

ADULT LEARNING IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Factsheet

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INTRODUCTION

This factsheet was developed in 2025 by the European Training Foundation (ETF) as part of an exercise mapping of adult learning (AL) in EU candidate and potential candidate countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*¹, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine.

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.

Adult learning is an important part of lifelong learning². It includes formal (i.e. linked to formal qualifications) and training in various topics and professional development programs offered outside an education institution, including upskilling and reskilling activities, and learning aimed at developing a wide spectrum of skills³.

Adult Learning (AL) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly decentralized and shaped by the country's complex constitutional structure with no countrywide law governing AL. At the state level, the Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for performing tasks and executing duties that fall within the competence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and that relate to establishing the basic principles for the coordination of activities, harmonising the plans of the competent authorities, and defining strategies at the international level in the following areas: health and social protection, pensions, science and education, labour and employment, culture and sport, as well as geodetic, geological and meteorological affairs. Authority over adult learning, according to the constitutional framework on education policies, is divided among multiple administrative levels: the ten cantons within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, and the autonomous Brčko District Bosnia and Herzegovina. Each of these units has its own education legislation and institutions, leading to a highly fragmented education and AL policy and implementation landscape. Although Bosnia and Herzegovina's key⁴ AL strategic document, Strategic Platform for Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Context of Lifelong Learning for the Period 2014–2020, has expired, its core principles remain embedded in legislation and institutions. The document promoted lifelong learning as the foundation of a "learning society" and envisioned an open, flexible system supporting learning at all life stages. The "Principles and Standards in Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina" provide a normative framework defining quality, access, delivery, and validation in adult education, serving as a technical basis for policy implementation rather than setting reform priorities.

However, the narrow use of the term "adult education" puts most attention on formal learning and underrepresents informal and non-formal dimensions of adult learning and education (ALE). Despite this, AL is increasingly seen as vital for employability, active citizenship, personal growth, and community resilience⁵. Although the term adult education (AE) is dominant, it is considered insufficient to fully capture adult learning and education (ALE) activities. Practice clearly indicates the importance of including both concepts — learning and education — in legal frameworks, in order to describe this field more realistically and precisely. This topic has been addressed by organisations and experts for many years, including institutions such as DVV International and the European Training Foundation. It is therefore necessary to continue highlighting its relevance and affirming it within systemic and regulatory solutions.

For the development of this Factsheet, a systematic collection of information was conducted through desk research and field work. The analysis is organised around the analytical framework and guiding questions presented in [Annex I](#). Group and individual interviews were carried out from July to December 2025 with representatives of relevant institutions, key players and stakeholders in adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina including formal and non-formal AL providers. The list of interviewees is enclosed as [Annex II](#).

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**

¹This 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.

²Cedefop'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

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

⁴Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning in BiH 2014-2020, Council of Ministers BiH, 01/10/2014 EPAL Platform, <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/hr/resource-centre/content/principi-i-standardi-u-oblasti-obrazovanja-odraslih-u-bosni-i-hercegovini-0>

⁵https://www.dvv-international.ba/fileadmin/files/bosnia-and-herzegovina/Documents/Publications/Studija_BSC_bosnia_-_English.pdf

non-formal provision. This will serve as a basis for the ETF, and the competent education authorities and stakeholders involved to identify priority areas for possible future actions or policy advice.

This factsheet presents factual key-elements about adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina, considering the three dimensions mentioned above.

Context

Key Socio-Economic and Demographic trends

The last population census in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁶ was conducted in 2013. The current demographic data is therefore based on statistical projections⁷. According to the official demographic projection for the year 2025, the total population is estimated at 3.27 million, of which 51.61% are women. The share of women shows a consistent upward trend in long-term forecasts. The demographic profile reveals a clear trend of an ageing population. Children aged 1-14 years old are 13.21% of the total population, while individuals aged 65 and over represent 21.85%, a figure that is expected to grow at an accelerating rate. The population share in the 55-64 age cohort is 15.00%. The projected average age of the population is 44.5 years. The average age of the population is projected to reach 44.5 years in 2025, and 46.44 years by 2030. This demographic dynamic is exacerbated by ongoing emigration, with approximately 1.7 million Bosnians living abroad in 2025⁸, driving pronounced labour supply constraints and elevating competition for qualified workers.

As of 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina's labour market shows a gradual improvement, yet significant structural challenges remain. The employment rate increased to approximately 42.9%⁹ of the working-age population (15+), up from 41.5% in 2023, while the labour force participation rate remained relatively low at 49.5%¹⁰. Youth unemployment (ages 15–24) declined from 31.7% in 2022 to around 27.3% in 2024¹¹, yet remains one of the highest in the region. Additionally, 16% of young people were classified as NEET¹² as of 2023, highlighting persistent risks of long-term exclusion. Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown considerable progress, with its lowest NEET rate recorded in the most recent available data from 2023—reflecting a decline from previous peak levels, which stood at around 32%. Female participation continues to lag behind male participation significantly, pointing to gender barriers in employment and training access. Regional trends show a modest decrease in registered unemployment in Republika Srpska and Brčko District by March 2025. As of early 2025, Bosnia and Herzegovina's unemployment rate stands at approximately 11.7% (December 2024), with youth unemployment (aged 15–24) of 31.2% in Q4 2024 according to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Labour and Employment Agency. According to the World Bank, employment grew by 0.6% and unemployment declined to 11.7% in Q4:2024, with real wages growing by an annual rate of 7.9%¹³. These trends underscore the importance of investing in adult education, upskilling, and flexible training pathways to address mismatches between labour market demands and available skills, particularly among young people, women, and vulnerable groups.

In the area of skills development, Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved only modest convergence with the EU. Bosnia and Herzegovina has seen a gradual increase in employment, with the employment rate reaching around 41.5% in 2023¹⁴ (up from roughly 33–35% in the mid-2000s), and modest improvements in labour productivity indicators. However, these advances are not yet matched by broader systemic transformation.

⁶ Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a parliamentary democracy established under the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dayton Peace Agreement, 1995). The state has a decentralised and consociational structure comprising two entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska—and the self-governing Brčko District. The executive power is shared through a tripartite presidency representing the three constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs), while legislative authority is vested in a bicameral parliamentary assembly and the Council of Ministers. Each entity enjoys significant autonomy, with its own constitution, parliament, and government, reflecting the Dayton Constitution's aim to preserve unity while guaranteeing internal self-government.

⁷ For the purposes of this report, data from the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been used, and this data is harmonised with Eurostat standards. <https://pdo.bhas.gov.ba/1/>

⁸ World Bank. 2024. International mobility as a development strategy: Bosnia and Herzegovina Country Report.

⁹ <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/bosnia-and-herzegovina/labour-force-survey/labour-force-survey-employment-rate>

¹⁰ <https://tradingeconomics.com/bosnia-and-herzegovina/labour-force-participation-rate>

¹¹ <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/SLUEM1524ZSBIH>

¹² <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/all/young-people-western-balkans>

¹³ IMF Country Report No 25/252

¹⁴ Labour Force Survey, 2023; Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Sarajevo, 01.04.2024.

While efforts at digitalisation (e-filing tax systems, transit systems) are improving competitiveness, Bosnia and Herzegovina still lags behind its Western Balkans peers in digital society and education. Educational outcomes remain misaligned with labour market needs, reinforcing the structural unemployment and youth vulnerability.

In the digital transformation realm, Bosnia and Herzegovina lags behind regional peers in the digital transformation cluster, despite relatively high individual internet usage. According to the OECD (2025), the country records the lowest digital transformation score among Western Balkan economies, with only 59.1 % of the population possessing basic digital skills. While internet usage by individuals reaches 88.1 %, nearing EU comparative levels, the underutilisation of available infrastructure - particularly in education and public services - continues to hinder progress. Notably, as of early 2024, approximately 14,000 students across more than 500 schools still lacked access to basic internet¹⁵, highlighting persistent gaps in digital inclusion and the limited reach of digital transformation in key sectors such as education.

¹⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/bih/en/stories/teachers-bosnia-herzegovina-driving-force-behind-digital-transformation-education?utm>

CHAPTER I: ADULT LEARNING STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

This chapter offers insight into the main policy objectives, 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

Overview of relevant strategic documents

Strategic platform for Adult Education in the context of Lifelong Learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014-2020

Owing to its complex constitutional framework, Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks a single, unified policy document that regulates the education sector at state level. Instead, authority over education, in accordance with the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is distributed across various administrative levels, creating a highly decentralised system. The only strategic document adopted at the state level aiming to facilitate coordination among the entities, cantons, and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina¹⁶ is:

- Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in context of Lifelong Learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2014-2020.

The Platform is the key state-level policy framework for adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Adopted by the Council of Ministers and endorsed by all the relevant education authorities, it outlines strategic goals and priorities in line with European lifelong learning policies, including:

- Improving the legislative framework for adult education in the context of lifelong learning and aligning it with the European Union reference frameworks.
- Establishing effective modes of participation of relevant (representative) and other social partners in the process of adult education in the context of lifelong learning.
- Developing programme-based and institutional capacities and improving the accessibility of adult education in the context of lifelong learning.
- Ensuring and enhancing the quality of adult education in the context of lifelong learning.

Although the Platform expired in 2020, it remained a key reference for policy alignment and reporting. Despite this, the *Principles and Standards* and the *Strategic Platform* were seen as major achievements, reflecting broad political consensus.

In September 2025, work began on developing a new strategic document - a revision of the *Strategic Platform for Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014–2020)* - which is expected to be finalized in the upcoming period.

The working group involved in developing this document includes representatives from key education, labour, and employment institutions at state, entity, cantonal and Brčko District level, but does not include education authorities from Republika Srpska. The 2014 'Principles and Standards in Adult Education' document, adopted by the Council of Ministers, is a state-level normative framework supporting policy harmonisation, coordination (including VNFIL), and sector development rather than a strategic document.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made progress in strengthening the adult learning system, albeit unevenly across administrative units. All administrative units in Bosnia and Herzegovina have adopted or revised laws on adult education and have begun implementing operational plans. Guidelines and pilots for the validation of non-formal education and informal learning (VNFIL) were developed with EU support. Cooperation between social partners has expanded, with labour–education councils established in several cantons and programmes increasingly aligned with labour market needs. Networks of public, private, and civil stakeholders were formed in four administrative units, and an online monitoring system (ISKOOM) now tracks adult education delivery in several cantons. The ISKOOM platform

¹⁶ The document 'Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in context of Lifelong Learning in BiH (2014-2020)' has expired and it began to be revised in September 2025.

also supports systematic monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance, representing a key step toward coordinated and evidence-based adult learning policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁷ As such, the ISKOOM platform is designed for monitoring and evaluating all programmes, including holistic ones. While holistic programmes cannot be fully and strictly framed within EQAVET indicators, certain EQAVET quality principles can be applied and adapted to their specific characteristics. However, despite these advancements, existing monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms are not yet fully aligned with CEDEFOP and EQAVET principles, particularly regarding the use of performance indicators, feedback loops, and external evaluation procedures. Strengthening these dimensions would enhance transparency, comparability, and overall system reliability in line with EU quality assurance standards.

The Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Platform provides an overview of the progress achieved during the 2014–2020 period; however, this assessment is based mainly on activity reports rather than on a comprehensive evaluation framework. Monitoring used simple yes/no indicators on law adoption, by-law adoption/harmonisation, institutional establishment, and local strategy development, highlighting which administrative units had taken actions aligned with the Platform's goals.

The evaluation of the Strategic Platform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2024, found that while significant progress had been in establishing the legal and institutional framework for adult learning, implementation remained partial, fragmented, and uneven across administrative units. All jurisdictions have now adopted relevant laws and, to some extent by-laws in this regard, creating a foundation for quality assurance and coordination, but systemic challenges persist, including weak inter-institutional cooperation, insufficient funding, and the absence of harmonised monitoring and data systems. The evaluation also emphasised that progress was largely activity-based rather than outcome-oriented, highlighting the need for consistent indicators and a unified monitoring approach. Building on these findings, the MoCA in a cooperation with DVV International, launched the revision of the Strategic Platform, which aims to strengthen governance, enhance programme quality, and ensure alignment with EU frameworks such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL), the Union of Skills initiative, and UNESCO's GRALE reporting. The new strategy will focus on transforming the existing foundation into a coherent, evidence-based, and sustainable adult learning system that links adult education in context of lifelong learning more closely with labour market and social development priorities as well as the promotion of adult learning.

The absence of standardised indicators has likely resulted in greater flexibility for education authorities at the entity, cantonal, and Brčko District levels; however, this flexibility also reflects structural constraints, including limited data systems and weak monitoring capacities at the state level of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Policy frameworks for adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina differ significantly across administrative units. For instance, the Bosnian-Podrinje Canton Goražde and Republika Srpska have each developed dedicated adult learning strategies tailored to their local contexts. A particularly notable example is the Zenica-Doboj Canton, where adult learning is not only addressed through a standalone strategy but is also explicitly integrated into the Development Strategy of the Zenica-Doboj Canton 2021–2027, highlighting its strategic importance. In contrast, in cantons such as West Herzegovina and Una-Sana, Brčko District Bosnia and Herzegovina, adult education is included solely as a component within their broader Cantonal and District Development Strategies for the period 2021–2027, without a separate, detailed policy focus. There are also several local communities, such as the Sarajevo Municipality Centar, that have recognised adult education as a development tool in their strategic and development documents.

In other administrative units, the development of adult education strategic documents remains delayed due to human-resource constraints, affecting strategic planning capacity. Despite expressed commitments to initiate adult learning strategy development, no official timelines, strategic programming cycles, or implementation frameworks have been formally established to guide the process.

Adult Education Strategy in the Republic of Srpska for the period 2021–2031¹⁸

The Strategy was officially adopted on 30 December 2020, by the Government of Republika Srpska (RS), defining adult education as the fourth subsystem of education, alongside preschool, primary, and secondary education - marking a significant advancement in lifelong learning policy planning.

The key objectives focus on strengthening the legal, organisational and operational framework for adult education, developing a flexible and accessible system and ensuring closer alignment with labour market needs through enhanced cooperation with employers and social partners. Although the Strategy builds on the concept of lifelong learning, which is prevalent in the EU context, it does not establish a formal obligation to harmonise with EU

¹⁷ Please see [Annex VIII](#) Evaluation of results achieved: 2014 – 2020 up to date

¹⁸ Adult Education Strategy in the Republic of Srpska for the period 2021–2031

documents - at least not to an extent that makes such an alignment immediately clear or directly recognisable in the text itself. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on improving quality and modernising educational methods and processes. Adult education is recognised as a shared responsibility of government institutions, employers, educational providers, professional associations, and citizens, and as a strategic instrument for advancing productivity, employability, competitiveness, and social inclusion.

Adult Learning Plan 2023 & Register Rulebook in RS

In September 2023, the Government of Republika Srpska adopted the Adult Education Plan for 2023, while the Rulebook on the Method of Maintaining and Managing the Adult Education Register was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska and enacted by the Minister of Education and Culture. The Adult Learning Plan of Republika Srpska for 2023 outlines several key priorities in the field of lifelong learning, including the organisation and delivery of programmes across local communities, securing funding and defining institutional responsibilities, accrediting and monitoring the quality of adult education providers, and implementing formal, non-formal and informal programmes (such as retraining, upskilling and professional development). The Plan also promotes the principles of lifelong learning, inclusiveness, flexibility in programme options, and alignment with European education standards¹⁹.

Strategy for Adult Education of Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Goražde (2018–2022) “Education for the Next Age”

In January 2018, the Government of Bosnian-Podrinje Canton Goražde adopted the ‘Strategy for Adult Education of Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Goražde (2018–2022)’. This strategy aimed to develop the lifelong learning capacities of all citizens by fully integrating adult education into the Canton's education system. Its general goal was to strengthen the foundation for lifelong learning, structured across three strategic focus areas:

- **Institutional development** – Establishing robust frameworks for adult education governance by improving the quality and efficiency of adult learning, strengthening the capacities of adult learning providers (andragogy training, organisational development) and establishing an information system for adult education (database, monitoring & evaluation);
- **Programme expansion** – Increasing access to labour market-oriented programmes, particularly for the unemployed by developing new curricula for adult education tailored to labour-market needs (e.g., IT sector, wood industry);
- **Flexible and innovative learning** – Encouraging diverse, adaptable learning methods to foster active participation in adult learning provision.

To put these goals into practice, the strategy identified 11 measures and 83 detailed actions. The Ministry of Education, Youth, Science, Culture, and Sports of BPK Goražde took the lead in implementing it, partnering with employment services, municipal institutions, employers, civil society and education providers.

This strategy distinguishes itself from those previously discussed by its thoroughness, with an estimated budget of EUR 2.4 million – EUR 1.46 million of which are additional funds, while the rest is covered by in-kind contributions (e.g. facilities, trainers). Created as part of the EU-funded project ‘Ensuring and Improving the Quality of Adult Learning in the Context of Lifelong Learning’ (led by ALDI Association and Džemal Bijedić Vocational School), the strategy also benefited from support from DVV International. Their contributions included quality assurance software, capacity-building for ministry personnel, registration of adult learning providers, and the development of sector-specific curricula, including IT and woodworking. Programmes particularly those led by ALDI, also included holistic programmes such as foreign languages, soft skills, photography, and digital marketing.

Development Strategy of the Zenica-Doboj Canton for the period 2021–2027

Although not explicitly part of the Development Strategy 2021–2027, the Adult Education Plan 2025–2027 of Zenica-Doboj Canton aligns fully with its goals on improving education services according to labour market needs. Key areas like lifelong learning and adult competencies are shared priorities. Implementation plans from the Pedagogical Institute, and others treat adult education as part of the broader strategic framework supporting the Canton's vision.

The **Adult Education Plan 2025–2027 of Zenica-Doboj Canton** aims to improve adult education availability, quality, and relevance by aligning programmes with labour market needs, enhancing social inclusion, strengthening institutions, and promoting lifelong learning addressed through following key objectives:

¹⁹ https://erp.slglasnik.org/erp?kategorija=155&namjenjeno_za=RS&utm

- enable adults to complete primary and secondary education;
- develop and implement programmes tailored to the needs of the local labour market;
- increase participation of vulnerable groups in education (the unemployed, women, Roma, persons with disabilities);
- strengthen the capacity of institutions and professional staff involved in adult education;
- promote the concept of lifelong learning within local communities.

The proposed measures include:

- develop new adult education programmes, particularly in occupations that are in high demand;
- regularly publish public calls and provide financial support through the cantonal budget and donor funds;
- introduce monitoring and evaluation systems for implemented programmes;
- actively cooperate with employment services and employers to co-finance and adapt training;
- implement promotional campaigns at the cantonal and municipal levels.

The document addresses updating the education database (for adults without a primary education), issuing programme calls, accrediting courses, staff training, outcome evaluation, and education promotion, with a strong focus on aligning the education system with labour market needs and promoting lifelong learning. The Adult Education Plan of the Zenica–Doboj Canton builds on the Law on adult education, which stipulates that programmes for completing primary education at a later stage are free of charge, and in this context, only this type of programme is financed.

The Development Strategy of Brčko District Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2021–2027 explicitly identifies adult learning and lifelong learning as one of its strategic priorities within the broader education and skills development framework. The strategy aims to improve access to quality education and training across all age groups, with a focus on addressing labour market needs, promoting skills development, and supporting social inclusion. Although adult learning is formally recognised at the strategic level, recent analyses note that implementation remains limited, particularly in terms of regulatory frameworks for adult learning, recognition of prior learning, and sustainable financing mechanisms.

In the Development Strategy of West Herzegovina Canton (WHC) 2021-2027, adult learning is implicitly included under the broader strategic goal “Socially Responsible Canton,” particularly through Priority 2.2: Increase the quality and competitiveness of education and comply education with labour market needs, which aims to modernize education, strengthen inclusive practices, and improve alignment between education programmes and employment demand.²⁰

Additionally, there are some concrete policy steps: in October 2021 the WHC Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport initiated a ‘Basic Andragogy Training’ programme for teachers of adult learning, providing publicly recognised certificates and developing andragogical skills in understanding adult learning styles, experience, and needs. Through these measures, the WHC’s strategy shows recognition that adult learning is part of building education systems better suited to LLL and social inclusion.

Adult Education in Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2021–2023

The ERP 2021–2023 acknowledges adult learning as a tool to address high unemployment and low activity rates. It proposes adult training, professional development, and education - especially for women - to improve labour market integration. However, the ERP still lacks mechanisms to full integrating adult learning into broader economic and education planning. The ERP 2023–2025 outlines a comprehensive commitment to strengthening adult learning across Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a focus on legislative harmonisation, labour market alignment, and system modernisation. It promotes the harmonisation of adult learning laws at entity, canton and Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina levels in accordance with the ‘Principles and Standards’ and the Strategic Platform for Adult Education, aiming to align the national system more closely with EU reference frameworks. The ERP further prioritizes the expansion of adult learning opportunities, particularly in the areas of retraining, upskilling, and supplementary

²⁰ Development Strategy of West Herzegovina Canton for the Period 2021-2027, WHC. Strategic goal 2, Priority 2.2: ‘Increase the quality and competitiveness of education and comply education with labour market needs.’

professional education, with a strong emphasis on improving access for women, the long-term unemployed, and adults with low or outdated qualifications.

To ensure stronger alignment with labour market needs, the ERP proposes closer coordination between education institutions and employment services and as well as the design of training for in-demand professions. Measures are also planned to enhance quality assurance, including the development of adult learning curricula, accreditation procedures, and the establishment of robust provider registries. Finally, the Programme seeks to operationalize the Bosnia and Herzegovina Qualifications Framework, strengthen validation of prior learning (VPL), and enable broader validation of non-formal and informal learning - thereby promoting more flexible and inclusive learning pathways for adult learners.

The comparison between the ERP 2021–2023 and the more recent ERP 2025–2027 clearly reveals a regression in the recognition and strategic positioning of adult learning within Bosnia and Herzegovina economic planning framework. While the ERP 2021–2023 at least acknowledged adult learning as a tool to enhance employability, facilitate the retraining of the unemployed, and support the integration of vulnerable groups positioning it within the broader context of labour market and human capital reforms, the ERP 2025–2027 entirely omits any concrete reference to this segment of the education system. This omission disrupts continuity with earlier strategic commitments and overlooks the fact that the revision process of the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education was officially launched in 2025, creating additional challenges for future strategic planning and the establishment of effective multisectoral cooperation, particularly with the economic sector, thereby reducing the potential for a systemic alignment of adult education with labour-market needs and partnerships with industry. It points to a significant disconnect between sectoral policies and macroeconomic planning.

The absence of adult learning from the ERP 2025–2027 further undermines Bosnia and Herzegovina's ability to respond systematically to the growing need for reskilling and upskilling workforce, an essential requirement in the context of the green and digital transitions, as well as in efforts to access EU Growth Plan funding for the Western Balkans. The transformation of the mining sector alone, including mines and thermal power plants, is complex over the long term and entails high costs, which can be partially offset through investments. The reform²¹ assumes the retraining of 20% of workers in coal regions and the employment of 40% in new sectors in order to address job losses resulting from the transition.

Adult Education in Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2025–2027

It was unanimously adopted by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers in March 2025 and submitted to the European Commission. It serves as a strategic document for coordinating economic policy reforms to meet the EU accession criteria, improve competitiveness, generate job opportunities, and support social inclusion.

The European Commission's assessment of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Economic Reform Programme (ERP) highlights priority areas for reforms in the Human Capital domain:

- strengthening coordination of employment policies via inter-ministerial mechanisms, including the development and rollout of a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan
- establishing skills needs monitoring and forecasting system to better align education, training, and reskilling/upskilling initiatives with labour market demands
- improving access to early childhood education and care (ECEC), especially targeting vulnerable populations and rural areas

Employment Strategies and adult learning

Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved measurable progress in aligning adult education and employment policies with European Union priorities in the field of lifelong learning, particularly with regard to the development of systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), curriculum modernisation, and the expansion of reskilling and upskilling programmes. However, Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks a unified overarching employment strategy, as employment policies and Active Labour Market Measures (ALMMs) are implemented separately in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and the Brčko District, leading to fragmented delivery and quality assurance.

²¹ Economic Reform Programme 2025-2027 of BiH <https://ekonsultacije.gov.ba/legislativeactivities/details/126578>

Adult learning measures - such as retraining, occupational skills training, counselling, and financial incentives - mainly target the long-term unemployed, women, young people, and persons with disabilities. Although laws allow free training for unemployed individuals, this is largely confined to programmes under the Employment Institutes. Retraining is most frequent for individuals with lower and medium qualifications (ISCED 2–3), while non-formal learning often serves those with higher education levels.

Despite progress guided by strategic documents such as the Bosnia and Herzegovina Strategic Platform and RS Strategy for Adult Education 2021–2031, adult learning remains underfunded and unevenly implemented. Institutional capacity, coordination, and quality assurance mechanisms are still weak, while recognition and validation processes are not yet operational.

Quality assurance frameworks are only partially aligned with CEDEFOP/EQAVET standards, lacking measurable indicators, external evaluation, and systematic feedback mechanisms. Achieving closer EU alignment will require stronger coordination, dedicated funding, and harmonised standards to enable adult learning to become a driver of digital and green transitions, workforce adaptability, and inclusive growth.

Reform Agenda of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2024 – 2027

As part of its participation in the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans 2024–2027, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a National Reform Agenda in September 2025. This Agenda serves as a strategic framework for the socio-economic reforms required to access financial support from the EU's Reform and Growth Facility, amounting to a potential €6 billion for the Western Balkans, of which Bosnia and Herzegovina was initially eligible for approximately €1.085 billion.

The Reform Agenda of Bosnia and Herzegovina focuses on four priority pillars identified by the European Union: the green and digital transition, private sector development and improvement of the business environment, human capital development and retention, and the strengthening of the rule of law alongside public administration reform.

Despite political delays and coordination challenges, the Agenda was adopted and is now the foundation for accessing funding under the Growth Plan. However, due to late submission and incomplete alignment with EU recommendations, Bosnia and Herzegovina's indicative allocation was reduced by 10%, lowering the available amount to EUR 976.6 million. Due to political disagreements within the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the adoption of the Reform Agenda - an essential document for accessing funding under the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans 2024–2027- was hindered, resulting in a reduction in the funds allocated to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Reform Agenda is directly linked to the disbursement of EU funds and requires full finalization and harmonization with the European Commission's guidance, effective institutional coordination between the state and entity levels, and the timely implementation of concrete reforms accompanied by measurable indicators across the four thematic pillars.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina's Reform Agenda, the Human Capital pillar includes:

- three components – likely referring to sub-domains such as education & training, active labour market policies, and employment services or youth inclusion.
- three reforms, eleven steps, and fifty-three activities – while these numbers are often cited in national reform frameworks but are still not publicly accessible documents.

Although the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2021–2023 acknowledged AL as a tool for upskilling the unemployed and increasing employability - particularly for women and low-qualified adults, WHILE ERP 2025–2027 fails to mention AL at all - marking a regression in strategic positioning and undermining the role of AL in labour market transformation, social inclusion, and EU integration. This policy disconnect is particularly striking given that 2025 marks the official start of the revision of the national Strategic Platform for AL.

Strategic Planning for Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina – New Cycle Launched

The Working Group (WG) for the revision of the Adult Education Strategic Platform, established by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, was formed with the aim of defining the strategic directions for the development of the adult education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina through an expert and participatory process, building on the previous strategic cycle and taking into account recommendations for systemic improvements. On 2 September 2025 the Working Group (WG) held its first meeting on 2 September 2025²² as part of a joint initiative by the MoCA of Bosnia and Herzegovina and

²² <https://www.dvv-international.ba/news/article/revision-process-of-the-strategic-platform-for-the-development-of-adult-education-in-the-context-of-lifelong-learning-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-has-begun?utm>

DVV International – Office for Bosnia and Herzegovina, marking the launch of a new Strategic Platform for the Development of AL in the context of LLL.

This inter-institutional and cross-sectoral working group is developing strategic guidelines for the next adult education policy cycle, building on the 2014–2020 Strategic Platform, which, in addition to the existing objectives that have not been achieved in the Strategic Platform 2014–2020, will also include objectives related to EU integration and the promotion of adult learning. The group brings together representatives from sectoral ministries, employment institutes, and relevant education agencies across Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of strengthening cross-sectoral alignment and introducing a more systemic policy approach.

The report Information on the Implementation of the Strategic Platform²³ pointed to a limited level of achievement of the defined objectives, which were highly ambitious for a relatively short timeframe — particularly considering that this was the first strategic document adopted in the field. Although pioneering in its reform vision, the document set a developmental agenda that exceeded the institutional and human-resource capacities available at the time, ultimately constraining its full implementation reach. In light of these constraints, and to ensure strategic continuity and further systemic development, a decision was taken to transfer previously defined but unfulfilled objectives into a new strategic policy document. The new document is designed to reflect the next policy programming cycle and to align more formally with key recommendations and requirements linked to the country's EU accession process. It is also being drafted in response to strategic commitments for Bosnia and Herzegovina's path toward the European Union, integrating elements that will strengthen the systemic alignment of adult education with labour-market needs and cooperation with the economic sector.

The initial session focused on systemic challenges, roles of stakeholders, and thematic priorities such as institutional development, quality assurance, recognition of prior learning, and sustainable financing.

Legal framework

Until the adoption of adult education laws in all administrative units in Bosnia and Herzegovina - a process completed in October 2019 - the field of adult education did not have a distinct and comprehensive legal framework. During this period, its development and implementation took place within the general provisions of existing framework education laws, relying on normative–framework and strategic documents, including the “Principles and Standards of Adult Education” (2014) and the Adult Education Strategic Platform (2014–2020)^{24,25,26,27,28}. At the subnational level, Republika Srpska operates under the Adult Education Law adopted in 2021²⁹ superseding the previous 2009 framework and complementary legislation from 2011. and has adopted an Adult Education Plan for 2023 together with a Rulebook on the method and management of the Adult Education Register. The Government of Republika Srpska adopted the 2023 Adult Education Plan alongside a Rulebook governing the management of the Adult Education Provider Register. The Institute for Adult Education of the RS is currently working on amendments. A wide set of by-laws regulates provider selection and registration, issuance of public certificates, examination commissions and procedures, employer verification for practical training, mandatory adult-education records, and qualification requirements for educators. While the 2021 law introduced a provider register and formal oversight mechanisms, policy reviews by European Training Foundation and civil-society analyses by DVV International identify ongoing systemic challenges: fragmented operational implementation, highly decentralised administrative responsibilities without strong coordination and accountability mechanisms, predominance of formalistic and rigid programme structures over modular and flexible learning pathways, limited institutional capacity for quality monitoring — particularly locally — and primarily declarative, rather than systematic, labour-market and economic-sector cooperation. This indicates the need for clearer strategic cycles, stronger provider accountability, greater programme flexibility, deeper EU-framework alignment, and structured economic-sector partnerships in future adult-learning reforms.

²³ <https://www.mcp.gov.ba/Content/Read/obrazovanje-dokumenti>

²⁴ Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Official Gazette of BiH*, No. 18/03.

²⁵ Framework L

aw on Secondary Vocational Education and Training in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Official Gazette of BiH*, No. 63/08.

²⁶ Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Official Gazette of BiH*, Nos. 59/07 and 59/09.

²⁷ Council of Ministers of BiH, Principles and standards in the field of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Official Gazeta of BiH*, No 39/14.

²⁸ Council of Ministers of BiH, Strategic Platform for the development of adult education in the context of lifelong learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the period 2014–2020. *Official Gazette of BiH*, No 96/14.

²⁹ Law on Adult Education of Republika Srpska, *Official Gazette of the RS*, No 111/21.

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in accordance with the constitutional arrangement and the applicable legislation, competences in the field of education, including adult education, are divided between the federal and cantonal levels of government. The federal level, through the competent ministry, has a coordinating and expert role, particularly with regard to planning, policy alignment, the development of general standards, and the provision of professional support in the field of education. Cantonal education authorities, within their constitutional and legal competences, play a key role in the regulation, organisation and financing of adult education. This includes the adoption of regulations, the approval and supervision of adult education providers, and the planning and implementation of programmes in line with the needs of local communities and labour markets. While this constitutional and institutional allocation of competences allows adult education policies to be tailored to the specificities of the cantonal context, in practice it has led to differences among cantons in the pace of adoption of secondary legislation, implementation timelines, and the degree of operationalisation of certain measures. These differences primarily reflect varying administrative capacities, policy priorities, and stages of development of adult education systems at the cantonal level. In particular, Posavina Canton has not yet adopted the Rulebook on the content, form, method of maintaining and safeguarding andragogical documentation; the Rulebook on the conditions and methods of adult training to address urgent labour market needs; the Rulebook on professional supervision of adult education organisers; and the Rulebook on procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as well as previously acquired knowledge and skills. Central Bosnia Canton lacks the adoption of several by-laws, including the Rulebook on registration in the Register of adult education providers and on the form, content and method of maintaining the Register and deletion from it; the Rulebook on the content, form, method of maintaining and safeguarding andragogical documentation; the Rulebook on the conditions and methods of adult training to address urgent labour market needs; the Rulebook on the procedure for approving the delivery of formal programmes; the Rulebook on the title, content and form of certificates for formal and non-formal adult education; and the Rulebook on the professional qualifications of adult education programme implementers. In Herzegovina–Neretva Canton, it is necessary to adopt the Rulebook on the conditions and methods for acquiring andragogical competences; the Rulebook on standards and norms in adult education; and the Rulebook on the conditions and methods of adult training to address urgent labour market needs. In Canton 10, the adoption of the Rulebook on the conditions and methods of adult training to address urgent labour market needs is still pending. In Sarajevo Canton, the Rulebook on the conditions and methods for acquiring andragogical competences has not yet been adopted. In addition, an analysis of the re-accreditation process for adult education providers and programmes is needed, particularly with regard to the independent accreditation body established by the Ministry of Education of Sarajevo Canton.

Across all administrative units in Bosnia and Herzegovina, secondary legislation regulating procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is still lacking, as is the integration of provisions on the introduction of an information system for documentation and record-keeping into the Rulebooks governing the content, form, maintenance and safeguarding of andragogical documentation. Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina has its own AL Law (Official Gazette BD 50/18, 2018) with accompanying by-laws issued via the District's Official Gazette.

As of September 2025, key gaps remain, including incomplete harmonisation across Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina cantons, and uneven or missing by-laws especially for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL).

Overview of relevant legal framework

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a ministry of education at the state level, or a single state-level law on adult education. However, at the state level, a normative - framework document entitled 'Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina' - has been adopted, which serves as a common reference framework for the development and alignment of adult education policies across different levels of government. Although all administrative units in Bosnia and Herzegovina have adopted AL laws, weak coordination and underdeveloped mechanisms for quality assurance, financing, and data collection hinder progress. Adult learning policies are mostly donor-driven, although adult learning is recognised as a key part of the education system, supporting lifelong learning, employability, and social inclusion. An overview of legal frameworks for adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina in all Bosnia and Herzegovina administrative units (2013–2024), is enclosed as [Annex III](#).

Legal and Institutional Developments in Adult Learning across Bosnia and Herzegovina

Between 2009 and 2019, all administrative units of Bosnia and Herzegovina — including the ten cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District — adopted or amended laws regulating adult learning, establishing a comprehensive legal basis for formal, non-formal, and informal learning. After 2019, some education authorities have embarked on amending existing laws or adopting new legislation. The legal

frameworks share common objectives: improving employability, social inclusion, and lifelong learning opportunities through quality assurance, institutional regulation, and labour-market alignment. Most laws define conditions for establishing and accrediting adult learning providers, maintain registers of institutions and employers offering practical training, and specify standards for programme design, educator qualifications, and certification procedures. Amendments adopted between 2018 and 2022, particularly in Tuzla, Sarajevo, and Central Bosnia Cantons, introduced stronger quality assurance mechanisms, external evaluation, and information systems for monitoring providers and programmes. Several cantons (e.g. Una-Sana, Zenica-Doboj, and BPC Goražde) developed strategic and annual AL plans, ensuring coordinated implementation and financing shared among authorities, employers, and participants. While the legal frameworks are now largely harmonised and aligned with EU and lifelong learning principles, challenges remain in full operationalization, particularly where by-laws and enforcement mechanisms are still under development, such as in Brčko District and some smaller cantons.

Law on Adult Education in Republika Srpska (2021)

The latest law was adopted on 25 November 2021 and entered into force on 14 December 2021. This law replaced earlier provisions from 2013, 2017, 2018 and represents a comprehensive update of the adult learning framework in the entity.

The law regulates the organisation, structure, and functioning of adult learning as an integral part of the education system in Republika Srpska. Adult learning encompasses education, training, and professional development for adults.

The law emphasises that adult learning is a shared responsibility of the Republika Srpska government, local governments, employers, employees, associations, educational and scientific institutions, and individuals.

Types of adult learning

- Formal education includes officially recognised programmes adapted to adult learners.
- Non-formal education is delivered through specialized organizations, language schools, training centres, etc.
- Informal learning covers self-directed learning and acquiring knowledge outside formal or non-formal institutions.

Programmes and providers

- The Institute for Adult Education develops and approves publicly valid training programmes.
- Providers of non-formal adult education must be registered in the official register, have a valid operating license, maintain the appropriate documentation and ensure compliance.

Laws on Adult Education in the cantons of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)

The analysis of adult learning laws across the FBiH reveals a highly fragmented legislative and implementation landscape. While all cantons formally recognise adult learning as part of the lifelong learning system (please see detailed overview of adopted laws in [Annex III](#)), the depth and clarity of legal provisions vary widely. More advanced cantons such as Sarajevo and Tuzla have established comprehensive frameworks that include accreditation procedures, quality assurance mechanisms, and strategic planning instruments. However, within the broader institutional context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, no administrative unit has yet developed comprehensive secondary legislation, established operational implementation structures, or put in place functional mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). These inconsistencies hinder the development of a coherent, interoperable adult education system, limit the portability of qualifications across administrative units, and reduce the system's overall capacity to respond effectively to labour market and social inclusion priorities. Harmonisation of legal standards, recognition procedures, and quality frameworks remains a key priority for advancing adult education in FBiH.

Despite notable progress in establishing AL laws across Bosnia and Herzegovina, the legal and regulatory framework remains fragmented, uneven, and misaligned with core EU standards. While most jurisdictions formally recognize adult learning in its various forms, significant disparities persist in implementation, particularly regarding accreditation, quality assurance, and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The absence of harmonised standards and limited operational mechanisms for validation, and weak coordination across administrative levels hinder system-wide coherence and learner (participants) mobility. Moreover, bureaucratic barriers, underfunded institutions, and insufficient stakeholder participation restrict access, innovation, and inclusion - especially for disadvantaged groups. To align more closely with EU practices, Bosnia and Herzegovina must strengthen inter-institutional coordination,

invest in capacity-building, operationalise recognition procedures, and embed quality assurance and learner-centred approaches at all levels.

Adult learning policies

Bosnia and Herzegovina's adult learning system is guided by eight interrelated policy areas, originally framed under the Strategic Platform for Adult Education (2014–2020) and now being updated with a timeframe yet to be determined. While legal and institutional foundations have been established in most areas, implementation remains fragmented, reflecting the Bosnia and Herzegovina decentralised governance. Coordination, financing, and data systems are still evolving, and many policies rely on donor-driven initiatives rather than systemic national frameworks.

Although the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning for 2014–2020 established an important common reference framework and strategic directions for the development of the lifelong learning system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the limited extent of its implementation, as well as the fact that the document has expired, point to the need for its revision and adaptation to contemporary needs and priorities. In the absence of an updated strategic framework, its current role is primarily orientational, while the further development of a coherent and inclusive lifelong learning system depends on the adoption of a new or revised strategic document, supported by stronger implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, the document 'Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina,' although adopted in 2014, continues to serve as an important normative–framework and reference document, particularly in the context of the complex governance system of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It established common principles, a shared terminological framework, and minimum quality standards, which have served as a basis for the development of legislative and strategic solutions at lower levels of government. However, given that the document was adopted more than a decade ago, and given the significant developments in European lifelong learning policies, the advancement of systems for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), the digitalisation of education, and evolving EU priorities in the fields of employment and skills, its role in 2025 is primarily orientational and referential. In this regard, the ongoing revision process of the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education represents an opportunity to further operationalise and update the principles and standards, and to link them with new reform and strategic documents, including the Bosnia and Herzegovina Reform Agenda and the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, while strengthening implementation and monitoring mechanisms at all levels of government.

Since 2020, these policy areas have evolved through new strategic initiatives and international cooperation (notably with the EU, ETF, and DVV International), reflecting gradual institutional strengthening but also persistent fragmentation in implementation. The following policy areas represent the core pillars guiding adult learning reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their current status as of 2025.

Strengthening Governance and Coordination

The policy on Strengthening Governance and Coordination aims to improve cooperation and policy harmonisation across Bosnia and Herzegovina's education system, divided among the state, entities, cantons, and the Brčko District. The Strategic Platform for Adult Education (2014–2020) identified weak coordination and limited institutional capacity as major barriers to system development (MoCA & DVV, 2014). Although the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) has a coordinating role, it lacks executive authority to enforce policy coherence (Eurydice, 2022). Progress has been made through the establishment of a Working Group for the revision of the Strategic Platform under MoCA initiative with the support of DVV International, uniting stakeholders from all administrative levels (DVV International, 2025). New coordination bodies, such as the Council for Adult Education of Sarajevo Canton (2025), the Adult Education Council of the Zenica–Doboj Canton (2018) and earlier the Institute for Adult Education of Republika Srpska, mark a shift toward stronger institutional linkages, although full coordination among competent educational authorities remains an ongoing challenge (ETF, 2024; RESPA, 2021). At the state level, a Working Group for the Revision of the Strategic Platform for Adult Learning was established in 2025 bringing together representatives only from cantons and Brčko District Bosnia and Herzegovina to coordinate strategic planning. The Ministry of Civil Affairs invited all relevant institutions from RS to join. Until December 2025, although all working materials for the revision of the Strategic Platform were sent to all institutions from Republika Srpska, none of them appointed members of the Working Group. The National Coordinator for Adult Learning (EPALE)³⁰, operating through the Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education, serves as a focal point for policy coordination among Bosnia and Herzegovina administrative

³⁰ "Principi i standardi u oblasti obrazovanja odraslih u Bosni i Hercegovini" (Službeni glasnik BiH, broj 39/14)

units. These developments indicate growth of institutional capacity and improved mechanisms for coordination across governance levels, though full harmonization remains a continuing challenge.

Expanding Financial Support and Sustainability

The policy on Expanding Financial Support and Sustainability (although still in the form of a proposal) aims to establish stable, multi-source funding mechanisms for adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reducing reliance on project-based and donor-driven initiatives. Although most entity and cantonal laws on AL refer to shared financial responsibility among public authorities, employers, and learners³¹ and local communities, in practice, systematic and predictable financing remains absent. No dedicated budget lines exist at the state or entity level, and funding is typically ad hoc or externally sourced³².

Adult learning programmes are implemented by registered AL providers in accordance with the respective laws. Some of the programmes are supported by international organisations, with limited government co-financing or sustainability planning. The UNDP Human Development Report (2020) highlights persistent inequalities in funding and access, particularly affecting low-skilled and rural populations. The Strategic Platform for Adult Education (2014–2020) recognises the need for an integrated financial framework but its implementation has lagged. Future priorities include introducing public co-financing schemes, incentives for employer-based training, and transparent allocation mechanisms at entity and cantonal levels, as recommended by the European Training Foundation³³ (ETF, 2024). Official financial statistics and reports on education expenditure (such as the Education Finance Statistics Report prepared by the Agency for Statistics) do not provide insight into the amounts spent on adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is no specific budget code for adult-education expenditure, making it difficult to determine from budgets what share of funding is allocated for this purpose. In addition, there are no public calls for grants or dedicated funds for adult-education projects issued by the competent ministries. Determining the level of spending on adult education by reviewing the annual reports of the relevant ministries is a highly demanding task, as expenditure is often reported only in aggregate amounts and, for example, does not include information on the age of beneficiaries. Annual reports by the ministries of education do not disaggregate data for adult education, nor do official statistics record the number of adult learners in primary or secondary education as a separate category³⁴.

Broadening Access and Inclusion

The policy on *Broadening Access and Inclusion* seeks to ensure that all adults in Bosnia and Herzegovina regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or socio-economic status have equal access to learning opportunities throughout their lives. Although this principle is enshrined in the Strategic Platform, practical implementation remains limited and uneven across entities and cantons. Adult learning continues to focus largely on the unemployed and those without completed formal education, while participation among vulnerable groups particularly women, minorities, and persons with disabilities - remains low.

Efforts to improve inclusiveness have been supported through initiatives led by DVV International, UNDP, and local authorities³⁵, promoting community-based and flexible learning programmes. However, these remain fragmented and donor-dependent, with little systematic state funding or coordination³⁶. Strengthening inter-sectoral collaboration between education, employment, and social institutions, along with developing targeted subsidies and outreach mechanisms, is essential for transforming this policy into a coherent, sustainable framework for inclusive adult learning. To shift from goal to reality, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to invest in outreach, tailor adult learning offers to diverse learners, and ensure that inclusion becomes a measurable component of adult-learning policy.

Enhancing Quality and Accreditation of Programmes

The policy area of enhancing quality assurance and accreditation of adult education programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina is formally established and is progressing, with legal bases and accreditation systems in place. Bosnia

³¹ Law on Adult Education of Tuzla Canton, *Official Gazette* No. 9/15, 5/22

³² European Association for the Education of Adults. (2022). *Country Report: Bosnia and Herzegovina*. EAEA Country Reports 2022. <https://countryreport.eaea.org/>

³³ European Training Foundation (ETF). (2024). *Policies for Lifelong Learning – Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Turin: ETF.

³⁴ Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Information on the Implementation of the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Period 2014–2020*. (Oct. 2023). Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

³⁵ UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2020. *Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene*. New York.

³⁶ UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), CONFINTEA VII *National Report on the Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education: Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2022.

and Herzegovina quality assurance (QA) in adult education is formally anchored in legislation and supported by defined standards for programme structure (including lesson-hour requirements and theory–practice ratios) and educator competencies, yet its practical implementation remains constrained by systemic challenges, as the QA system relies predominantly on formal education institutions, while many non-formal and broader adult learning activities remain outside provider registers, and comprehensive public data systems for monitoring accredited providers and programmes are not fully operational or universally publicly accessible, leading to limited systematic oversight, complex accreditation procedures, and comparatively low adult participation rates, particularly reflecting uneven local institutional capacity to consistently implement QA functions³⁷. Cantonal and entity-level laws—such as those of Sarajevo Canton (2020) and Tuzla Canton (2022) introduced regular external evaluations and official registers of accredited providers. Despite this progress, implementation remains uneven across jurisdictions, and many non-formal programmes, especially those led by NGOs and companies, operate outside the accreditation system, which limits recognition and oversight. Current reforms aim to harmonise quality standards and strengthen institutional capacity for monitoring and re-accreditation. Supported by DVV International and the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA), these efforts seek to create a coherent, transparent, and quality-assured framework aligned with European lifelong learning standards³⁸. However, operationalisation is still partial, quality assurance is unevenly applied, and a fully functioning, system-wide adult learning accreditation landscape is yet to be achieved. To meet the objectives, further work is needed in expanding accredited provider coverage, ensuring that adult learning programmes (formal, non-formal and informal) are subject to quality criteria, and linking accreditation directly to labour-market relevance and recognition of outcomes.³⁹

Validation of non-formal education and informal learning (VNFIL)

Bosnia and Herzegovina's legal framework formally enables recognition and validation of prior learning (VPL)⁴⁰, including competences from non-formal and informal settings, but implementation remains limited. Existing laws mainly refer to exams as the only validation method, which diverges from CEDEFOP's European Guidelines and the EU Council Recommendations on VNFIL. The fragmented governance system, absence of accredited centres, and weak quality assurance further hinder progress. Nevertheless, VNFIL is a strategic reform priority under the Strategic Platform for Adult Education (2014–2020) and the EU-funded 'EU for Vocational Education and Skills Recognition' project (EU4VET, 2025). In 2025, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Manual for the Implementation of VNFIL and a Training Programme for 150 practitioners⁴¹. In parallel with capacity-building efforts, the piloting of the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL/VPL) processes is envisaged in selected vocational schools at four locations (Sarajevo Canton, Una-Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina), in order to test procedures, tools, and institutional arrangements in a real-world setting. The pilot phase aims to identify implementation challenges and generate recommendations for the potential scaling-up of the system. In addition, a Strategy and Action Plan for a VNFIL communication campaign has been developed and presented, aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the process among both professional stakeholders and the wider public, and at strengthening trust in the system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning as an integral component of lifelong learning policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Develop standardized procedures for recognizing knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning and link them to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Qualifications Framework (BQF).⁴² The VNFIL policy area in Bosnia and Herzegovina is emerging and shows a promising alignment with EU frameworks and donor-supported projects. The presence of EU-backed VET initiatives focused on VNFIL marks a positive step. However, full implementation is not yet in place: scalable procedures, institutional capacity, cooperation across jurisdictions and meaningful recognition of non-formal/informal learning still need to be strengthened.

³⁷ Amina Isanović Hadžiomerović, Andreas Pfanzelt, Hannah Pfanzelt, *Study on adult learning and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022*. - Sarajevo: Institut za međunarodnu saradnju Njemačkog saveza visokih narodnih škola - DVV International (Ured za Bosnu i Hercegovinu), 2022.

³⁸ Laws on Adult Education of Sarajevo Canton (2020 Amendments) and Tuzla Canton (2022 Amendments, ISKOOM database).

³⁹ European Training Foundation (ETF) (2023). *Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training in the Western Balkans and Türkiye: Regional Report*. Turin.

⁴⁰ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the official term used is 'Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) (validacija prethodnog učenja), as defined in the Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education (Official Gazette of BiH, No. 39/14) and related acts. In EU and international contexts (ETF, CEDEFOP, GIZ, DVV International), the equivalent term "Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL)" is used. Both refer to the same process, with VPL being the nationally adopted term and VNFIL its internationally harmonised equivalent.

⁴¹ Although a positive step forward, the document remains advisory in nature and lacks a clear legislative framework for the formal recognition of the VNFIL process within Bosnia and Herzegovina's education system. Without a legal basis (at entity and cantonal levels), it is difficult to ensure the system's sustainability and credibility, as well as to establish clear funding mechanisms, strong labour market integration, external quality assurance, and consistent institutional coordination.

⁴² Action Plan for the Development and Implementation of the BiH Qualifications Framework (Council of Ministers of BiH, 2015); UNESCO UIL RVA Country Profile, 2021.

Besides the very limited number of human resources dealing with AL in the responsible institutions of the different administrative units, there are also significant challenges to be addressed in terms of the level of knowledge and expertise available concerning VPL arrangements. This is noted both at the level of decision-makers and, experts, and potential implementers. There is also the additional challenge of establishing a sound collaboration with employers and professional associations, in order to better address their needs and supply the labour market with qualified and competent workers.

Aligning Adult Learning with Labour Market Needs

Bosnia and Herzegovina aims to align AL with labour market needs by promoting flexible, short-term, and modular training programmes designed in cooperation with employers to enhance employability and competitiveness. Implementation has advanced through the Strategic Platform, cantonal reforms introducing modular and employer-oriented approaches, and initiatives such as the EU4VET Project (2023–2026) and DVV International programmes, which support curriculum modernization, occupational standards, and dual-learning and reskilling schemes. These efforts indicate gradual progress toward a demand-driven adult learning system that strengthens cooperation between education providers, employers, and public employment services. However, participation in continuing vocational education and training (CVET) remains low, and implementation varies significantly across entities and cantons. Limited institutional coordination and fragmented governance structures hinder consistent policy execution and system-wide alignment with labour market needs. Overall, while promising initiatives exist, adult learning policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina remain fragmented, reflecting uneven progress and coordination gaps that constrain their full effectiveness.

Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems

Bosnia and Herzegovina is developing policies to strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and data systems in adult learning, aiming to establish comprehensive databases and information systems that track providers, learners, and learning outcomes across entities and cantons, to support evidence-based policy and planning. Tools such as ISKOOM⁴³ mark tangible progress toward more systematic data collection and monitoring. However, implementation remains uneven and fragmented, with limited scale, incomplete coverage, and weak integration between data and policy decision-making. The absence of a harmonised national framework and consistent indicators across jurisdictions continues to impede coherence and comparability. Overall, while initial structures are emerging, the system for monitoring, evaluation, and data in adult learning remains fragmented, requiring stronger coordination, unified standards, and full participation from all entities and cantons to achieve comprehensive and effective governance. The policy for strengthening monitoring, evaluation and data systems in adult learning is formally emerging in Bosnia and Herzegovina: tools such as ISKOOM represent concrete steps forward⁴⁴. To date, only four administrative units in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Tuzla, Una-Sana and Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Goražde) have taken over the implementation of the ISKOOM information system.

Promoting Lifelong Learning Culture and Awareness

The policy on Promoting Lifelong Culture and Awareness aims to foster a society-wide understanding of learning as a continuous process that supports employability, personal growth, and social inclusion. Although the Strategic Platform established LLL as a guiding principle, implementation has been limited, and AL remains widely perceived as remedial training for the unemployed (MoCA & DVV, 2014; EAEA, 2022). The ongoing revision of the Strategic Platform, led by DVV International and the MoCA, seeks to integrate LLL more firmly into education, employment, and social policies (DVV International, 2025). Awareness-raising initiatives by UIL, UNDP, and civil society actors have increased visibility but remain project-based and fragmented (UIL, 2022; UNDP, 2020). A coordinated, well-financed communication strategy is needed to build a sustainable and inclusive lifelong learning culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, AL remains virtually invisible in national public discourse, with minimal efforts dedicated to awareness-raising, learner guidance, or promotion of lifelong learning culture. Inclusive AL programming for persons with disabilities is especially limited, with few adapted materials or accessible environments. Efforts to integrate green and digital skills into adult learning - critical for future workforce resilience - are scattered and predominantly donor-driven, lacking an overarching strategy. Projects such as GIZ's 'Skills for Jobs' or CBAM-specific training remain isolated initiatives, unsupported by systemic quality standards or pathways to recognition through micro-credentials. In

⁴³ Regulation on the Information System for Controlling and Monitoring Adult Education - ISKOOM, *Službene novine Tuzlanskog kantona* [Official Gazette of Tuzla Canton], No. 5/22.

⁴⁴ OECD (2022) *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2022/03/oecd-reviews-of-evaluation-and-assessment-in-education-bosnia-and-herzegovina_20acd65c/a669e5f3-en.pdf

this regard, the DVV, in cooperation with authorities from five administrative units, has started the creation of the Accredited Adult Education Programmes (APOO) platform, which will at the same time consolidate all data and also have a promotional role.

These priority policy areas apply to the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina, but are implemented within its decentralised constitutional structure. While the MoCA of Bosnia and Herzegovina provides coordination and alignment with EU frameworks, the responsibility for education policy lies with RS, the ten cantons of the FBiH and the BD Bosnia and Herzegovina. As such, the realisation of adult learning priorities depends on effective cooperation and harmonisation among all administrative levels. In sum, Bosnia and Herzegovina’s adult learning policies are conceptually aligned with European frameworks, but implementation gaps persist across jurisdictions.

Youth Guarantee in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Although the Youth Guarantee is primarily an employment and youth policy rather than an adult learning policy, it indirectly supports adult learning objectives by promoting early re-skilling, training, and continued education among young adults entering the workforce. As of 2025, the MoCA is leading the development of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, in cooperation with the ILO and co-funded by the European Commission, supported by ETF, to ensure young people gain access to employment, education, or training within four months of unemployment or leaving education. This initiative is closely linked to AL and LLL priorities, as it promotes early engagement in continuous skills development and supports the transition from education to work. By integrating reskilling, training, and apprenticeship components, the Youth Guarantee strengthens pathways for lifelong learning and employability, complementing Bosnia and Herzegovina broader LLL framework. Progress has been achieved through the creation of state, entity, and Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina working groups and pilot implementation sites, although coordination and institutional capacity challenges persist. The initiative aligns with EU-supported efforts to build a comprehensive, inclusive, and demand-driven LLL system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For a detailed overview of adult learning policy areas, objectives, and implementation status in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see [Annex IV](#) – Overview of Adult Learning Policy Areas, Objectives, and Implementation Status in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

National performance against key EU targets on adult learning

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

Participation of adults in learning

EU targets by 2025 and 2030	National target
At least 47 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2025.	1.8% (Eurostat 1,6% 2024 ⁴⁵) of adults aged 25-64 have participated in at least one educational activity in the 12 months prior to the survey (2022) (BHAS- EUROSTAT report, 2022).
At least 60 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2030.	SDG indicator 4.3.1: Participation rate of young people and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex. ⁴⁶ - Baseline (2023): 15.4% (15.6% M, 15.2% W) - Target (2030): 29.5% (29.8% M, 30.2% W)

Source: Author

Adult participation is currently low at 1.8% (2022, BHAS), vastly below the EU goal of 60%.

The Adult Education Survey (AES) was conducted for the first and only time in Bosnia and Herzegovina between February and March 2017, in line with Eurostat methodology. Covering individuals aged 25 to 64, the survey revealed that only 8.7% of adults had participated in formal or non-formal education in the 12 months prior to data collection - 2.2% in formal and 6.9% in non-formal learning. A further 74.7% had engaged in informal learning, primarily through family, media, and self-directed methods. Despite these valuable insights, no up-to-date data has been collected or published since 2017, leaving a significant evidence gap for policymakers and stakeholders in adult learning. This lack

⁴⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_04_60/default/table?lang=en

⁴⁶ Voluntary National Report VNR on SDGs, 2023.

of continuity hampers efforts to monitor participation trends, assess the effectiveness of adult learning systems, and align with EU benchmarks on lifelong learning.

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

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Bosnia and Herzegovina
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%.	Data from PISA 2018 shows that BiH is significantly behind these benchmarks: 58% of students underachieve in reading, 65% in mathematics, and 57% in science - among the highest in Europe. Moreover, fewer than 1% of students reach top performance levels in any domain. Digital skill gaps are equally stark, with estimates suggesting less than 30% of adults (16–74) possess basic digital competencies, far below the EU's 85% target. ⁴⁷

Source: Author

STEM in VET

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Bosnia and Herzegovina
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.	< 35% (varies by entity; often between 30–34%) ⁴⁸ with ~12–15% (in STEM tracks) in engineering, ICT, construction ⁴⁹ . (http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-tvet).

Source: Author

STEM in higher education

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Bosnia and Herzegovina
The share of students enrolled in STEM fields in third-level education should be at least 32%, with at least 2 out of 5 students female	BiH lacks a comparable data. There is some data in gender-gap reports for STEM in BiH (e.g. Gender Gap in STEM BiH Factsheet), but not full quantitative coverage to allow comparison with the EU target of 32% STEM + ≥ 40% female share. STEM and ICT participation rates in VET, higher education, and PhD programmes are also significantly lower, though detailed data is limited. Basic skills proficiency (literacy, numeracy, digital skills) in BiH remains a concern, but no equivalent national benchmarks are readily available.

Source: Author

ICT PhD programmes

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Bosnia and Herzegovina
The share of students enrolled in ICT PhD programmes should be at least 5%, with at least 1 out of every 3 students female.	There is no reliable data for BiH that confirms what percentage of all PhD students is enrolled in ICT programmes. The latest available data goes back to 2015, where women accounted for 45% of all recipients of doctoral degrees in BiH ⁵⁰ . There is no readily available public data for ICT-PhD enrolment and gender composition in BiH.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's gap to the Union of Skills 2030 targets is due to a mix of systemic fragmentation and capacity limits: long-standing underinvestment and decentralised governance produce uneven curriculum standards, teacher CPD, and QA across entities/cantons; basic skills teaching remains weak, with large socio-economic inequalities and low participation in early learning compounding underachievement; STEM/ICT pathways are narrow and gender-segregated, with limited school-to-work links and few incentives or scholarships for girls; higher-education research and doctoral funding is modest, constraining ICT-PhD pipelines; and the brain drain further erodes talent

⁴⁷ https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_BIH.pdf

⁴⁸ <https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-05/Policies%20for%20lifelong%20learning%20-%20Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20EN.pdf?utm>

⁴⁹ <http://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-tvet>

⁵⁰ <https://www.measurebih.com/uimages/edited20ga20report20measure-bih.pdf?utm>

pools. Data gaps persist because there is no unified, EU-aligned education data system (incomplete administrative datasets, irregular international assessments, and limited disaggregation by field/level/gender). Closing the gap will therefore require a twin track: a foundational-skills uplift and targeted STEM/ICT expansion (with gender measures), underpinned by an overarching data strategy and stable multi-year financing.

In light of the EU's 2030 targets outlined in the Union of Skills framework, Bosnia and Herzegovina faces significant challenges in aligning with key benchmarks related to educational quality, digital competence, and STEM participation. The PISA 2018 results reveal alarmingly high levels of underachievement in reading, mathematics, and science, with fewer than 1% of students reaching the top performance level - far below the 15% target. Digital skills are also critically lacking, with less than 30% of adults possessing basic competencies compared to the EU goal of 85%. Participation in STEM fields at VET and tertiary levels remains below target, and gender disparities persist, particularly in ICT and engineering tracks. Moreover, the absence of reliable, up-to-date data on STEM and ICT PhD enrolment - especially data disaggregated by gender - further impedes evidence-based planning and monitoring. Without a coherent strategy to address these gaps, Bosnia and Herzegovina risks falling further behind in the development of a skilled, inclusive, and future-ready workforce.

Conclusions

Strengths

- There is a coherent policy framework for adult education, based on the 'Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education (2014–2020)' and the normative–framework document 'Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina', which establishes common principles and minimum quality standards. The ongoing preparation of a new Strategic Platform, coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with DVV International, contributes to maintaining strategic continuity and to the further alignment of policies with European priorities.
- The legal basis for formal, non-formal, and informal learning has been established in all jurisdictions. Republika Srpska maintains a comprehensive set of by-laws and a functional registry system, while several cantons (Sarajevo, Tuzla, Central Bosnia) have introduced quality assurance standards.
- The decentralised structure allows contextual adaptation of policies at entity and cantonal levels, while pilot initiatives such as those led by DVV International and EU4VET foster cooperation, innovation, and exchange of good practices.
- The digitalisation of adult learning data systems through ISKOOOM enhances transparency, monitoring and evidence-based policymaking. A culture of evaluation is gradually emerging in Republika Srpska, BPC, Sarajevo, Una-sana and Zenica-Doboj Canton.
- The adoption of the VPL/VNFIL Handbook (2025) and the practitioner training programme mark significant progress toward operationalising validation in line with EU standards. The forthcoming Strategic Platform 2025–2030 explicitly aligns with the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) and the Union of Skills objectives, ensuring closer harmonisation with EU frameworks.

Challenges

- Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a single, unified state-level strategy for adult education (AE), or a single framework law. In order to ensure a common reference framework within a complex constitutional and administrative context, a normative–framework document entitled 'Principles and Standards in the Field of Adult Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina' was adopted at the state level in 2014. This document defines the core principles, minimum quality standards, and terminological guidelines for the development of adult education policies. It continues to have a reference value and serves as a common point of departure for different levels of government, while strategic planning and operational solutions are, in practice, developed through entity - and cantonal-level documents, in line with their respective competences. In this context, further linking existing normative frameworks further with more recent strategic documents and economic planning instruments, including the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2025–2027, remains a challenge in strengthening the visibility and role of adult education within broader development policies.
- The fragmented governance structure continues to hinder progress. The absence of harmonised standards and incomplete by-laws - particularly in smaller cantons and the Brčko District - creates inconsistencies in programme accreditation, provider licensing, and recognition procedures.
- The AL system remains highly fragmented, with no national mechanisms for quality assurance or data coordination. Monitoring is inconsistent, horizontal cooperation is limited, and links between education, labour and social sectors remain weak.

- Monitoring and evaluation systems are underdeveloped, relying largely on administrative data and yes/no indicators. There are no standardised national indicators, outcome-based monitoring tools, or regular Adult Education Surveys (the last one was conducted in 2017). Data remains fragmented and insufficiently disaggregated for meaningful analysis.
- Performance outcomes remain weak: adult participation in learning (1.8%, Eurostat 2024) is far below EU targets, while skill mismatches persist due to underdeveloped STEM/ICT pathways, insufficient inclusion of green and digital competences, and limited coordination between education and economic policies.
- The Labour market relevance of adult learning remains low. Employers often prefer in-house training over formally verified non-formal programmes, reflecting both a shortage of qualified candidates and limited trust in the certification value of AL programmes.

State of play

- The main priorities of the adult learning (AL) strategic framework focus on strengthening governance and coordination, improving quality assurance, operationalising validation of non-formal and informal learning (VPL/VNFIL), ensuring sustainable financing, and aligning education more closely with labour market needs and EU lifelong learning policies.
- There is a continued effort to develop a comprehensive and coherent policy framework through the Strategic Platform for Adult Learning (2014–2020) and its forthcoming revision. However, despite strategic intent, adult learning remains a secondary policy area, with limited public investment and inconsistent political commitment.
- Non-state actors, including social partners and NGOs, participate in AL initiatives, but their advocacy efforts remain uncoordinated and largely dependent on donor support rather than systematic engagement in policymaking.
- The development of the legal framework corresponds broadly with the strategic framework, ensuring policy coherence but uneven implementation across jurisdictions.
- The AL legal framework is partially aligned with policy objectives and strategies. Republika Srpska has established a comprehensive system with adopted by-laws and registers, while the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains fragmented due to inconsistent adoption of secondary legislation across cantons.
- The strategic framework provides an overarching vision for lifelong learning but lacks specificity regarding regional contexts and differentiated implementation approaches, limiting responsiveness to local labour market needs.
- AL policies remain fragmented and predominantly focused on programme accreditation, provider licensing, and initial steps toward VNFIL operationalisation. Broader systemic reforms - particularly those related to quality assurance and financing - remain underdeveloped.
- Participation in adult learning is very low (1.8% in 2024, Eurostat), and national targets or monitoring systems related to participation, skills, or employment outcomes are not systematically established.
- Benchmarking indicators and national targets only partially match relevant EU policy frameworks, including the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL) 2030 and the Union of Skills targets. Alignment is mostly conceptual, with limited operational mechanisms for data collection and monitoring.

CHAPTER II: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND GOVERNANCE OF ADULT LEARNING

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

Institutional arrangements

Institutional responsibilities for lifelong learning lie primarily with the competent ministries and institutions at the level of individual administrative units. These responsibilities encompass a broad range of functions, including policy development, the preparation of regulatory frameworks (laws and secondary legislation), as well as the administration and supervision of education and training providers. In line with its coordinating mandate at state level, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina plays a role in initiating, aligning, and facilitating the development of common frameworks and reform processes, including support for the consideration of new systemic solutions -such as arrangements for the validation of non-formal education and informal learning (VNFIL) - in cooperation with the competent Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions.

In all administrative units, decision-making is centralised at the level of the competent education authorities and their professional departments. Pedagogical institutes (PIs) supervise public providers (mainly schools). Professional work is performed by PI in individual administrative units. These organisations/institutions play a key role in the development of preschool, primary and secondary education.

The Republika Srpska Strategy of AL is aligned with the institutional setup of Bosnia and Herzegovina, recognising the competencies of Republika Srpska in the field of education. It is consistent with key Bosnia and Herzegovina and entity-level policy documents.

Within Bosnia and Herzegovina's decentralised institutional framework, Republika Srpska holds full responsibility for education policy, including adult learning. Although there is no separate LLL Strategy in RS, the principles of lifelong learning are fully integrated into the Adult Education Strategy, complementing the Strategy for the Development of Education 2015–2020 and ensuring alignment with both national and international education priorities.

Republika Srpska is also unique in having a dedicated institution for adult learning - the Institute for Adult Education of Republika Srpska. The Institute plays a key role in implementing adult education policy and has developed a procedure for the validation of professional competences. This process is conducted through formal examinations administered by a Board of Examiners, composed of representatives from the Ministry, employers, and education providers. Candidates are assessed on verify their knowledge and skills based on qualification standards developed in cooperation with local employers. This system ensures that adult learning and validation processes in Republika Srpska are responsive to labour market needs and consistent with the broader framework of lifelong learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although the existing Laws on Adult Learning in cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) prescribe the roles and obligations of key actors -such as legislators, professional bodies, and adult learning (AL) providers - they fail to define specific obligations or mechanisms related to the introduction of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) systems. Notably, there are currently no legal provisions that set out the criteria, procedures, or institutional responsibilities for establishing and accrediting VNFIL providers. This creates a significant regulatory vacuum that impedes the development of a transparent, credible, and quality-assured system for the recognition of prior learning, especially for adults who have acquired skills through non-formal education or work experience. Without clearly defined pathways, potential VNFIL providers lack a legal basis for operation, and individuals remain without structured opportunities to have their competences validated and certified outside formal education.

However, all the representatives of the MoE and of the Pedagogical Institutes have pointed out the lack of capacity in the field of adult learning. Since the same structures will probably be used during the implementation of the VNFIL systems, it is necessary to think about these challenges in the future and ensure capacity building or even recruitment of professionals for adult learning.

The Pedagogical Institutes also have responsibility over AL providers (prevailing public schools). They provide opinions and support their programme. AL providers are usually schools, centres for adult education and NGOs.

Public and private adult learning providers are allowed to develop their own programmes; however, these must be accredited by the competent authority in the field. The division of responsibilities for preparing modular programmes, as well as the extent to which they are based on occupational or qualification standards, remains unclear.

Roles and responsibilities in AL

Figure 1 shows the roles and responsibilities of each institution in the adult learning landscape.

Pedagogical Institutes, RS Institute for Adult Education ministries of education and inspectorates

* Monitoring & Evaluation

Adult Learning governance model

Adult Learning (AL) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is managed through a multi-level structure reflecting Bosnia and Herzegovina's decentralised education system. The MoCA coordinates issues of common interest and leads cooperation with international partners, supported by the APOSO for quality assurance and by the Agency for Labour and Employment in linking AL with labour market policies. In the RS, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Institute for Adult Education regulate, license, and supervise providers, while in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, cantonal ministries and pedagogical institutes perform similar roles. The BD Bosnia and Herzegovina Department of Education applies its own framework for licensing and supervision. Public Employment Service's (PES) finance short-term training for priority groups, and providers - public, private, and NGOs - deliver programmes aligned with accreditation and quality standards. Employers, chambers, and trade unions identify skills needs and support programme design, while municipalities co-finance training at the local level. Oversight and data collection are ensured by inspectorates, pedagogical institutes, and statistical offices, with ongoing technical assistance from international partners such as DVV International, the ETF, GIZ, and the EU. A detailed overview of the representation and composition of the various institutions in governance, steering and coordination bodies relevant to AL is found in [Annex V](#).

Intersectoral cooperation and coordination

Intersectoral cooperation in adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina is essential due to Bosnia and Herzegovina's decentralised governance and the cross-cutting nature of lifelong learning. The key coordination mechanism at the state level is the Conference of Ministers of Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a permanent advisory body that brings together ministers of education from the entities, cantons, and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The Conference reviews the state of education, facilitates the exchange of information and good practices, and proposes strategic priorities and reform directions, does not have binding authority over lower levels of government. It involves coordination between education authorities (ministries, schools, APOSO), employment institutions (public employment services, ministries of labour), economic actors (chambers of commerce, employers), and social partners (NGOs, unions). Cooperation takes place in the development of legislation, the design of qualification standards, VNFIL, and the implementation of labour market-oriented training programmes. Employment services in Bosnia and Herzegovina commonly finance retraining and upskilling measures, but public funding schemes and calls for training programmes do not systematically prioritise accredited adult-learning providers, nor do they include provisions requiring the engagement of accredited providers through the selection process, which results in uneven use of quality-assured and formally recognised training capacities.

However, intersectoral cooperation remains fragmented, uneven, and heavily reliant on donor-supported initiatives. Only two cantons (Sarajevo Canton and Zenica-Doboj Canton) have established having functional bodies (Councils for Adult Education)⁵¹ that enable cross-sectoral dialogue, while other administrative units lack formal coordination platforms, except for tripartite advisory councils that are primarily established for vocational education and training. There is no national coordination body, and joint planning, funding, and monitoring mechanisms are not yet

⁵¹ The Council for Adult Education, established by a Decision of the Government of Zenica–Doboj Canton (Official Gazette of Zenica–Doboj Canton, Nos. 3/21, 9/22, 21/22, 5/23, 6/23, 7/24), functions as an advisory and coordination body in the field of adult education.

institutionalised. Strengthening cooperation requires formalising partnerships between education, labour, and economic sectors, expanding the role of social partners, and creating integrated systems for quality assurance and data sharing.

Institutional representation in governance, steering, and coordination bodies in sub-sector AL

Adult learning governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina reflects a complex multi-level system involving state, entity, cantonal, and district institutions. As outlined in [Annex VI](#) (Institutional Representation in Governance, Steering and Coordination Bodies in the Sub-Sector of Adult Learning), responsibilities for legislation, implementation, and coordination are shared among numerous actors. The field of adult education is currently characterised by the absence of a valid state-level strategy, meaning that strategic planning is predominantly carried out at lower administrative levels, with support from state-level coordination mechanisms and initiatives, including the ongoing activities related to the revision of the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) coordinates education policy and strategic alignment across the various levels of government. In Republika Srpska, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Institute for Adult Education oversee legislation, programme approval, and standards. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, competence lies with cantonal ministries of education, supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Science, while in the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Department of Education implements its own legal framework and supervises provision.

Strategic coordination is supported by the Conference of Ministers of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite broad institutional engagement, fragmentation of responsibilities continues to challenge coherent governance and system-wide coordination.

Funding of Adult Learning

Funding for adult learning comes from a variety of sources, as outlined in several reports and policy reviews. The respective MoE contributes through their respective budgets for a completion of primary education, while municipal budgets also provide support for selected AL programmes, but this is not shown as an allocation for adult education. In addition, self-payment represents a significant share of covering the full or partial cost of participation, particularly in non-formal and some formal programmes⁵². Total expenditure on education amounted to 4% of GDP in 2018 (including public and private expenditures as well as foreign sources of financing), of which 95% was public expenditure. The largest share of funding was allocated to primary education (50%), followed by secondary education (25%), higher education (19%), and pre-primary education (4%)⁵³. Employers may also finance training when it aligns with specific workplace needs. International donors, including EU funds and NGOs, play a crucial role by funding adult learning initiatives through projects and providing operating grants to non-formal providers. Other contributors include professional associations, academic institutions, and various civil society actors, while additional support may come from local government resources outside of education ministry allocations.

- 1. Source:** Public budgets at the entity level - namely, from Republika Srpska and the cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina together with municipal budgets, which also provide support for selected adult learning programmes⁵⁴. All laws on adult education stipulate that the financing of adult education is the joint responsibility of responsible administrative units, local self-government units, employers, employees, economic and professional associations, associations, educational institutions and individuals.
- 2. Source:** Learners and employers - Fees paid by learners: in many non-formal and formal adult learning programmes, participants bear the cost fully or in part. Employers sometimes finance the training of adults if there is a specific need.
- 3. Source:** International donors, NGOs, EU funds, etc. often support adult learning initiatives via projects.
- 4. Source:** PES financing adult learning programmes as part of their ALMPs, such as retraining for unemployed persons, upskilling for the long-term unemployed or short-term vocational training programmes for in-demand

⁵² *Study on adult learning and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022*/Amina Isanović Hadžimerović, Andreas Pfanzelt, Hannah Pfanzelt. - Sarajevo: Institut za međunarodnu saradnju Njemačkog saveza visokih narodnih škola - DVV International (Ured za Bosnu i Hercegovinu), 2022.

⁵³ Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2020). *Demography and Social Statistics – Education Finance Statistics*. Sarajevo: BHAS. Available at: <https://bhas.gov.ba/>

⁵⁴ Currently, there are no calls specifically aimed at funding adult education. The Working Group's proposal was to first introduce this as a way of formalising the commitment of ministries of education to promoting adult education.

occupations. These ALMPs are implemented through public calls for training programmes conducted by certified providers, subsidies for employers to train new workers, training vouchers for unemployed individuals (in select cases, depending on the canton or entity).

Adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina is financed through a highly fragmented system with responsibilities distributed across multiple governance levels. Financial responsibility lies primarily at the entity, cantonal, and Brčko District levels, while at the state level the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and state agencies have a coordinating and facilitative role, particularly with regard to accessing and aligning international, EU, and donor funding in cooperation with the competent institutions. In Republika Srpska, a more coherent framework exists, with regular education budget lines and by-law-based financing supporting formal adult education, examinations, and quality assurance. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, funding and regulation are decentralised to cantonal ministries, where financing models differ, and adult education often lacks a dedicated budget line. The Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina applies a unified budget structure, enabling simpler allocation for formal and selected non-formal programmes. Public Employment Services (PES) at entity, cantonal, and district levels represent the main domestic source of funding for short-term training and retraining programmes linked to labour market needs, though their budgets vary annually. At the municipal level, funding is irregular and limited, channelled through public calls, vouchers, or donor co-financing. Overall, funding remains inconsistent, project-based, and under-monitored, with no overarching mechanism for tracking total allocations or ensuring balanced support across formal and non-formal adult learning. A summary of the funding sources, types and available data on funding volumes is found in [Annex VII](#).

Funding Overview

In the state budget there is no budget line for adult education, while public budgets at entity, cantonal and municipal levels are allocated to support completion programmes for adult primary education and the functioning of public institutions such as Adult Learning Centres. However, these allocations are modest, uncoordinated, and poorly tracked, with no central mechanism for monitoring total investment in adult education. Public Employment Services (PES) provide additional support through active labour market measures, financing short-term training, retraining, and employer-linked programmes, although coverage and budget volumes fluctuate. Unlike other forms of education, adult education is a shared responsibility involving municipalities, employers, workers, enterprises and professional associations, associations, scientific and educational institutions, and individuals⁵⁵. According to the Principles and Standards (Article 3.3.7.2), adult education is financed from public revenues, by employers, participants, the European Union, and other donors. International donors and NGOs, remain critical funders of non-formal and community-based adult learning, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised groups. Meanwhile, learners and employers increasingly finance participation in short vocational, digital, or soft skills courses, language training, and certification programmes, reflecting the growing demand for upskilling and professional development outside the formal education system. Overall, the funding landscape lacks coherence, sustainability, and systematic reporting, with a clear imbalance favouring formal over non-formal and lifelong learning opportunities.

Adult learning and participation in active labour market programmes are free of charge in most administrative units in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In contrast, further professional development and education for personal growth are largely self-financed. Some adult learning programmes receive financial support from international donors or employers, partially offsetting costs for learners. Public providers offering additional AL programmes face restrictive budget regulations, limiting their capacity to expand. A key obstacle to AL development is the absence of a dedicated budget line -public spending is typically embedded within VET or employment measures. Additionally, the lack of systematic monitoring across all administrative levels hinders the ability to assess the relationship between financial input and educational outcomes, which is essential for informed policy development.

There is no unified record of expenditures, as budget documents often do not distinguish the costs borne by participants or employers specifically for adult education. According to information from the 2022 budget document of Zenica–Doboj Canton, the canton planned a total of BAM 311,300 for all primary schools involved in adult education, with annual expenditures per school estimated at around BAM 28,300. These amounts cover the costs of implementing adult education programmes, including the completion of primary education⁵⁶. Analyses tend to focus on public or donor sources, such as state or entity budgets and international projects, while data on private investments

⁵⁵

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021. Adult Education and Training in Europe: Building Inclusive Pathways to Skills and Qualifications. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Text completed in September 2021. Reproduction is authorized provided the source is acknowledged.

⁵⁶ Planned co-financing of the completion of primary education for adults within the budget of Sarajevo Canton (up to BAM 80,000), according to the Draft Budget of Sarajevo Canton for 2026.

remain largely unavailable. Practices vary significantly across cantons and local levels⁵⁷, some regions require participants to pay fees, others offer free programmes, and the availability of support mechanisms is inconsistent. Moreover, existing reports and studies are typically qualitative, relying on interviews and surveys, and therefore lack comprehensive and precise financial data.

Given that overall education spending in Bosnia and Herzegovina is about 4 % of GDP (all levels) and given the relatively low uptake of adult learning programmes, public spending on AL may be well under 0.5 % of GDP, perhaps even nearer to 0.2-0.3 %. Private contributions (learners + employers) might add another small share - say 0.05-0.2 % of GDP - but again, that is a speculative range⁵⁸. The OECD report shows that while overall education spending is one of the highest among Western Balkan countries, there is no disaggregated data for adult learning (estimates for the adult learning share therefore remain guesses)⁵⁹.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

Institutional roles and responsibilities

The following outlines the respective roles and responsibilities of key institutions involved in the governance and quality assurance of adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It highlights their coordination, advisory, monitoring, accreditation, and inspection functions, as well as their involvement in aligning adult learning with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Qualifications Framework.

Quality assurance in adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina is shared among several institutions with interlinked and sometimes overlapping mandates, as detailed in [Annex VIII](#) (Institutional Roles over Quality Assurance for Adult Learning). The Ministries of Education hold the main coordination and supervisory role, overseeing the implementation of legislation and provider compliance. The Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education (APOS) with its VET Department, contributes to developing quality assurance mechanisms and aligning them with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Qualifications Framework (BiHQF). The RS Institute for Adult Education and pedagogical institutes (where they exist) provide professional supervision, mentoring, and evaluation of programmes, while educational inspectorates conduct inspections and quality oversight.

While this framework ensures broad institutional involvement, the fragmentation of responsibilities still limits coherence and consistency in quality assurance across administrative levels.

Quality assurance remains inconsistent across administrative units. The absence of a harmonised accreditation system results in non-formal learning programmes operating outside recognised qualifications frameworks. While some regions have adopted adult learning laws referencing validation of prior learning (VPL), the validation process is narrowly interpreted as examination-based, which contradicts EU recommendations (CEDEFOP) and fails to accommodate diverse forms of learning. A coherent Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) system is still lacking, with limited trust in NGO or project-led training.

Teaching staff for special adult learning programmes

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina is regulated at the entity, cantonal and BD Bosnia and Herzegovina level, with no unified overarching CPD framework, leading to diverse approaches and implementation standards. In the formal education sector, CPD is mandatory for teachers and is typically coordinated by pedagogical institutes, ministries of education, or authorised training providers, with a focus on subject-specific competencies, pedagogy, and innovation in teaching. However, access to CPD varies widely across regions, and funding is limited. For AL practitioners, including trainers, educators, and staff of AL centres, CPD is not systematically regulated or financed, and opportunities for professional growth depend heavily on project-based support from international organisations. This includes training in andragogy⁶⁰, curriculum development, and learner-centred approaches. In addition, the University of Sarajevo - Faculty of Philosophy has adopted a study on the launch of the Basic Andragogical Training programme, which will be open to all interested parties from all over Bosnia and

⁵⁷ Example – City of Konjic (Good Practice): The 2025 city budget allocates Euro 300 000 for Active Employment Policy (code 614414) to support business start-ups, new employment, and related projects (women/youth, energy, environment), up from EUR 250 000 in 2024.

⁵⁸ ETF (2021) *Financing Adult Learning in the EU Neighbourhood: Country Profile Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Turin: European Training Foundation.

⁵⁹ OECD (2022) *Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Bosnia and Herzegovina*, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁶⁰ Adult education laws mention andragogical training. Six cantons have declared basic andragogical training to be publicly valid.

Herzegovina⁶¹. When it comes to VNFIL practitioners such as assessors, mentors, or coordinators - there is currently no Bosnia and Herzegovina-wide certification system and, once operational, it will be at the level of the competent administrative units of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most VNFIL related CPD is ad hoc, often delivered as part of pilot projects or donor-supported capacity-building programmes. As a result, standardised qualifications and role definitions for AL and VNFIL professionals remain underdeveloped, and there is a pressing need for institutionalised CPD systems, especially for non-formal educators and those working in validation and guidance services.⁶²

⁶¹ <https://www.unsa.ba/novosti/filozofski-fakultet-uns-a-najavljuje-pokretanje-programa-cjelozivotnog-ucenja-osnovna>

⁶² DVVI financing adult education train-the-trainer programmes in BiH. Teachers and other professionals are trained by ministries or providers assigned by ministries in didactics and methods of AL according to Curriculum GlobALE.

Conclusions

Strengths

- Clear legal assignment of responsibilities within the decentralised structure – MoCA at the state level coordinates international cooperation and issues of common interest; APOSO and the Agency for Labour and Employment contribute to QA and labour-market linkage. Republika Srpska has an advanced institutional model with a dedicated Institute for Adult Education ensuring coherent policy and implementation.
- Multiple funding sources (public budgets, PES measures, employer and learner contributions, EU/donor support) offer a basis for shared responsibility. RS has regular budget lines and by-law-based financing. Municipal co-funding and EU projects stimulate innovation and target training for priority groups.
- Employers, chambers and social partners are increasingly engaged in skills-needs mapping and programme design. NGOs and international partners (EU4VET, DVV, ETF) support pilot projects and capacity building. Some cantons have functional adult learning Councils and tripartite dialogue structures.
- Legal frameworks assign clear competences to each administrative level, allowing contextual adaptation. RS offers a coherent and centralised implementation model via its Institute for Adult Education.
- The BiH Qualifications Framework (BiHQF), although still at the proposal stage, should provide a common reference framework for recognition. APOSO ensures alignment of qualification standards with EU principles. RS has operational validation procedures linked to occupational standards.
- Quality assurance mandates are shared by ministries, pedagogical institutes and APOSO, which links QA with BiHQF. Emerging digital monitoring systems (ISKOOM in Tuzla Canton) improve data transparency. QA efforts in RS show structured supervision of providers.

Challenges

- Governance of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains fragmented, with overlapping mandates and the absence of a single national coordinating body. The Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a limited coordinating role at the state level, without executive powers, while communication between entities and cantons is irregular and often driven by donor-funded initiatives. The capacity of the competent ministries and pedagogical institutes to implement adult education policies remains limited.
- Funding is highly fragmented and project-based; most cantons lack dedicated budget lines. There are no training funds, tax incentives or levy mechanisms. Financial reporting and monitoring are not systematic; private investment data is missing. In practice, the financing of adult education in most administrative units is implemented through broader budget programmes and economic classifications (e.g. education, employment, social policy, or active labour market measures), without being allocated to dedicated budget lines.
- Stakeholder engagement is uneven across administrative units and largely dependent on donor projects. There is no permanent national coordination platform for social partners or civil society. Learners' representation and feedback mechanisms **remain weak**.
- In FBiH and BD, implementation differs significantly across cantonal ministries and the education department. There is no mechanism for system-wide monitoring or joint planning between entities. Decentralisation limits standardisation and policy coherence.
- Validation in most jurisdictions remains examination-based, contrary to EU recommendations. Lack of harmonised criteria and institutional responsibilities for VNFIL. Portability of qualifications across entities limited trust in non-formal learning is low.
- QA frameworks are fragmented and inconsistent across entities and cantons. Non-formal providers often operate outside recognised QA systems. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for trainers and VNFIL staff **is not systematic** and depends on donor projects.

State of play

- Alongside the MoCA and APOSO as coordinating and advisory bodies, a broad range of institutions participate in policy design and implementation - including the RS Ministry of Education and Culture with its Institute for Adult Education, ten cantonal ministries in FBiH, and the BD Department of Education. Their roles are defined by law, but implementation and coordination remain fragmented and mostly donor driven.
- Financing of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly decentralised and fragmented, with a significant reliance on project-based funding sources. In Republika Srpska, dedicated budget lines for this area exist, while in the cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Brčko District BiH financing is provided through a combination of different budgetary sources and international projects, including active labour market policy measures. However, in most administrative units there are no clearly earmarked budget lines or permanent financing mechanisms, which limits the predictability and strategic steering of investments in adult education.

- There is a **moderate diversity** of stakeholders, including employers, chambers, PES, NGOs, and donors. However, participation is not yet institutionalised — social partners and learner representation remain limited and cooperation largely project-based.
- The management of AL policies is **highly decentralised**, reflecting BiH's administrative structure. RS applies a more coherent and centralised model, while in FBiH, adult education falls fully within the competence of cantonal ministries of education, which regulate this field independently through their own laws, secondary legislation, and strategic documents. As a result, significant differences exist among cantons in terms of the scope of regulation, clarity of procedures, institutional capacities, financing models, and the level of development of quality assurance systems. While some cantons have established relatively well-developed frameworks for the regulation and implementation of adult education, others rely on basic legal provisions with limited implementation mechanisms, resulting in uneven policy application across the territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In general, in the field of education, and consequently also in the sub-sector of adult education, the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a coordinating and support role in state-level processes, including the international representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the alignment of education policies with European initiatives, together with the competent institutions. The Ministry does not have executive or regulatory powers; rather, it acts as a contact point and intermediary in inter-institutional and international cooperation.
- The validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is linked to the Bosnia and Herzegovina Qualifications Framework (BiHQF) through guidelines developed within the Working Group of the EU project on vocational education and skills recognition in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EU4VET). These guidelines were conceived as a reference tool for system development and were integrated to the extent considered necessary at the time. However, they have not yet resulted in the establishment of a comprehensive and fully operational VNFIL system aligned with BiHQF standards. In practice, Republika Srpska - which subsequently withdrew from the project - does not have a formally operationalised system, while cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District of BiH are at the piloting stage of VNFIL activities. Full integration will require further alignment of legislation and quality assurance standards, a clear definition of institutional responsibilities, sustainable financing models, capacity building of institutions involved in VNFIL implementation, and mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and mutual recognition of learning outcomes across administrative units.
- Quality assurance mechanisms are only partially covered. Supervision and monitoring exist through pedagogical institutes and inspectorates, but there are no harmonised system or uniform indicators. Continuous professional development (CPD) for AL practitioners and assessors' remains sporadic and is funded externally.

CHAPTER III: ADULT LEARNING PROVISION

This 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.

Adult Learning types and programs

Adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina includes a mix of formal programmes (primary education of adults with the approval of competent ministry) provided by primary schools and non-formal programmes aimed at reskilling, upskilling, and lifelong learning. Formal pathways allow adults to complete or upgrade their education and gain qualifications equivalent to regular schooling, while non-formal options -such as vocational training, modular courses, and crafts master exams - offer flexible, labour-market-oriented learning. Programmes, generally at EQF levels 2–5, are delivered by public VET schools, adult learning centres, and chambers of crafts, and lead to recognised certificates or diplomas. Many short-term trainings courses are supported by Public Employment Services⁶³ and donors, promoting employability and inclusion.

The table below presents the types of programmes for the acquiring qualifications through formal AL and verified non-formal AL⁶⁴:

Type of programme	Provider(s)	Target group	Final certification
Primary education	Registered primary schools	15+	Diploma EQF/BQF Level 1
Initial VET	Registered AL providers, usually public secondary schools	18+	Diploma EQF/BQF Levels 2–4
Reskilling	Registered AL providers, usually secondary schools	18+	Diploma or Certificate EQF/BQF Levels 2–4
Upskilling	Registered AL providers, Secondary VET schools, PES through in-house training	18+	Certificate EQF/BQF Levels 3–5
Vocational training	Accredited providers – secondary VET schools and private training providers	18+	Certificate EQF/BQF Levels 2–4
Professional advancement	Accredited and non-accredited training providers-secondary VET schools, private training providers, chambers of crafts,	18+	Certificate EQF/BQF Levels 4–5
Short modular programmes	Secondary schools, public and private institutes, chambers, PES, private companies, NGOs	16+	Certificate EQF/BQF Levels 2–5 (partial qualifications)
Crafts master exam	A VET school or registered adult learning provider in accordance with the applicable regulations in the field of education, in cooperation with the cantonal Chamber of Crafts.	21+	Diploma EQF/BQF Level 5

Adult learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina operates through two main lines of provision: formal and non-formal education programmes. Formal adult education, delivered mainly by public VET schools, enables adults to complete or upgrade their primary and secondary education or gain new vocational qualifications through accredited programmes equivalent to regular schooling. In contrast, lifelong learning programmes are predominantly delivered by

⁶³ See [Annex IX](#) – Employment and Self-employment Co-financing Programmes, 2024 (Federation of BiH).

⁶⁴ Primary education for adults is regulated by law and is provided by primary schools with the approval of the competent ministry.

private training providers, NGOs, and enterprises, while TVET schools play a more limited role. These programmes offer diverse opportunities for reskilling, upskilling, and personal development; however, they generally do not lead to formal qualifications unless accredited by the competent ministry.

Across Bosnia and Herzegovina, formal provision remains limited to a small number of public schools, while private and non-formal providers play a growing role in adult learning, offering flexible, labour market-oriented courses. Programmes focus on acquiring new competences, enhancing employability, and supporting inclusion of vulnerable and older learners. However, quality assurance, standardisation, and VNFIL are still underdeveloped, leading to variations in programme quality and weak integration with the qualification's framework.

Type of programmes⁶⁵

Adult learning programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina cover a range of formal and non-formal education opportunities designed to support lifelong learning, improve employability, and promote social inclusion. These programmes differ in purpose, content, and target groups but share a common goal of enabling adults to acquire, update, or certify knowledge and skills relevant to both personal and professional development.

Primary Education for Adults

Primary education programmes for adults are designed as accelerated and modular pathways equivalent to regular primary schooling. They follow the same curriculum standards but are adapted to the needs of adult learners through flexible schedules, such as evening or weekend classes, and often include placement testing and recognition of prior learning. The duration of each school year in adult primary education is regulated by law.

The main objective of these programmes is to ensure the completion of primary education and to strengthen basic literacy, numeracy, digital, and civic competences. They also aim to facilitate further learning, whether through secondary or vocational education, and to enhance employability and social participation. The programmes target adults - generally aged 15 or 18 and above - who did not complete primary education, including the long-term unemployed, Roma and other minority groups, returnees, migrants, socially vulnerable populations and adult education for convicted prisoners in the Zenica Correctional Facility. They are implemented mainly by public primary schools authorised for adult learning and accredited adult education centres, sometimes in partnership with NGOs and institutions. Graduates receive a publicly recognised certificate equivalent to primary school completion with allows access to secondary education, while modular or partial certificates may be issued to those still completing all components⁶⁶. In 2022, Sarajevo Canton has developed an innovative adult primary education programme that focuses on basic life skills and includes vocational training in the final year. This model represents the organisational and programmatic integration of basic general education with short-term vocational training. It is based on the assumption that most adults without a basic education belong to socially excluded groups who are not motivated to pursue education unless it provides them with the knowledge, skills and competences needed for labour-market inclusion or for successfully seeking and securing employment. Funding is typically provided through public education or employment budgets, although municipal and donor co-financing is common, and fees may apply where no public support exists.

Reskilling

Reskilling programmes focus on training adults for a new occupation, combining theoretical and practical components to enable rapid entry into in-demand sectors of the labour market. They are primarily aimed at the unemployed or adults seeking a career change and are provided by vocational schools, adult learning centres, or accredited private providers. The programmes target adults—aged 18+. Upon completion, participants receive a public vocational certificate or diploma, depending on the programme's level and accreditation status. These programmes are often financed through active labour market measures or employer co-funding.

⁶⁵ Each administrative unit in BiH, in accordance with the Law on Adult Learning, maintains its own Register of adult learning providers and accredited programmes. Registers of providers and programmes (formal and non-formal) exist only at those levels of government that have adopted adult learning laws and begun their implementation.

⁶⁶ Sarajevo Canton has developed an innovative adult primary education programme that focuses on basic life skills and includes vocational training in the final year.

Secondary Education for Adults (general/VET)

Secondary education programmes, both general and vocational, provide adults with the opportunity to complete secondary schooling or obtain a trade qualification. The programmes are modular, accelerated, and are often delivered during evenings or weekends to accommodate adult learners. Their primary objectives are to enable adults to earn a secondary diploma, improve employability, and offer pathways to higher or further vocational education. These programmes are intended for adults aged 15 or 18 and above who left education before completing secondary school or who wish to retrain for a new profession. They are delivered by public vocational or secondary schools and accredited adult learning centres licensed by the relevant education authorities. Participants obtain a publicly recognised diploma or vocational qualification. Financing is mostly fee-based, though co-funding from public employment services, municipalities, or donor projects is occasionally available.

Programmes for upskilling (modular CVET)

Upskilling or modular CVET programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina target adults aged 18+ who wish to enhance or update their skills in line with labour market demands. Delivered by vocational schools, adult learning centres, private providers, and Public Employment Services, these short, modular courses focus on developing occupational and transversal competences - such as digital, technical, or entrepreneurial skills. Programmes typically lead to partial or full qualifications at EQF/BQF levels 3–5 and are often co-financed by employers or donor projects. They are primarily aimed at unemployed individuals and adults seeking career transitions, with the main goal of promoting lifelong learning, enhancing employability, and enabling continuous adaptation to evolving labour market demands.

Non-formal Continuing Education (languages, digital, compliance/Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM))

Non-formal Continuing Education programmes in Bosnia and Herzegovina encompass short, flexible courses delivered either in person or online. They are focused on languages, digital competences, compliance training, and transversal skills relevant to the modern labour market, including emerging areas such as sustainability and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Aimed at adults aged 18 and above - such as employees, jobseekers, SME staff, and individuals pursuing career advancement or personal growth, these programmes seek to enhance employability, adaptability, and lifelong learning. They are delivered by private training organisations, chambers of commerce, NGOs, higher education institutions, and companies. Certification is typically provider-based and not formally recognised within the national qualifications framework unless accredited, while funding is predominantly private, covered by employers or learners, with occasional public or donor co-financing.

Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL)

The validation of non-formal education and informal learning (VNFIL/VPL) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still at the development and piloting stage, with the aim of establishing a future mechanism for the formal recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education (through work experience, non-formal training, or self-directed learning), thereby shortening qualification pathways and improving employability. Although methodological foundations and pilot activities are in place, VNFIL has not yet been established as a systemic and operational component of the education framework. The process targets adults aged 18 and above who have developed occupational competences through practical experience but lack formal certification. While VNFIL is acknowledged in national policy and legal frameworks, its implementation remains uneven. Pilot activities for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in Bosnia and Herzegovina are being implemented within the EU4VET project in a limited number of administrative units, primarily in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Brčko District. The piloting covers Una-Sana Canton, Tuzla Canton, Sarajevo Canton and Brčko District, with the aim of testing procedures, methodologies and institutional arrangements prior to potential wider implementation. The activities are carried out in a project-based phase, without a unified national framework, while Republika Srpska is currently not participating in the piloting. Depending on existing regulations and institutional capacities, validation can result in partial or full qualifications, credits, or exemptions, supporting greater transparency, mobility, and alignment with labour market needs. The programme aims to strengthen the capacities of a core group of 150 trainers, who are expected to deliver training for VNFIL counsellors and assessors. These practitioners are intended to play a key role in the introduction of the VNFIL system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with an additional 30 professionals envisaged to be engaged in the process.

Support measures and services for adult learners

Outreach, information and validation services

Recognition initiatives

As a part of recognition initiatives, the Profile Pass has been introduced under the GIZ “Informal and Formal Adult Learning (2013-2017)” project remains active in Bosnia and Herzegovina but functions mainly as a pilot tool rather than a Bosnia and Herzegovina-wide recognised validation instrument. It supports adults in documenting skills gained outside formal education and has improved awareness of lifelong learning and competence recognition. However, despite its successful implementation in several local initiatives, it has not been formally adopted by education authorities or integrated into entity or cantonal legal frameworks. The tool’s principles continue to influence the development of the country’s emerging system for VPL/VNFIL, especially under ongoing EU4VET-supported reforms, yet its official status remains project-based and advisory rather than regulatory.

Active labour market programs and services

Public Employment Services (at entity and cantonal levels) implement training programmes for adult jobseekers as part of active labour market measures. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, the programme “Training for the Labour Market 2023” explicitly includes such activities⁶⁷.

However, in some analyses, ALMP measures are more heavily focused on employment subsidies rather than training, indicating that training for adults under ALMPs is sometimes limited or secondary⁶⁸.

There are cases where VET schools offer AL programmes, which are financially supported by local development agencies and sometimes overlapping with ALMP objectives⁶⁹.

Career guidance and counselling services

Career guidance and counselling services in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are in place but remain uneven in coverage, quality, and integration across administrative levels. The institutional framework exists, yet the operationalisation, targeting of adult learners, and alignment with lifelong learning objectives require further development. Guidance for adults is primarily delivered through Public Employment Services (PES) in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District, which provide counselling, job matching, and skills assessments as part of active labour market measures. Beyond these, adults can access support through adult learning centres, VET schools, and donor-funded initiatives - such as the EU’s Education for Employment and the Swiss-funded Youth Employment Project (YEP), which have introduced pilot adult guidance programmes and counsellor training.

An important step toward European alignment was achieved in November 2023 when Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Europass and Euroguidance networks, enhancing access to digital mobility tools, learning portfolios, and quality guidance practices. However, dedicated adult-learning-oriented counselling within formal education providers remains limited, and the absence of harmonised standards, consistent funding, and national monitoring mechanisms continues to hinder system-wide coherence.

A key challenge for Bosnia and Herzegovina is the lack of institutional coordination, sustainable financing, and a unified framework for lifelong career guidance across education and employment sectors hindering the role of guidance as a driver of adult participation, upskilling, and labour market needs⁷⁰.

Network of providers of formal and non-formal Adult Learning

The adult learning landscape is diverse, but fragmented. Formal providers, such as vocational schools, are central but limited in scope especially in terms of validation and reach. NGOs and private organisations offer flexibility and innovation but lack formal recognition and sustainable support. The emergence of non-formal local networks is a

⁶⁷ etf.europa.eu

⁶⁸ Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) (2021). *Peer Review Report – Bosnia and Herzegovina*, p. 10. Available at:

https://www.esap.online/download/docs/Peer%20report_BiH.pdf

⁶⁹ uil.unesco.org

⁷⁰ ETF (2022): *Career development support system review – Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Available at: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/career-development-support-system-review-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

promising development, fostering collaboration across sectors and paving the way toward more inclusive, community-based adult learning.

The network of adult learning providers in Bosnia and Herzegovina is rooted in the formal education system and complemented by the active participation of NGOs and private training organisations. Despite this solid foundation, its overall effectiveness is constrained by low participation rates, weak recognition of non-formal and informal learning, unstable funding for non-formal providers, and fragmented governance arrangements. In practice, the system can be described as moderately developed—capable of delivering formal adult education with reasonable quality in certain areas but still characterised by significant gaps and uneven performance across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The lack of a centralised state-level mechanism for accrediting and re-accrediting adult training providers results in differing criteria, timelines, and enforcement across regions, undermining the comparability of qualifications and eroding stakeholder trust. To address this, Bosnia and Herzegovina should harmonise accreditation standards, strengthen external quality assurance, and establish a consistent re-accreditation cycle that includes outcome monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and corrective measures to ensure continuous improvement in training quality.

The alignment between AL content and labour market needs in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains problematic, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen regional networks among formal and non-formal AL providers across public, private, and civil sectors. Initiatives by DVV International and ALDI have led to the establishment of such networks in Sarajevo Canton, Brčko District, Republika Srpska, Una-Sana Canton and BPC Goražde, with efforts underway to expand participation to non-formal providers. The Council for Adult Education of Sarajevo Canton was established in 2025 and is the only formal body of its kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the need for a similar network has been acknowledged in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, no concrete steps have been taken. Institutionalising these networks and leveraging their experiences for policy implementation is a critical priority, especially to counter perceptions of AL as a shortcut to quick diplomas or emigration. A unified, cross-sectoral state-level AL network could foster a shared approach and reposition adult learning as a societal investment rather than a cost. However, AL promotion currently depends heavily on DVVI and international donors, underlining the need for sustainable, domestically driven strategies, with national authorities taking a leading role in initiating and guiding AL reforms and programmes.

Conclusions

Strengths

- A broad range of formal and non-formal AL programmes exists, including primary, secondary, vocational, reskilling, and upskilling opportunities, targeting different adult groups (unemployed, low-qualified, older adults, vulnerable groups).
- Formal AL programmes are delivered through accredited VET schools and centres, leading to nationally recognised qualifications (EQF/BQF levels 2–5).
- Non-formal provision by private providers, NGOs, and chambers addresses labour market and personal development needs, increasing flexibility and outreach.
- Public Employment Services (PES) play an important role in funding and implementing short-term labour market training.
- Initial progress in VPL/VNFIL pilots (in RS and selected FBiH cantons) supports recognition of skills acquired through work or informal learning.
- Career guidance, counselling, and Europass/Euroguidance participation (2025) improve access to learning and mobility tools.

Challenges

- Provision is fragmented and uneven across entities and cantons, with major differences between formal and non-formal sectors.
- Attractiveness of AL programmes remains low due to weak promotion, limited economic incentives, and low awareness of benefits.
- Verification of AL programmes often focuses on administrative compliance, not responsiveness to labour market needs.
- Statistical data on non-verified, non-formal programmes are missing, and there is no unified registry or monitoring mechanism.
- VNFIL implementation remains limited, lacking legal clarity, capacity, and public trust.

- Although career guidance and counselling services exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they are uneven in scope, quality, and degree of integration, and are primarily delivered through public employment services and project-based initiatives. Their systemic linkage with adult education and lifelong learning remains limited, while the lack of harmonised standards, stable financing, and strong inter-institutional coordination further constrains the development of a coherent lifelong career guidance system.
- Non-formal education providers often lack stable funding and operate in the absence of an established qualifications framework, resulting in largely project-based provision and weak links to formal learning pathways. This limits both institutional sustainability and the recognition of learning outcomes for adult learners.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina's adult learning system continues to face significant inclusion and accessibility gaps, as targeted measures for women returning to work, persons with disabilities, minorities, and adults in remote or rural areas remain limited, leading to unequal access to lifelong learning opportunities.
- Employers continue to report low reliance on certificates from verified non-formal AL programmes, citing severe labour shortages and a tendency to provide in-house training rather than depend on formal education outputs.
- Public funding for AL is scarce and unpredictable, with most programmes, dependent on donor support. This lack of sustainable financing continues to hinder the sector's development and limits participation growth.
- State of play The AL system offers both formal and verified non-formal programmes focused on reskilling, upskilling, and completion of education. Labour market relevance is not a requirement for programme verification.
- Provision only **partially matches** the needs of diverse learner groups; participation among low-qualified, rural, and vulnerable adults remains low.
- Formal provision is dominated by public VET schools, while the non-formal market, although dynamic, operates largely outside verification and monitoring systems.
- Career guidance is mainly delivered through PES, with limited outreach to adults in non-formal education; Bosnia and Herzegovina's integration into Europass and Euroguidance (2025) represents a step forward.
- VNFIL in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains at an early stage of development, with a lack of a harmonised framework and limited institutional capacity. Piloting is envisaged in several cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, in Republika Srpska—despite a more developed adult learning framework—VNFIL has not yet been established as a functional and systemically implemented mechanism.
- Overall, AL provision is **moderately attractive**, but not yet fully responsive to labour market and learner diversity needs. Stronger data systems, recognition mechanisms and national coordination are required.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account all the information collected and analysed for the preparation of this Factsheet, the following key conclusions can be drawn:

Dimension I: Strategic and legal framework

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex and multi-layered framework for adult education, grounded in its constitutional structure and the division of competences between the entities, the cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the state level exercising a coordinating and facilitative role without executive powers in this area. While the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning (2014–2020) served as a common reference framework during its period of validity, its expiry has resulted in the absence of a current state-level strategic document. As a result, adult education is now planned primarily at the entity and cantonal levels, and overall implementation remains inconsistent and uneven across administrative units. In this context, a positive development is the ongoing initiative to revise the Strategic Platform for the Development of Adult Education, led by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of strengthening policy coherence in adult education and enhancing inter-institutional cooperation within the country's complex constitutional framework. The legal framework is largely aligned with policy objectives but remains incomplete due to delays in adopting secondary legislation and operational mechanisms, particularly in validation and quality assurance. Regular monitoring and evaluation of AL policies and action plans are still lacking, and adult learning continues to be marginalised in public policy priorities. Sustainable financing and stronger integration with the labour market and lifelong learning objectives are needed to translate strategic intent into measurable outcomes.

Dimension II: Governance and institutional arrangements

Governance of adult education in Bosnia and Herzegovina operates through a multi-layered institutional structure, which poses challenges for consistent coordination, policy coherence, and a clear allocation of responsibilities. Although competences are distributed across the state, entity, cantonal levels, and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, inter-institutional cooperation remains limited, particularly between the education and labour sectors. While the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a coordinating and facilitative role in adult education, the application of evidence-based policy making (EBPM) remains constrained due to the lack of comparable data, standardised indicators, and systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms across all levels of government. Quality assurance frameworks in adult education exist, but their implementation and alignment across different levels of government are still evolving, while institutional capacities—particularly at cantonal level and among certain service providers—require further strengthening. Financing mechanisms are diverse, with a need for greater transparency and more systematic monitoring, while public employment services, although with a limited range of programmes, play an important role in the provision of non-formal adult education. Financing of non-formal AL providers, NGOs and local initiatives remains highly inconsistent.

Strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation, developing more sustainable financing models, and ensuring continuous capacity building for implementation and quality assurance are key to the further development of a coherent and functional adult education governance system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dimension III: Provision and programmes of AL

Adult learning provision in Bosnia and Herzegovina is diverse but uneven, with a strong focus on formal education pathways and limited recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Most programmes are delivered through VET schools and registered adult education centres, complemented by donor-funded and NGO-led initiatives. However, outreach to adult learners, particularly low-qualified and vulnerable groups, remains insufficient. The system for the validation of non-formal education and informal learning in Bosnia and Herzegovina is at a developmental and piloting stage, with methodological foundations and capacity-building activities being implemented through EU-funded projects. However, operational and system-wide implementation across all levels of government has not yet been established, despite the existence of relevant legal and strategic foundations. Participation in lifelong learning remains among the lowest in Europe⁷¹, reflecting both limited awareness and weak motivation among adults to engage in

⁷¹ European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice (2021). Adult Education and Training in Europe: Building Inclusive Pathways to Skills and Qualifications.

education. The lack of comprehensive data on participation, outcomes, and provider performance prevents evidence-based planning. Expanding inclusive outreach measures, ensuring sustainable support for non-formal providers, and introducing systematic data collection and monitoring are essential to strengthen adult learning participation and quality across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ANNEX I – ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Chapters	Guiding questions [1]	Sources/methods
<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country context (governmental and administration features over education and training affairs, main legal frameworks, placement of AL sub-sector within the wider education & training system) - Specific elements related to the BiH political situation, constitutional arrangements, territorial/regional autonomies, and jurisdiction over education sector - Presentation of the country paper structure and objectives 		Desk review
<p>Chapter 1. AL Strategies & Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AL national and regional Strategies (existing, past and present, or under preparation and expectations on their 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) - 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 & evaluation mechanisms) - National targets vs EU targets (analysis of the 5 key indicators of NEAAL and Union of Skills 2030 at national level, plus indicators related to AL from Growth Plans/National Reform Agendas) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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? 2. Is the legal framework adjusted to the national/regional strategies and policy objectives? Do they correspond to specific needs of regions? Is there a mismatch between the different levels of policy definition (fully aligned/partially aligned/not aligned at all)? 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)? 4. What are the main indicators in use and related targets for AL sector (e.g. participation rates, skill levels, employment outcomes)? 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 matched/partially matched/ not matching at all)? 	Desk-review Interviews Data analysis

Chapters	Guiding questions [1]	Sources/methods
<p>Chapter 2. AL institutional arrangements & governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 AL supply and demand, participation of employers and other players from the world of work, funding sources and financing models) - AL governance models (key-features of the governance model, i.e. centralised/decentralised, participative, co-decision (diversity of actors, autonomy of the providers), supervision and coordination processes, relation to NQFs) - Monitoring and quality assurance, data collection and analysis on AL, including evaluation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 what are their roles (e.g. advisory, consultative, decision-making)? 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? Are the financing model and funding sources sufficient and adequate (very adequate/moderately adequate/not adequate at all)? 3. Which stakeholders (for example employers, trade unions, civil society, learners) are 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)? 4. How well coordinated is the management of the implementation of the AL policies as per the country's institutional arrangements? Do they correspond to the adopted legal frameworks, and do they correspond to a more centralised or decentralised model (very centralised/to a certain extent centralised/decentralised)? 5. How far are the recognition, portability and integration of AL outcomes/qualifications are integrated in/linked to national qualification frameworks/national qualification systems (fully integrated/to a certain extent/not integrated at all)? 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 is the quality of trainers/facilitators ensured (fully covered/to a certain extent/not covered at all)? 	<p>Desk-review</p> <p>Interviews</p>

Chapters	Guiding questions [1]	Sources/methods
<p>Chapter 3. AL Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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) - AL provision (size of the provision, number of enrolled learners, completion of the programmes) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What types of AL programmes are currently available (formal and non-formal), and what are their primary objectives and target groups? To what extent does AL provision match the needs of different groups of adult learners, addressing the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (fully match/partially match/ not matching at all)? 2. Which are the current providers of AL and are 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)? 	<p>Desk-review</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Statistical data analysis</p>
<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main findings - Main successes, what is working well, as well as challenges identified at each level (chapters 1, 2, 3) - Specificities of AL findings, perspectives in AL, source of policy learning. - 1 to max 3 conclusions to be highlighted. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the main findings in each of the 3 dimensions. 2. What indicates 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.)? 3. What remains as a (old) challenge, or which are the emerging challenges? 4. Do the findings in 1, 2 and 3 support the study assumption that AL is recognised as priority and there is progress? 5. What are the sources of 'policy learning' (who is source of inspiration: neighbours, EU countries, international practices, etc.)? 	<p>Expert's own analysis, based on key qualitative and quantitative information collected through desk research and interviews</p>

[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 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Institution and Interviewee	Institution and Interviewee	Institution and Interviewee
Assistant to Minister in Ministry of Education of Una-Sana Canton	Head of Unit for VET Information Systems, Adult Education, and Lifelong Learning in APOSO's VET Department and Advisor for the Implementation of the Qualifications Framework and Lifelong Learning	Director of Association for Local Development Initiatives 'ALDI' Goražde
Assistant to Minister, Ministry of Education of Central Bosnia Canton	Minister of Education and Advisor to the Minister of Education of West-Herzegovina Canton	Head of Unit for Labour Market Analysis, Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation at the Federal Employment Institute
Head of Department for Vocational Education and Adult Education in the Ministry for Education of Canton Sarajevo	Director of Centre for the promotion of civil society, Sarajevo	Director of the Employers Association of FBiH Sarajevo
Expert Adviser for Vocational and Adult Education in Ministry of Civil Affairs BiH	Director of Centre for Education and Research "NAHLA" Sarajevo	Director of DVV Office BiH and Project Coordinator/Fundraising at DVV Office BiH
Director of Institute for Education – Foreign Trade Chamber of BiH	Secretary General of the Chamber of Craft FBiH	Head of the Active Employment Policy Department Federal Employment Institute Sarajevo
Assistant to the Minister of Education of Canton 10 Livno		

Source Author

ANNEX III – OVERVIEW OF CANTONAL AND ENTITY - LEVEL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR ADULT EDUCATION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (2013–2024)

Year	Document	The goal of the Legal act and its provisions	Source
2009 / 2021 (new law)	Law on Adult Education of Republika Srpska New 2021 law followed by updates of by-laws (8 + older acts); framework essentially completed.	The 2021 Adult Education Law of Republika Srpska aims to recognise adult learning as a public interest within lifelong education, to regulate formal and non-formal pathways (primary and secondary completion, re-qualification, rapid labour-market-driven training), to enable accreditation and registration of adult-education providers, to mandate quality through standards and to supervise record-keeping, to establish legal grounds for provider, programme, learner, mentor and employer registers, to regulate examinations and the issuance of publicly valid certificates/diplomas, and to ensure responsiveness to labour-market skill needs through cooperation with employers and sectoral institutions.	Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 111/21.
2013/2021	2021 (new law) 2021 Law on Adult Education of Una-Sana Canton – (Law 10/13 repealed) Framework largely completed; nine key by-laws adopted.	The Revised Law from 2021, regulates both formal and non-formal adult learning and is supported by multiple bylaws. It establishes a register of adult education providers and a separate register of employers who host practical training. The law defines standards for institutions, including infrastructure, staff, and programme quality, and introduces flexible training programmes tailored to urgent labour market needs. It also regulates the issuance of public documents, the organisation and duration of adult education classes, and the use of standardised andragogical documentation. These provisions aim to improve access to and the quality, and relevance of adult education in the canton.	Official Gazette of Una-Sana Canton, No. 01-02-1-324/21.
2014/2018	2014 Law on Adult Education of Zenica-Doboj Canton Amendments to Law on Adult Education (9 by-laws) Completed and detailed; includes public programmes	The Law on Adult Education in Zenica-Doboj Canton regulates both formal and non-formal learning for adults, including retraining, upskilling, and various vocational programmes. Adult education providers must be registered institutions that meet defined standards for staff, space, and equipment. Programmes must outline clear objectives, duration, competencies, and assessment methods. A three-year strategic plan and annual implementation plans guide priorities and funding. The law also allows adults to validate knowledge and skills gained through non-formal or informal learning via official exams conducted by authorized institutions.	Official Gazette of Zenica-Doboj Canton, No. 13/18
2015/2019	The Law on Adult Education of Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Goražde (BPC Goražde) Amendments to the Law on AE in BPC Goražde (seven by-laws) adopted. Largely established but exam by-law still missing.	The Law on Adult Education in BPC Goražde defines adult education as formal, non-formal, informal, and self-directed learning within the unified education system. It is recognised as a public interest, aimed at reducing unemployment and aligning education with labour market needs and European values. The law regulates the conditions for institutions providing adult education, including infrastructure, staffing, and program requirements. It mandates the development of a three-year strategic plan and annual action plans with allocated budgets. Program content includes key competencies such as literacy, language, digital,	Official Gazette of Bosnian-Podrinje Canton Goražde, No. 12/19

Year	Document	The goal of the Legal act and its provisions	Source
		occupational, and civic skills. Upon completion, participants receive certified qualifications, and the cost of adult education is shared among public institutions, employers, learners, and donors, with a focus on employability and social inclusion.	
2015	Law on Adult Education of West Herzegovina Canton Still incomplete – five key by-laws adopted.	Adult education in the West Herzegovina Canton includes formal, non-formal, informal, and/or self-directed learning. The law defines the goals, principles, and types of programmes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • primary adult education • secondary education / qualifications • requalification, additional qualification, specialization, training, and professional development Provisions are included on how programmes are organised, the requirements for institutions delivering adult education, registration of such institutions, and standards and norms for implementation.	Official Gazette of West Herzegovina Canton – No. 17/2015
2015/2022	Law on Adult Education of Tuzla Canton Amendments to Law on Adult Education of Tuzla Canton All by-laws (eight) envisaged adopted.	The Law on Adult Education in Tuzla Canton, adopted in 2015 and amended in 2022, regulates formal and non-formal adult learning with the aim of improving employability and aligning education with labour market needs. It establishes standards and norms for adult education providers, including infrastructure, staffing, hygiene, and pedagogical conditions. The law mandates registration of providers and programmes, proper record-keeping, and standardised procedures for examinations and certification. Special provisions exist for short-term training programs tailored to urgent labour market demands. Adult education activities must align with officially approved strategic and annual plans. Financing is shared among public authorities, employers, and participants, with the possibility of support for priority programs addressing unemployment. The 2022 Amendments to the Law on Adult Education of Tuzla Canton introduced several important changes aimed at improving quality, transparency, and responsiveness of the adult education system. A unique central database 'Information system for controlling and monitoring adult education' (ISKOOM abbrev. in B/C/S) was established to track providers, programmes, and participants. The amendments strengthened the requirements for curriculum development and introduced mandatory andragogical training for adult education organisers. They also refined procedures for programme approval, registration of providers, verification of working conditions, and the formation of examination committees. New provisions enable rapid implementation of short-term training programmes in response to urgent labour market needs, and the law now explicitly supports cooperation with European networks such as the European Association for Adult Education (EAEA).	Official Gazette of Tuzla Canton No. 9/15 Official Gazette of Tuzla Canton No. 5/22
2015/2020	2015 The Law on Adult Education of Sarajevo Canton Amendments to the Law on Adult Education	The 2020 Amendments to the Law introduced significant improvements in quality assurance, institutional oversight, and program regulation. Providers of adult education are now subject to external evaluations by the Ministry every five years, with stricter accreditation and re-accreditation requirements regarding infrastructure, staffing, and	Official Gazette of Sarajevo Canton, No. 40/20

Year	Document	The goal of the Legal act and its provisions	Source
	Functional framework; acts periodically updated. nine by-laws adopted	programme delivery. The law formalized the use of official registers for both adult education providers and employers offering practical training. It also enhanced procedures for organizing and verifying examinations and introduced clear standards and norms for programme content, learning modalities, and required documentation, aligning adult education more closely with labour market and lifelong learning goals.	
2017	Law on Adult Education of Canton 10 All envisaged by-laws (five) adopted.	This Law provides the legal foundation for organising, implementing, and supervising adult education in the canton. Its primary goal is to ensure access to lifelong learning for all adults, whether through formal, non-formal, or informal means. The law regulates the establishment and operation of adult education providers, outlines the rights and obligations of participants, defines various educational pathways (including retraining, upskilling, and validation of prior learning), and introduces mechanisms for certification and public recognition of learning outcomes. It also includes provisions for educational planning, financial support, partnerships with employers and civil society, and the establishment of quality assurance procedures and registries for authorised institutions.	Official Gazette of the Herceg-Bosnian Canton, No. 9/16
2017	Law on Adult Education of Central Bosnian Canton Significantly incomplete; key by-laws still missing. Only two by-laws adopted	This Law establishes adult learning as part of the canton's unified education system and a matter of public interest, defining principles (lifelong learning, quality, equity, recognition of prior learning) and clear terminology (formal, non-formal, informal, self-directed learning, key competences). It regulates who may provide adult education (schools, higher-education institutions, dedicated AE institutions and other qualified organisers), sets conditions for founding and operating providers, introduces a mandatory register of AE providers (missing), and prescribes periodic compliance checks every four years. Programmes (basic and secondary education, first qualification, reskilling/up-skilling, specialisation, key competences, health, environment, third-age learning, etc.) must specify aims, learning outcomes, entry/exit rules, duration, delivery modes (including e-learning), resources, and evaluation. The law enables validation of prior learning via exams at authorised institutions and governs certification (public documents), documentation and data records, practical training arrangements, and educator requirements including andragogical training. Governance and planning are supported by an AE Council and the Ministry (annual AE plan, oversight, quality assurance). Financing (no dedicated budget) is a shared responsibility of the canton, municipalities, employers, learners, and other sources; employed learners are guaranteed educational leave. Supervision, inspection, misdemeanour fines, and deadlines for adopting by-laws ensure enforcement and full operationalisation. A rulebook on the procedure for determining compliance with the conditions for the work of adult education providers in Central Bosnia Canton was adopted in December 2024.	Official Gazette Of SBK/KSB No. 5/17

Year	Document	The goal of the Legal act and its provisions	Source
2018	<p>Law on Adult Education of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton</p> <p>Partially implemented; validation and staff competency acts missing. Four by-laws adopted</p>	<p>This Law establishing a structured and accessible system of lifelong learning that enables adults to acquire, improve, and validate knowledge, skills, and competences for personal development, employment, and active participation in society. The law regulates the organisation, implementation, financing, and quality assurance of adult education, covering both formal and non-formal learning. It defines the responsibilities of public institutions, private providers, and relevant authorities, and sets conditions for accreditation, programme approval, and certification. The law also introduces a template for register of providers and outlines procedures for supervision and evaluation to ensure the transparency and effectiveness of adult learning in the Canton.</p>	<p>Official Gazette of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton No. 3/2018</p>
2018	<p>Law on Adult Education of Brčko District BiH</p> <p>Full set of by-laws (nine) adopted (exams, registers, standards, supervision)</p>	<p>This law outlines the provisions for organising both formal and non-formal learning activities, including vocational/training programmes, retraining, and lifelong learning opportunities. However, a key challenge remains that many by-laws (i.e. regulations required to operationalise the law) are not yet fully developed, which leads to gaps in implementing standards, accreditation, financing, and quality assurance.</p>	<p>Official Gazette of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 50/18.</p>
2019	<p>Law on Adult Education of Posavina Canton</p> <p>Partially completed; some by-laws missing. Five + two key by-laws adopted</p>	<p>This Law regulates the organisation, financing, and delivery of adult education in the canton. It defines the responsibilities of institutions and authorities involved, sets the conditions for accreditation and registration of adult education providers, and establishes rules for issuing public certificates. The law is supported by several by-laws, including standards and norms for programme implementation, procedures for managing provider registers, approving educational programmes, and regulating examination committees. While the legal framework exists, implementation remains limited, and alignment with broader EU practices is still developing.</p>	<p>Official Gazette of Posavina Canton, No. 10/2019</p>

Source: Author

ANNEX IV – OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING POLICY AREAS, OBJECTIVES, AND IMPLEMENTATION STATUS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Policy area	Objective	Current status
Strengthening Governance and Coordination	To strengthen inter-institutional cooperation and enhance policy alignment across different levels of governance (state, entity, cantonal, and Brčko District levels of BiH).	Emerging and improving. Coordination structures (MoCA Working Group on AL, Council for AE Sarajevo and Zenica -Doboj Canton, RS Institute for AE) established; However, inter-entity alignment and overall policy coherence at the state level remain limited.
Expanding Financial Support and Sustainability	Create stable, multi-source financing and reduce reliance on donor projects.	Weakly developed. No dedicated budget lines: funding remains ad hoc, project-based; integrated financing framework still pending.
Broadening Access and Inclusion	Ensure equitable access to learning for all adults, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.	Partially implemented. Inclusion initiatives exist (DVV, UNDP), but outreach and public funding limited; remains fragmented and donor driven.
Enhancing Quality and Accreditation of Programmes	Strengthen quality assurance, accreditation, and recognition mechanisms for AE providers and programmes.	Established but uneven. Legal frameworks exist; accreditation procedures in place in many cantons/entities, but coverage incomplete.
Recognition and Validation of Prior Learning (VPL)	Enable validation of non-formal and informal learning and link to BiH Qualifications Framework.	Emerging. Legal basis exists; pilots under EU4VET; Manual for VPL/VNFIL adopted in 2025; limited institutional capacity and coverage.
Aligning Adult Learning with Labour Market Needs	Develop modular, flexible, demand-driven programmes designed with employers.	Progressing but fragmented. Active EU4VET and DVV projects; uneven participation and coordination; growing employer partnerships.
Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Systems	Establish comprehensive AE databases (e.g. ISKOOM) for evidence-based policymaking.	Emerging. ISKOOM operational in several cantons; lacks national harmonisation and full data integration.
Promoting Lifelong Learning (LLL) Culture and Awareness	Foster public understanding and participation in lifelong learning.	Emerging. Awareness initiatives by MoCA, DVV, UIL; still project-based, fragmented, lacking national communication strategy.

ANNEX V – INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNANCE, STEERING AND COORDINATION BODIES IN SUB-SECTOR AL

Governance Area	Institution / Body	Role in Adult Education	Key Stakeholders Involved
Legislative / Legal Regulation	Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Srpska – Institute for Adult Education	Drafting and proposing the legislative framework; adopting and implementing secondary legislation; regulating the quality assurance system; institutional oversight and administrative supervision; coordination with other sectors.	Institute for Adult Education; Pedagogical Institute; Employment Service of Republika Srpska; Employers' Union; Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Crafts; local communities; adult education providers.
	Brčko District of BiH – Department of Education	Development and implementation of education policy in the District; adoption and enforcement of education regulations, including adult education; establishment, financing, and supervision of educational institutions and adult education providers; quality assurance and oversight of education; development and implementation of lifelong learning programmes.	In accordance with the Statute of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the applicable District regulations, the following actors are involved: the Government of the Brčko District; the Department of Education of the Brčko District Government; public and private adult education institutions; public institutions related to the labour market, primarily the Employment Service of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and social partners and local stakeholders (as needed), including employers, business associations, and non-governmental organisations, which participate in an advisory capacity or through projects and partnerships.
	Cantonal ministries of education in FBiH	Development and implementation of education policies at the cantonal level; adoption and enforcement of laws and secondary legislation in the field of education, including adult education; planning, financing, and supervision of educational institutions and adult education providers; quality assurance of education programmes and accreditation procedures; development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies and programmes; cooperation with other cantonal authorities, social partners, and relevant institutions.	Cantonal ministries of education; cantonal governments; pedagogical institutes (where established); advisory bodies for adult education (where in place); public and private adult education institutions; public employment services (cantonal employment institutes); and social partners and local stakeholders (as appropriate), such as employers, chambers of commerce and crafts (where they exist), trade unions, and civil society organisations, participating

Governance Area	Institution / Body	Role in Adult Education	Key Stakeholders Involved
			in an advisory and project-based capacity.
Management / Implementation	Cantonal Ministries of Education in the Federation of BiH	Have competence over education policy (formal and non-formal); adopt cantonal laws; implement and monitor adult education.	Cantonal education ministries; adult education centres; local authorities; training providers; employers; civil society.
	In Republika Srpska, governance of adult education is centralised at the entity level, with the Ministry of Education and Culture acting as the key regulatory authority.	<p>The Institute performs professional, analytical, developmental, regulatory, supervisory, and coordination functions in adult education, including programme development, approval, monitoring and evaluation, maintenance of central registers and databases, quality assurance, professional training of educators, provision of expert guidance, implementation of lifelong learning projects, licensing and oversight of specialised training and examinations, and other tasks in accordance with the law.</p> <p>The Pedagogical Institute provides professional and pedagogical support, carries out professional–pedagogical supervision of programme delivery, monitors the quality of the teaching process, and offers mentoring and advisory support to teachers and institutions.</p> <p>Through the Employment Service, links with the labour market are ensured, including participation in active labour market policy measures, financing and referral of participants to adult education programmes, identification of labour market needs and shortage occupations, and cooperation with adult education providers on reskilling and upskilling.</p> <p>Adult education providers (public and private institutions) are responsible for delivering formal and non-formal adult education programmes, enrolment, implementation of instruction, and issuance of certificates, ensuring compliance with legislation, standards, and quality assurance requirements, and cooperating with the Ministry, the Pedagogical Institute, and the Employment Service.</p> <p>Social partners (the Employers' Union of Republika Srpska, chambers of commerce and crafts, and local communities) participate in identifying labour market needs, developing programmes and projects, and forming partnerships for adult training and employment.</p>	Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska; Pedagogical Institute of Republika Srpska; Institute for AL of RS, Employment Service of Republika Srpska; inspection authorities; public adult education institutions; private adult education providers; Employers' Union of Republika Srpska; Chamber of Commerce; chambers of crafts/trades and related associations (where they exist); local self-government units.

Governance Area	Institution / Body	Role in Adult Education	Key Stakeholders Involved
	Brčko District – Department of Education	The Department of Education of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a central regulatory, governance, and supervisory role in adult education at the district level, with responsibility for policy development, quality assurance, financing, and the implementation of lifelong learning programmes.	Department of Education; adult education organisers; District Government; employers; institutions; inspection services.
Coordination / Strategic Planning	Conference of Ministers of Education in BiH	Permanent advisory body for coordination of the education system – including adult education – between the state, entities, cantons and district; proposes strategic priorities. It has a role in monitoring education standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina and aligning them with international standards.	The Conference is composed of all heads of administrative bodies at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the entities, the cantons, and the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina who, in accordance with the existing constitutional and legal arrangements, are responsible for the field of education—namely, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, entity ministers of education, cantonal ministers of education, and the Head of the Department of Education of the Brčko District..
	Ministry of Civil Affairs	Coordinates education policy at the state level; ensures alignment with and monitoring of Bosnia and Herzegovina's international obligations in the field of education; supports the development of common policies and strategic documents without binding authority over lower levels of government; and facilitates cooperation and information exchange among entity, cantonal, and other competent institutions.	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MoCA); Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska; cantonal ministries of education; Department of Education of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
	Federal Ministry of Education and Science (BiH)	Although there is no single permanent coordination body for adult education at the level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Ministry of Education and Science participates in working groups (e.g. on strategies, legislation, and reforms) and coordinates activities with cantonal ministries of education.	Representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science; representatives of cantonal ministries of education; representatives of pedagogical institutes; social partners and experts (as required).

ANNEX VI – ADULT LEARNING GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Authority / Institution	Level of authority	Main Roles and responsibilities
Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA)	State	Coordinates AL matters of common interest; leads national strategy processes; liaises with international partners and coordinates cross-entity cooperation.
Agency for Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education (APOSO)	State agency	Provides expertise on standards and assessment; supports quality assurance tools; coordinates activities under the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL).
Agency for Labour and Employment of BiH	State	Coordinates employment policy and alignment of adult learning-related active labour market measures (ALMM) across entities and Brčko District.
Ministry of Education and Culture & Institute for Adult Education of Republika Srpska	Entity (RS)	Legislate and issues by-laws; license and accredits providers and programmes; maintain registers; oversee quality assurance, examinations, documentation, and supervision.
Cantonal Ministries of Education & Pedagogical Institutes (Federation of BiH)	Cantonal (FBiH)	Regulate AL at canton level; license providers and approve programmes; maintain registers; provide advisory support, professional development, and supervision.
Department of Education of Brčko District	District	Implements AL legislation; licenses providers and programmes; maintains registers; ensures quality assurance and supervision.
Public Employment Services (Entity, Cantonal, BD)	Entity / Cantonal / District	Finance and procure short training and retraining programmes; target priority groups; monitor participation, completion, and outcomes.
Providers (Public VET Schools, Adult Education Centres, HE Units)	Institutional / Local	Deliver formal and non-formal AL programmes; maintain learner records; comply with licensing and QA standards; offer guidance and, where applicable, validation (VNFIL).
Private Providers & NGOs	Non-state	Deliver non-formal adult learning in line with minimum standards; report outcomes; cooperate with employers and education authorities.
Educators, Trainers, Assessors (incl. VNFIL)	Individual / Institutional	Apply adult-centred pedagogy; assess learning; undertake continuous professional development; implement validation procedures where established.
Chambers of Commerce, Employers, Trade Unions	Non-state / Social Partners	Identify labour market and skills needs; co-design programmes and standards; host work-based learning; co-finance targeted training initiatives.
Municipalities / City Administrations	Local Government	Co-fund adult learning through grants, vouchers, or in-kind support; align local training offers with development plans; monitor local performance indicators.
Inspectorates & Pedagogical Institutes	Entity / Cantonal	Conduct professional supervision and inspections; ensure compliance with standards; recommend quality improvements.

Authority / Institution	Level of authority	Main Roles and responsibilities
Statistical Offices & Line Authorities	State / Entity / Cantonal	Collect and publish adult learning data; improve EMIS/LMIS integration; monitor participation, completion, and outcomes.
International Partners (DVV International, EU/IPA, ETF, GIZ, etc.)	International	Provide technical assistance and capacity building; pilot and scale adult learning models; support harmonisation, data systems, and quality assurance improvements.

[2] Adult Learning (AL) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is governed through a multi-level, multi-actor framework due to the country's decentralised education system. The governance model includes three functional dimensions: design, implementation, and monitoring/control, with overlapping responsibilities.

ANNEX VII – SUMMARY OF THE FUNDING SOURCES BY THE STATE BUDGET, ON BOTH CENTRAL AND MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Government level	Budget holder(s)	Main funding instruments	Type of programme	Typical beneficiaries	Notes
State level BiH	Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA); state agencies (e.g. APOSO); Agency for Labour & Employment	Coordination budgets; co-financing of state-level initiatives; project envelopes with international partners	System development (standards, QA tools), strategic processes, pilots; (rarely) small implementation grants via projects	Authorities, agencies, providers (through projects)	Education delivery is not financed by the state level; state mainly coordinates and co-finances with donors
Entity: Republika Srpska (central within RS)	RS Ministry of Education & Culture; Institute for Adult Education	Regular education budget lines; by-law-based financing (provider licensing, exams); programme approvals	Formal AL in VET schools/centres; exams/certification; QA; limited non-formal AL tied to standards	Public providers, exam centres, adult learners	More complete by-law set (registers, exams, public docs, records) enables targeted financing
Federation of BiH – Cantons (central within canton)	10 Cantonal Ministries of Education & Pedagogical Institutes	Cantonal education budgets; programme grants; licensing/approval fees; (sometimes) targeted AL measures	Formal AL (e.g., secondary/VET for adults), selected non-formal programmes, QA/supervision, teacher CPD	Public providers, accredited centres, adult learners	No FBiH-entity AE law; financing and by-laws vary by canton; often no dedicated AE budget line (embedded under VET/general education)
Brčko District (central within District)	Department of Education (Brčko)	District education budget; provider licensing/approval; programme grants	Formal AL offers; exams/certification; QA/supervision; selected non-formal AL	Providers, exam centres, adult learners	Unified district structure simplifies allocation compared to cantons
Public Employment Services (PES) (entity/cantonal/BD BiH)	RS Employment Service; FBiH PES + cantonal services; BD BiH Employment Service	ALMM-training/retraining, vouchers; employer-linked training; public calls	Short courses, up/re-skilling, on-the-job training tied to vacancies	Unemployed, long-term unemployed, priority groups; employers	Key public source for non-formal, labour-market AL; budgets fluctuate by year/unit
Municipalities	Municipal/city administrations; local development agencies	Annual public calls/grants to providers; vouchers/stipends to learners; project co-financing with donors/PES; in-kind support (premises/equipment)	Community and non-formal AL (digital, languages, basic skills); support for formal pathways (re/qualification); local pilots	Local adult learners, accredited providers, NGOs	Highly variable by municipality; often no dedicated AE line (funded under education, employment, local development)

Source of funding	Type of programme	Funding volume
Public budgets	<p>Programmes for completion of primary education of adults⁷²</p> <p>Programs for completion of secondary education for adults with completed primary education⁷³</p>	<p>Public funding for AL from state budgets exists but is fragmented, without a central coordination mechanism or consistent tracking, and often limited in volume.</p> <p>Most financing is directed toward formal education pathways, with non-formal and community-based programmes receiving less attention or relying on donor support.</p> <p>Students and their parents are responsible for acquiring textbooks, manuals and insurance. Private education institutions cover their expenses by charging tuition fees. The monitoring of adult learning financing is insufficient in all administrative units. There are currently no guidelines for monitoring financial allocations in AL.</p>
PES ALMP	<p>Retraining for unemployed persons upskilling for the long-term unemployed, short-term vocational training programmes for in-demand occupations, subsidies for employers to train new workers, training vouchers for unemployed individuals</p>	<p>FBiH PES Out of the planned budget of EUR 91.275 million, only EUR 45.87 million was actually executed in 2024, representing an implementation rate of approximately 50%. The report highlights that there were EUR 29.42 million in carry-over contractual obligations from previous years, which impacted the ability to fully execute new funds.</p> <p>In 2024, Republika Srpska planned approximately EUR 5.1 million for active labour-market measures, including about EUR 153000 specifically for training and re-training programmes.</p> <p>In Brčko District there is no specific published figure for the amount allocated by the Brčko District BiH PES for training and retraining programmes in 2024.</p>
International donors, NGOs, EU funds	<p>Non-formal adult learning programmes, often focused on marginalised / vulnerable groups; includes online courses; emphasis on community-based learning.</p>	<p>No reliable data.</p>
Learners and Employers	<p>On-the-job training / in-house training Short vocational / technical courses Certification / licensing programmes for e.g. welders, forklift operators, safety officers, etc. Soft skills and management training such as leadership, communication, sales, team dynamics, etc. Language courses for migration, employment abroad, or tourism jobs. ICT and digital skills courses for employability and digital inclusion, Personal development / hobby courses such as photography, design, health and wellness, creative skills.</p>	<p>There is no official statistic consolidating total out-of-pocket spending by learners or total employer training expenditure in BiH adult learning.</p>

⁷² Adult learning is not free of charge in all parts of the country and is conditioned on the age of adult learners. This is the case with the still legally valid Law on AE in Canton 10, for instance. The Law on AE in Canton 10 restricts free attendance at primary education for adults to students aged 15 to 18. Primary education in all other administrative units, including BD, is free of charge, which is regulated by special articles in AE Laws.

⁷³ Financial Education Statistics Report by the Agencies for Statistics. Currently, there is no insight into the amounts spent on AE in BiH. There is no special code for AE expenditure, and it isn't easy to discern from the budgets what amount is allocated to that purpose.

ANNEX VIII – INSTITUTIONAL ROLES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR AL

Role	MoEs	APOSO	Institute for Adult Education	Pedagogical institutes	Educational inspectorates
Coordination and advisory role, especially in aligning quality assurance mechanisms	√	√	√	√	
Monitoring of the implementation of the AE Law	√				√
Monitoring of the implementation of remedial education through advisory - consultative, mentoring-instructional support and professional supervision	√	√			
Programme accreditation, provider licensing, educator qualifications, and monitoring	√		√	√	√
Professional supervision and oversight of the implementation of non-formal adult education			√	√	
Supports alignment of adult education programs with the BiH Qualifications Framework (BQF)		√			
Inspection supervision and quality oversight over the AE and VNFIL service providers	√	√	√	√	√

Source: Author

ANNEX IX – EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT CO-FINANCING PROGRAMMES 2024 (FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)

No.	Programme Name	Objective	Co-financing Measures / Target Groups	Number of Beneficiaries (2024)
1	Employment Co-financing Programme 2024	To co-finance the employment of unemployed persons registered with employment services in the Federation of BiH, from different categories, by stimulating labour demand.	Measures: Employment of interns; Youth with experience; Women's employment; Opportunity for All; Employment of Demobilised Soldiers; Periodic/seasonal employment; New Opportunity; Public Works and Assistance to those in Need; 'Looking for an Employer.' Target groups: young people without work experience, interns, women, people aged up to 35 with work experience, persons over 40, long-term unemployed (registered 12 months or more), low-skilled or unskilled persons, and demobilised veterans.	4,335 unemployed persons employed with 2,753 employers.
2	Self-employment co-financing – Start-up 2024	To encourage unemployed persons to become self-employed by starting their own businesses / registering enterprises for 12 months, and to enable them to hire other unemployed persons for the same period.	Measures: Entrepreneurship for Youth; Entrepreneurship for Women; Entrepreneurship for All; Entrepreneurship for Demobilised Soldiers. Target group: all unemployed persons in F BiH who have not registered a business in the past 48 months.	1,107 newly registered businesses + 215 additionally employed = 1,322 beneficiaries.
3	Employment co-financing 'Employment Service in Cooperation with Employers' 2024	To co-finance the employment of unemployed persons registered with the FBiH employment services. Implementation dynamics defined by cantonal employment services according to needs.	Target group: all categories of unemployed persons registered in FBiH.	2,617 unemployed persons employed with 1,689 employers.
4	Self-employment co-financing 'Start-up – Second Chance' 2024	To encourage self-employment and business start-ups / business registration for 12 months, and additional employment of other unemployed persons for 6 months. Implementation defined by cantonal services.	Target group: persons registered as unemployed in FBiH before application submission; both self-employing individuals and those hiring another person, regardless of education level or age, who will register and maintain the business for at least 12 months.	757 newly registered businesses + 119 additional jobs = 876 beneficiaries.
5	Self-employment co-financing in agriculture 2024	To encourage unemployed persons to become self-employed or to employ others by starting agricultural businesses registered for up to 24 months.	Target group: persons registered as unemployed in FBiH at least one day before the public call, regardless of education, gender or age, who will register and maintain the activity for at least 24 months. Excluded: those who had a registered business in the past 48 months.	430 new agricultural businesses + 22 additional employees = 452 beneficiaries.
6	Programme 'Training and Work with a Known Employer' 2024	To increase employability of unemployed persons through on-the-job training with a known employer, leading to employment for 6, 12, 18 or 24 months after training.	The Institute co-finances training and employment costs depending on the variant (A, B, C or D) selected by the employer; regulated by contract between the Institute and the employer. All registered unemployed persons and employers in FBiH may apply.	309 unemployed persons employed with 117 employers after training, mostly on 24-month contracts.

No.	Programme Name	Objective	Co-financing Measures / Target Groups	Number of Beneficiaries (2024)
7	Programme 'Training for the Labour Market' 2024	To include unemployed persons registered in FBiH employment services in training programmes to gain additional skills and increase employability.	The Institute co-finances training costs up to BAM 1,000 per person. Target group: unemployed persons for whom an employment advisor issues a positive opinion on training need.	958 training vouchers implemented.
8	Programme of Joint Projects with Other Organisations and Institutions 2024	To create partnerships and implement projects related to the labour market, employment, training and professional development, adult education, lifelong learning, career guidance and volunteering.	Implemented in cooperation with ministries, municipalities, NGOs and other partners.	668 persons employed, 145 trained, and 300 volunteering opportunities created.

Source: Author

ACRONYMS

AE	Adult Education
AET	Adult Education and Training
AL	Adult Learning
ALDI	Association for Local Development Initiatives
ALE	Adult Learning and Education
ALMM	Active Labour Market Measures
ALMP	Active Labour Market Programmes
APOO	Accredited Adult Education Programmes
APOSO	Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education
BAM	Bosnian Convertible Mark
BD BiH	Brčko District Bosnia and Herzegovina
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BPC Goražde	Bosnia – Podrinje Canton Goražde
BHAS	Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHAS)
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CBC	Central Bosnia Canton
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CPCD	Center for Civil Society Promotion
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
DVVI	Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul - Verband
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

EC	European Commission
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FMON	Federal Ministry of Education and Science
FZS	Federal Office of Statistics of the Federation of BiH
GiZ	German Organization for International Cooperation
HE	Higher Education
HNC	Herzegovina-Neretva Canton
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IRPO	Institute for Development of Pre-University Education
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISKOOM	Information system for controlling and monitoring adult education
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MoCA	Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
MoEs	Ministries of Education

NEET	Not in Employment, Education and Training
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
PC	Posavina Canton
PES	Public Employment Services
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
QA	Quality Assurance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
R&D	Research and Development
VNFIL	Validation of Non-Formal, Formal and Informal Learning
VPL	Validation of Prior Learning
RS	Republika Srpska
RZS	Institute of Statistics of Republika Srpska
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SC	Sarajevo Canton
SME	Small and Medium Size Enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
SVET	Strengthening of Technical Vocational Education (GIZ project in BiH)
TC	Tuzla Canton
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
USC	Una-Sana Canton

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning
VNOIU	Validation of Non-formal Education and Informal Learning
WB	World Bank
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WHC	West Herzegovina Canton
YG	Youth Guarantee
ZEDO	Zenica – Dobož Canton

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