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PWD	Persons with disabilities
QA	Quality Assurance
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SASPAC	National Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VE	Vocational Education
VNFIL	Validation of Non-formal, Formal and Informal Learning
VT	Vocational Training
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
YG	Youth Guarantee
YGIP	Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

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# Annex I – Analytical Framework and Guiding questions

Chapters	Guiding questions [1]	Sources/met hods
<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Country context (governmental and administration features over education and training affairs, main legal frameworks, placement of AL sub-sector within the wider education &amp; training system)</li> <li>- Specific elements related to the country political situation, constitutional arrangements, territorial/regional autonomies and jurisdiction over education sector</li> <li>- Presentation of the country paper structure and objectives</li> </ul>		Desk review
<p><b>Chapter 1. AL Strategies &amp; Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AL National and regional Strategies (existing, past and present, or under preparation and expectations on its adoption) – approach to AL (broad, narrow), main strategic objectives, results obtained to date, and targets to be achieved, comparative analysis with EU policy priorities alignment, existing legal framework; level of priority attributed to AL, plans for reforms or large-scale programmes)</li> <li>- AL National policies (overview of the main policy objectives, national and regional policy measures implemented or under implementation, target-population, equity and inclusiveness gaps identified, sources of funding, stakeholders' participation, monitoring &amp; evaluation mechanisms)</li> <li>- National targets vs EU targets (analysis of the 5 key indicators of NEAAL and UoSkills 2030 at national level, plus indicators related to AL from Growth Plans/National Reform Agendas)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the main priorities of existing AL national/regional strategies? Where do they intend to bring AL in the country? Currently, is AL a priority, does the government intend to advance AL, do social partners and/or other non-state actors advocate for progress in AL?</li> <li>2. Is the legal framework adjusted to the national/regional strategies and policy objectives? Do they correspond to specific needs of regions? Is there mismatching between the different levels of policy definition (fully/partially/not aligned at all)?</li> <li>3. What is the level of fragmentation of AL policies within the wider education and training system of the country (highly fragmented/fragmented/not so much fragmented)?</li> <li>4. What are the main indicators in use and related targets for AL sector (e.g., participation rates, skill levels, employment outcomes).</li> <li>5. Where relevant and possible, compare with EU policy objectives in the NEAAL 2030 and the Communication on the Union of Skills, as well as benchmarking indicators and other national targets.  (fully match/partially match/ not matching at all)</li> </ol>	Desk-review Interviews Data Analysis
<p><b>Chapter 2. AL Institutional arrangements &amp; Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Institutional arrangements (responsible institutions at national and regional levels, roles and responsibilities, coordination bodies, type of providers (public/private/others), coverage of the territory and gaps in the AL supply and</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which institutions are responsible for the coordination and implementation of AL policies, and how are roles and responsibilities divided among ministries, agencies, and other relevant actors? Which coordination mechanisms are in place (e.g. AL council. Inter-ministerial committee on AL. Economic and Social Council, etc.) and their roles i.e. advisory,</li> </ol>	Desk-review Interviews

<p>demand, participation of employers and other players from the world of work, funding sources and financing models)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AL Governance models (key-features of the governance model, i.e. centralized/decentralized, participative, co-decision (diversity of actors, autonomy of the providers), supervision and coordination processes, relation to NQFs)</li> <li>- Monitoring and Quality Assurance, data collection and analysis on AL, including evaluation.</li> </ul>	<p>consultative, decision-making?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. What are the main sources of funding of AL provision? Are there public-private partnerships related to AL funding, e.g. Training Funds, Tax exemptions, Levies, etc? Is the financing model and the funding sources sufficient and adequate? (very adequate/moderately adequate/not adequate at all)</li> <li>3. Which stakeholders (for example employers, trade unions, civil society, learners) involved in the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring of AL initiatives and to which extent there is a wide participation of relevant players in the different areas of AL governance? (high diversity of stakeholders/somehow diverse/not diverse at all)</li> <li>4. How well coordinated are the management of AL policies implementation as per the country's institutional arrangements? Are they corresponding to the adopted legal frameworks and do they correspond to a more centralized or decentralized model? (very centralized/to a certain extent centralized/decentralized)</li> <li>5. How far the recognition, portability and integration of AL outcomes/qualifications is integrated/linked to national qualification frameworks/national qualification systems? (fully integrated/to a certain extent/not integrated at all)</li> <li>6. What mechanisms (at national/regional/ at provider level) are in place to ensure the quality of AL provision? How is the monitoring of results implemented and what type of programmes are covered? How quality of trainers/facilitators ensured? (fully covered/to a certain extent/not covered at all)</li> </ol>	
<p><b>Chapter 3. AL Provision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AL Programmes (main existing formal and non-formal programmes, complementary services such as outreach, coaching, career guidance and validation of skills including the broader range of learners, objectives and relation to upskilling and reskilling initiatives, types of provision, recent initiatives in the AL domain for specific target groups, skills acquisition)</li> <li>- AL Provision (Size of the provision, number of enrolled learners, completion of the programmes)</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What types of AL programmes are currently available (formal and non-formal), and what are their primary objectives and target groups? To which extent the AL provision matches the needs of different groups of adult learners, addressing the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion? (fully match/partially match/ not matching at all)</li> <li>2. Which are the current providers of AL and is there significant differences between formal and non-formal provision? How attractive are the existing programs (formal and non-formal)? Are there significant gaps in AL provision? (highly attractive/moderately attractive/not attractive at all)</li> </ol>	<p>Desk-review Interviews Statistical data analysis</p>
<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Main findings</li> <li>- Main successes, what is working well, as well as challenges identified at each level (chapters 1, 2, 3)</li> <li>- Specificities of AL findings, perspectives in AL, source of policy learning.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify main findings in each of the 3 dimensions.</li> <li>2. What is indicating progress (a new law under preparation, more funding for AL, government calling non-state actors to mobilise and contribute to AL, very successful programmes, etc.)?</li> <li>3. What remains as a (old) challenge, or which</li> </ol>	<p>Expert's own analysis, based on key qualitative and quantitative information collected through desk</p>

<p>- 1 to max 3 conclusions to be highlighted.</p>	<p>emerging challenges?</p> <p>4. Do findings in 1, 2 and 3 support the study assumption that AL is recognised as priority and there is progress?</p> <p>5. What are the sources of “policy learning” (who is a source of inspiration: neighbours, EU countries, international practices, etc.)</p>	<p>research and interviews</p>
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[1] These guiding questions were used as check list for the authors to use while drafting the different sections of the reports, in particular in the Conclusions boxes of each Chapter – ‘State of play’ section.

## Annex II – List of interviewees and interviews

### List of focus group interviewees

Institution	Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2
Regional Public VTC Tirana 1	Project Coordinator	
People in Focus (Tirana and nationwide)	EU Project Coordinator	
Community Network 'Today for the future' (Durrës, Tirana, Puka, Kukës)	Director	
National Chamber of Handicrafts (Tirana and nationwide)	Project Coordinator	Specialist
Regional Public VTC Shkoder	Director	Development Unit Coordinator
AlbanianSkills (Tirana and nationwide)	Executive Director	
Community Social Centre 'Murialdo' (Fier)	Director	
Woman in Development (Korça)	Director	
Centre for Competitive Skills (Tirana and nationwide)	Project Coordinator	

### List of individual interviews

Institution	Interviewee
National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications	Executive Director
National Agency for Employment and Skills	Head of Department for Vocational Education and Training

## Annex III - Evaluation of results achieved

### NESS 2023-2030 Progress Report 2023

Priority <sup>33</sup>	Policy Measure	Indicator	Result
Policy Goal 1: Skills Development Strategic Objective 1.1. Reducing skills mismatch for all occupations	1.1.1. Developing a relevant and flexible VET offer	Employment rate of VET graduates	Increased from 57.5% (2021) to 77.4% (2023).
		The share of pupils that register in VET (Public and Private) by gender	Increased from 17,54% (2022-23) to 17,88% (2023-2024).
		The percentage of girls registered in VET schools	Increased from 14,7% (2021-2022) to 15.8% (022-2023).
		Number of updated VET programmes (initial and continuous).	Increased from 0 to 26 initial VET programmes
		Number of new vocational qualifications and revised qualifications based on inputs by the private sector	11 unified courses. Increased from 0 to 2 new vocational qualifications 22 revised qualifications
	1.1.2. Strengthening quality assurance in VET	Accredited VET providers (levels 2–5 NQF)	Increased from 6 (2022) to 9 (2023)
	1.1.3. Private sector engagement in VET governance	Share of VET students in professional practice	Decreased from 65% (2021–22) to 58% (2022–23)
		Percentage of businesses that identify skills mismatch of the labour force as key challenge	It was 24.8% (2019), but not reported data in 2023.
Policy Goal 1: Skills Development Strategic Objective 1.2. Upskilling for both men and women of working age	1.2.1. Fostering inclusive lifelong learning opportunities	Adults benefiting from training programmes	Increased from 14,917 (2022) to 16,428 (2023)
	1,2.2 Recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning	Number of people certified	No certifications recorded (2022–2023)
		Percentage of population with basic or higher digital skills (age 16-74), by gender	Decrease from 23.8% (2021) to 23.2% (2023)
Policy Goal 1: Skills Development Strategic Objective 1.3 Better functioning of the labour market for all	1.3.1 Digital transformation of employment services	Jobseekers using digital services	Reached 14,000 in 2023
		Number of VET providers that offer blended learning and online learning	No changes recorded. 9 in 2021 and 2023

<sup>33</sup> The priorities refer to policy goals and strategic objectives as they are presented in NESS 2023-2030.

Priority <sup>33</sup>	Policy Measure	Indicator	Result
Policy Goal 1: Labour Market Functioning	1.3.2. Developing skills intelligence system	Number of Labour Market Information products	2 published: Statistical Bulletin and Regional Analysis (2023)
	1.3.3. Consolidating and expanding employer and jobseeker services and adopting them based on monitoring and evaluation practices.	Number of vacancies published in NAES Number of job mediations facilitated by employment offices Percentage of people employed upon completing Employment Promotion Programmes	Increase from 25,000 (2021) to 61,173 (2023) Increase from 7,624 (2021) to 12,088 (2023) Tracer study was on-going
Policy Goal 2: Fostering decent employment for women and men through the implementation of inclusive labour market policies Strategic Objective 2.1: Mediating and delivering effective and inclusive programmes that support employment	2.1.1. Services and programs promoting employment and training using the labor market ecosystem	The number (or %) of participants in ALMPs from specific groups, divided based on different categories (from the third level, beneficiaries of economic assistance, ethnic groups, etc.).  The number (or %) of participants in VT from specific groups, divided based on different categories (from the third level, beneficiaries of economic assistance, ethnic groups, etc.).  The number (or percentage) of job placements realized for vulnerable groups	Decrease of the total from 4344(2022) to 2635 (2023)  Total no. not available but there is an increase in the specific groups like the persons in economic aid, from 768 (2022) to 842 (2023).  Increase from 26,794 (2022) to 27,657 (2023)
	2.1.2. Support inclusive school-to-work transition for young people NEET through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee scheme	Number of young people aged 15 – 29 supported through the Youth Guarantee scheme, divided by gender	72 (in 2023) and implemented in Tirana, Shkodër, and Vlorë with positive outcomes
	2.1.3. Increasing the inclusion of inactive women in labour market	Number (or %) of women beneficiaries served by different employment promotion programmes  Percentage of job placement for women jobseekers	No data for 2022, but it is reported as 63% for 2023.  Improved from 49% (2022) to 53% (2023)
	2.1.4 Increasing the integration of persons with disabilities (PWD) in labour market systems and skills development	Number of PWD supported through employment services, education, vocational training and employment promotion programs	Increase in the total number reached, from 149 (baseline) to 425 (2023)

## Annex IV - Figures on the accreditation process

Year	Number of accredited providers	Number of qualifications	Number of trained external evaluators
2025	2	-	-
2024	3	42	30
2023	5	52	12
2022	6	50	19

Table source: NAVETQ

# Annex V – Data on participation in lifelong learning

**4**

QUALITY EDUCATION

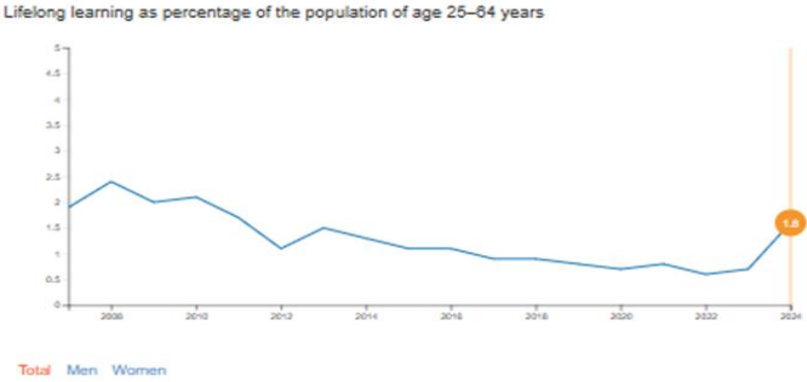


**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

**4.3 Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, by 2023**

**4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex**

<p><b>Definition</b> <span style="float: right;">^</span></p> <p>The percentage of youth and adults in a given age range (15-24 years, 25-54 years, 55-64 years, 15-64 years) participating in formal or non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months.;</p>	<p><b>Alignment with UN SDG</b> <span style="float: right;">v</span></p>
<p><b>Direction</b> <span style="float: right;">v</span></p>	<p><b>Source</b> <span style="float: right;">v</span></p>



Source: INSTAT

**4.1 By 2030, Ensure That All Girls And Boys Complete Free, Equitable And Quality Primary And Secondary Education Leading To Relevant And Effective Learning Outcomes**

4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex

**4.2 By 2030, Ensure That All Girls And Boys Have Access To Quality Early Childhood Development, Care And Pre-Primary Education So That They Are Ready For Primary Education**

4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex

**4.3 Ensure Equal Access For All Women And Men To Affordable And Quality Technical, Vocational And Tertiary Education, Including University, By 2023**

4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

**4.4: By 2030, Substantially Increase The Number Of Youth And Adults Who Have Relevant Skills, Including Technical And Vocational Skills, For Employment, Decent Jobs And Entrepreneurship**

Indicator 4.4.1: Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

## Annex VI - Responsibilities for AL in Albania

Institution	Responsibility
Ministry of Education and Sports	Policy, legislation, and strategic planning for initial education for adults and lifelong learning Policy and strategy – primary responsible.
Ministry of Economy and Innovation	Employment and skills strategies, funding, regulation and licensing of VET/LLL providers Policy and strategy – primary responsible.
National Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ)	Drafts and maintains the National List of Professions Drafts and maintains the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications for levels 2-5 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework Drafts national programmes and supporting materials for vocational qualifications for levels 2-5 of the Albanian Qualifications Framework Drafts and maintains the National List of Professions Monitors the continuous training of teaching staff of the professional culture of VET providers Drafts standards, criteria and procedures for the accreditation of VET providers Development and implementation of VET and skills policies Close collaboration with the private sector and the VET providers Policy and strategy – support in drafting and implementation. Standards and quality assurance - primary responsible Curriculum design - primary responsible
National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES)	Development and implementation of employment and skills policies Coordination of labour market analysis and adult skills needs assessment Active labour market programs, career guidance, and job matching Policy and strategy – support in drafting and implementation Labour market skills matching – primary responsible
Sectorial Committees / Technical Secretariats	Coordination, policy monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and serving as consultation platforms Standards and quality assurance - collaborator Labour market skills matching - collaborator
Compulsory education schools	Basic education delivery for adults Second-chance, part-time, remedial programs
VET providers (public and private)	Offering vocational training, upskilling, and retraining are aligned with the local labour market Implement adult learning programs, including short-term courses, post-secondary courses and LLL qualifications Labour market skills matching - collaborator
Public Universities	Lifelong learning, continuing education, and professional development Labour market skills matching - collaborator
Regional/ Local Employment Services	Identifies adult training needs in labour market Coordinates AL programs for unemployed adults Partners with training centres and employers Labour market skills matching - collaborator
Local Government Authorities	Support and coordination of local adult learning initiatives Facilitate community-based adult learning Labour market skills matching - collaborator

Institution	Responsibility
Employers' and Workers' Organizations	Participation in policy dialogue, advising on skill needs and workplace training Support work-based learning and adult upskilling Collaborate in curriculum and qualification design Labour market skills matching – collaborator Standards and quality assurance – collaborator Curriculum design – collaborator
State Education Inspectorate	Monitors and evaluates adult education providers Ensures compliance with quality standards and legislation Policy and strategy – support in drafting and implementation. Standards and quality assurance - primary responsible
Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (AQAPE/ASCAP)	Develops curricula and teaching materials for adult learning in Part-time Basic Education Provides research and policy support on education quality Policy and strategy – support in drafting and implementation. Standards and quality assurance - primary responsible

Table source: Desk research

## Annex VII - Institutional representation in governance, steering and coordination bodies in the AL sub-sector

Participating institution	National VET Council	National Labour Council	Tripartite Regional Consultative Councils (TRCC)	Sectoral committees	Involvement in AQF Implementation and accreditation processes / Commissions	VET providers boards
Ministry of Economy and Innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Ministry of Education and Sports	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
National Agency of VET and Qualifications	✓		✓	✓	✓	
National Agency for Employment and Skills	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Regional VTCs			✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional/Local Employment Services			✓		✓	✓
Regional education directories					✓	✓
Universities				✓	✓	
Economic Chambers/Chamber of Crafts/Association of Employers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trade Unions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual businesses				✓	✓	✓
Local government units		✓	✓		✓	✓
NGOs/CSOs		✓		✓	✓	
Independent Experts / consultants	✓	✓		✓	✓	

Table source: Desk research

## Annex VIII - Public funding sources

Source of funding	Type of program	Funding volume
<p>The Budget of the Republic of Albania covers LEGALLY MANDATORY:</p> <p>Central Budget (MoES) for second-chance education for adults</p> <p>Central Budget (MoEI) for VET national agencies, schools, VTCs and employment-related measures</p>	<p>Basic education for adults</p> <p>Secondary education for adults; evening schools and part-time general education programmes</p> <p>Operation of public Vocational Training Centres (VTCs)</p> <p>ALMPs, employment and skills programmes (i.e. training, reskilling and upskilling)</p> <p>State-funded operation of national agencies (AQAPE, NAVETQ and NAES)</p> <p>Salaries and wages of teaching and administrative staff in public education and VET institutions.</p> <p>Basic operational costs for public education infrastructure, including maintenance and essential services.</p> <p>Funding for national curricula development, quality assurance, and institution oversight.</p>	<p>No separate allocation available. Adult education is embedded in general education budget lines; the AL share cannot be isolated in national statistics.</p> <p>Not disaggregated for AL. AL funding is integrated into VET and employment budget lines. No separate AL budget line exists</p> <p>National agencies' budgets are published annually, but the portion devoted specifically to AL is not reported separately and cannot be quantified.</p>
<p>The Budget of the Republic of Albania MAY / CAN cover NOT LEGALLY MANDATORY</p>	<p>Infrastructure upgrading and equipment, teaching materials, ICT equipment, specialised machinery and tools, maintenance or minor investments for institutions delivering adult learning and VET programmes.</p> <p>Continuing professional development (CPD) for initial and general education, VET/AL staff.</p> <p>Cost of VNFIL, including portfolio assessment, practical testing and certification, regulated by ministerial instruction.</p>	<p>No specific AL allocation available. Funding is irregular and often linked to central or donor projects; no consolidated data are published.</p> <p>Fees for VNFIL are regulated and may be partly covered by public funds for specific target groups, but there is no national aggregation of volumes or clear reporting of the total public budget contribution.</p>
<p>Regional/Local Government Budgets (Municipalities)</p>	<p>Utilities and minor repairs for buildings under municipal competence, which may host adult learning activities.</p> <p>Occasional small contributions for facilities in cases of participation in donor/EU projects (case-specific)</p>	<p>No national reporting; no evidence of regular AL/VET funding</p>

Table source: Author

## Annex IX - Institutional roles and responsibilities in Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Role	MoES	MEI	NAVETQ	NAES	AQAPE
Approving standards for providers' accreditation		✓			
Enforcing standards for providers' accreditation			✓		
Monitoring of the implementation of the standards in accredited providers			✓		
Supervision and oversight of the implementation of non-formal AL and VNFIL service providers			✓	✓	
Monitoring of the implementation of remedial education (part-time basic education) through advisory, consultative, mentoring-instructional support and professional supervision	✓				✓
Approving inclusion of LLL qualifications in the AQF		✓	✓		✓

Table source: Author