

ADULT LEARNING IN SERBIA

Factsheet

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INTRODUCTION

This factsheet was developed in 2025 by the European Training Foundation (ETF) as part of an exercise mapping adult learning (AL) in the EU candidate countries and potential candidate.

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

AL is an important part of lifelong learning¹. It includes formal (i.e. linked to formal qualifications) and non-formal learning (mainly in companies but also in other learning environments), including upskilling and reskilling activities and learning aimed at developing a wide spectrum of skills².

In accordance with Article 2 of the Law on Adult Education (LAE) of the Republic of Serbia (Official Gazette No 55/2013, No 88/2017, No 27/2018, No 6/2020)³, adult education (AE) is regulated within the framework of lifelong learning. AE is an integral part of the unified education system of the Republic of Serbia and ensures that adults acquire, throughout their lives, the competences and qualifications needed for personal and professional development, employment and socially responsible behaviour. In the Serbian regulatory framework, AE covers formal and non-formal provision, as well as informal learning acquired through everyday experience. In this report, the broader term 'adult learning' is used to encompass the full scope of these activities.

For the development of this factsheet, information was systematically collected through desk research and field work, concluding in September 2025. The analysis is organised around the analytical framework and guiding questions presented in [Annex I](#). Group and individual interviews were carried out in July and August 2025 with experts in the field of AL coming from social partners, from the non-governmental sector and from a secondary vocational school accredited for the recognition of prior learning and the provision of AL. The list of interviewees is enclosed as [Annex II](#). This report has been validated by the representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Office for Dual Education and the National Qualifications Framework (the 'Office') and the Qualifications Agency (QA).

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

This factsheet presents key factual elements about adult learning (AL) in Serbia, considering the three dimensions mentioned above.

¹ Cedefop's glossary defines lifelong learning as 'any learning activity undertaken throughout life in a formal, non-formal or informal setting, which results in improving knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and qualifications for personal, social or professional reasons': [lifelong learning | CEDEFOP](#).

² Skills are understood in a broad sense, encompassing skills, knowledge and competences for life, well beyond the skills needed for the labour market.

³ <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-obrazovanju-odraslih-republike-srbije.html>

Country context

Key socio-economic and demographic trends⁴

The Republic of Serbia (RS)⁵ has experienced moderate but steady economic growth in recent years, accompanied by gradual improvements in labour-market performance. The economy expanded by around 3–4 % annually between 2022 and 2024, supported by investment, exports and domestic consumption (MoF, 2024; EC, 2024). Employment has continued to rise, while unemployment and informality have declined, reflecting the impact of structural reforms and active labour-market measures (SORS, 2023; Eurostat, 2025). Nevertheless, persistent regional disparities, youth unemployment and gender gaps remain key policy challenges (EC, 2024).

Demographic trends continue to reduce the size of the working-age population, as Serbia faces low birth rates, population ageing and continuous emigration (SORS, 2024b; EC, 2024). Urbanisation has accelerated, with about two-fifths of citizens residing in rural areas (SORS, 2025).

Overall, the trend is positive – rising employment with less joblessness and informality – but sustained attention needs to be paid to youth and female activation and to territorial gaps.

Key country insights

Demographics: the population was estimated to be at 6.58 million in 2024, reflecting low natural growth, population ageing and steady emigration (SORS, 2024b).

Labour market: the employment rate among the 20–64 age group was 64.7% in 2023. The long-term unemployment rate stood at 3.4% in Serbia (2024), almost twice the EU average of 1.9% (Eurostat, 2025). Economic inactivity among the 15–64 age group was about 28–29% in 2023, above the EU average of around 25% (EC, 2024).

Youth and vulnerability: the NEET rate among the 15–29 age group was 15.2% in Serbia (SORS, 2025), compared to 11.2% in the EU in 2023 (Eurostat, 2023). The at-risk-of-poverty rate in 2024 stood at 19.7% in Serbia vs. 16.2% in the EU, while 24.3% of the population faced poverty or social exclusion compared to 21.4% in the EU (Eurostat, 2025a).

Digital and education: in 2023, 85.2% of adults in Serbia used the internet, slightly below the EU average of 90%. Only 33.6% had at least basic digital skills compared to 56% in the EU, while 11.3% had above basic digital skills – less than half the EU average of 27% (DESI, 2024). In 2022, the share of adults aged 25–64 participating in some form of adult learning was 19.9% (SORS, 2023)

Urbanisation and sectoral employment: Serbia's labour market is concentrated in industry, construction, trade, transport, and hospitality, with growth in ICT and finance (MoE, 2025). Urbanisation reached 62.1% in 2024 (SORS, 2025).

⁴ Data of relevance for this section was gathered from following sources: EC (2024). *Serbia 2024 Report* [online]: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/serbia-report-2024_en; MoF (2024). *Macroeconomic and Fiscal Trends in Serbia 2024* [online]: <https://mfin.gov.rs/en/documents2-2/macroeconomic-and-fiscal-data2>; SORS (2023). *Labour Force Survey (LFS)* [online]: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/en-us/oblasti/trziste-rada/anketa-o-radnoj-snazi/>; SORS (2024b). *Population – Population Estimations, 2023* [online]: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/en-us/vesti/statisticalrelease/?p=15196>; SORS (2025). *Urbanisation Indicator, 2024* [online]: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/>; Eurostat (2025). *LFS – Long-term unemployment*, [online]: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/>; Eurostat (2025a). *At-risk-of-poverty & social exclusion* [online]: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20250430-2?utm>; EC (2024a). *DESI 2024* [online]: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi>

⁵ The Republic of Serbia is a unitary parliamentary state under its 2006 Constitution. It formally applied for membership of the European Union in December 2009, was granted candidate status in March 2012, and entered into accession negotiations in January 2014.

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

AL in Serbia is positioned within the national strategy framework, which links education, employment and social inclusion. Its goals and priorities are defined through successive strategic documents and planning instruments that have gradually integrated lifelong learning into the education system. The strategic approach to AL covers formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways for adults and supports participation, competence development and employability throughout life.

AL has been progressively shaped through several strategic cycles since the early 2000s. The conceptual paper *Strategic Directions of Adult Education Development* (MoES, 2001) prioritised literacy and basic adult skills through functional basic adult education (FBAE), linking it with the poverty reduction strategy. This was followed by the policy paper *Policy and Strategy of Adult Education Development in the Republic of Serbia* (Despotović & Pejatović, 2005), which linked training more closely with labour market needs and raised the visibility of AL. A key milestone was the adoption of the official *Strategy for the Development of Adult Education in the Republic of Serbia* (GoRS, 2007), which provided the first government-endorsed framework for adult education and was later supported by an action plan for its implementation in 2009–2010. According to Despotović & Popović (2014), the strategic documents from 2001 to 2012 reflected evolving policy discourses, largely supported by international and EU-funded initiatives, indicating that AL policy was shaped more by international influence than by national priorities. Monitoring outputs were limited, beyond CONFINTEA and ETF narrative evidence (Popović, 2008; ETF, 2011).

The *Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia 2012–2020* integrated AL into the education system. Strategic objectives included (i) increasing adult participation in lifelong learning, (ii) creating a regulatory framework for adult training providers – publicly recognised organisers of adult education (PROAE), and (iii) the development of recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures. Monitoring was introduced through action plans (2015; 2018–2019).

Overview of relevant strategic documents

Currently, there is no stand-alone national strategy dedicated to AL; instead, AL priorities are embedded within broader strategic frameworks, most notably in the strategy for the development of education and upbringing in the Republic of Serbia 2021–2030 (SDES 2030).

Strategy for the development of education and upbringing in the Republic of Serbia 2021–2030 (SDES 2030)

The strategy identifies the main challenges in the education sector and includes AL-related objectives under special objective (SO) 1.8 – Improving conditions for lifelong learning, SO 1.9 – Developing the education and training network, and partially SO 1.2 – Quality assurance in education. The strategy focuses on the development of the RPL system and the strengthening of the National Qualifications Framework (NQFS), encouraging dialogue and developing social partnership, and establishing regional training centres (RTCs) to increase access to lifelong learning, enhance AL staff competences and increase the participation of low-qualified and vulnerable adults in AL.

Implementation is ensured through action plans 2021–2023 and 2023–2026, which define objectives, activities, indicators and responsible institutions. Four annual reports on the implementation of the

SDES 2030 action plan have been published to date (2021–2024), providing evidence of progress under SOs. An overview of the results achieved in the 2024 annual report⁶ are available in [Annex III](#). The annual plan for adult education (APAE) and the report on its implementation (RoPAE) serve as annual instruments for planning and monitoring AL activities.

The SDES 2030 is broadly aligned with the *European Skills Agenda*⁷ and the *Union of Skills Communication*⁸, but it does not set a national quantitative target for adult participation in learning. Monitoring focuses on system measures and activities reported under SO 1.8 and related AL indicators.

Other national strategies relevant to AL

Employment strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2021–2026: this strategy sets the general goal of creating stable and sustainable employment growth, underpinned by knowledge and decent work, through cross-sectoral measures. It includes measures for hard-to-employ groups: such measures may be functional adult primary education, upskilling and re-entering education/training. For beneficiaries to obtain official certification of competences, such training measures need to be delivered by PROAE (MoLEVSA, 2021)⁹.

Strategy for youth 2023–2030: addresses the reskilling and upskilling of NEETs aged 25+, promoting inclusive non-formal learning and cooperation with PROAE. It directs education policies towards the labour market and innovation through the development of digital skills (both basic and advanced) within the education system and non-formal learning (e.g. short and postgraduate programmes, and AL-related fields).

Youth guarantee implementation plan 2023–2026¹⁰: aims to establish a social partnership to ensure high-quality employment, continued education, internships or traineeships within four months of becoming unemployed or finishing their studies. It emphasises career guidance and counselling (CGC), outreach to young NEETs, strengthening the capacities of the National Employment Service (NES), and cooperation with employers and PROAE for work-based learning (WBL) / dual programmes.

Reform agenda of Serbia 2024–2027: this Agenda, prepared under the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, defines Serbia's priority reforms for accessing EU financial support through the Reform and Growth Facility (RGF). Policy areas linked to AL are the green and digital transition and human capital / education and skills.

The first supports upskilling and reskilling in green and digital sectors, innovation in enterprises and digitalisation of services. The second focuses on strengthening education and employment systems, improving teaching quality, expanding vocational education and training (VET), including dual VET, and reinforcing AL training programmes. Measures also address reducing skills mismatches, facilitating school-to-work transitions, and supporting teacher training and workforce retention in critical sectors. (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2024)¹¹. According to the Pilot Reform Monitor – Serbia, First Semester 2025 (CEP, 2025)¹², Serbia made some progress in the initial implementation phase, remaining partially on track.

⁶ <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Report-on-the-implementation-of-SDES-2030-for-the-year-2024.pdf>

⁷ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/european-skills-agenda_en

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en

⁹ https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Strategija_zaposljavanja_u_Republici_Srbiji_2021-2026_engleski.pdf

¹⁰ <https://mto.gov.rs/extfile/sr/1829/EN%20Youth%20Strategy%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Serbia%20for%20the%20period%20from%202023%20to%202030.pdf>

¹¹ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/36d6d50b-9f25-4b79-bfc7-292b7b499f5b_en?filename=7.0.+ANNEX+VII+-+Reform+Agenda+Serbia.pdf

¹² By June 2025, EUR 51.66 million in pre-financing was disbursed from a total allocation of EUR 384 million, although performance-based payments were still pending. Key achievements include exceeding innovation-related targets and establishing a national reform-coordination structure, while challenges relate to delayed reform steps, limited stakeholder

Legal framework

Overview of relevant legal framework¹³

AL in Serbia is regulated by a series of laws and by-laws that cover formal, non-formal and informal learning, WBL, RPL, and CGC. The legal framework has evolved gradually, following the adoption of national education strategies and related legislation. The *adult education strategy 2006–2015* and the *strategy for the development of education in Serbia 2012–2020* established the policy basis for the Law on Adult Education (2013), followed by by-laws regulating provider accreditation, programme approval and quality assurance.

Since 2021, the SDES 2030 has provided the overarching framework, accompanied by amendments to the Law on NQFS (adopted in 2018 and amended in 2023) and the Law on Dual Education (adopted in 2017 and amended in 2023) addressing RPL and WBL.

The Law on Adult Education, last amended in 2020, remains in force. The 2023 action plan foresaw a revision of this law, but this has since been postponed. The list of relevant by-laws regulating RPL, CGC, programme accreditation and quality assurance is provided in [Annex IV](#).

Law on the Foundations of the Education System, (LFES)

The *Law on the Foundations of the Education System (LFES, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos 88/2017, 27/2018, 10/2019, 6/2020, 129/2021, 101/2022, 55/2023, 63/2024, 10/2025)* frames AL as part of the national education system. It stipulates how an educational institution may carry out ‘additional activities’ – such as AL, RPL and others – if these are registered as such in its founding act and internal regulations.

Law on Adult Education (LAE)

The *Law on Adult Education (LAE, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos 55/2013, 88/2017, 27/2018, 6/2020)* defines AL activities, the organisation and delivery thereof, quality assurance mechanisms and issuance of public documents confirming achievements. It governs the provision of formal education programmes (elementary and secondary education for adults), non-formal learning programmes and RPL. The law establishes the criteria for awarding the status of PROAE¹⁴, outlines their obligations and the necessary quality assurance. It lays down that primary education and training for a first qualification must be free of charge for adults, while other forms of adult education may be financed by participants, employers and/or public funds.

consultation and transparency concerns in some areas: https://cep.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/RA_Pilot-Reform-Monitor_Serbia_First-Semester-2025_As-of-June-2025.pdf

¹³ Sources: (LAE, 2020): <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2013/55/3/reg>; (LDE, 2023): <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-dualnom-obrazovanju.html>; (LFES, 2025): <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Zakon-o-osnovama-sistema-obrazovanja-i-vaspitanja.pdf>; (LNQFS, 2023): <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-nacionalnom-okviru-kvalifikacija-republike-srbije.html>

¹⁴ A PROAE is an institution or other legal entity that has acquired the status to deliver organised non-formal adult education programmes, based on the fulfilment of legally defined criteria concerning programme quality, personnel, space, equipment and learning resources (LAE, 2020)

Law on the National Qualifications Framework of Serbia (LNQFS)

The *Law on the National Qualifications Framework of Serbia (LNQFS, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 27/2018, 6/2020, 36/2023)* establishes the structure and governance of the NQFS, which serves as a key reference for linking qualifications across formal, non-formal, and informal learning. It provides a basis in which adult learners can access recognition of competencies acquired through diverse learning pathways. The law defines the roles of sectoral councils of the QA, and other stakeholders in the development and alignment of qualifications.

Law on Dual Education (LDE)

The *Law on Dual Education (LDE, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 101/2017, 6/2020, 36/2023)* sets regulation for dual education and WBL models in secondary education. According to this provision, WBL is not limited to formal secondary VET but also applies in the broader context of non-formal adult education when delivered by appropriately accredited training centres under the dual education framework. The LDE introduces accreditation standards for employers, regional training centres (RTC), ensures that WBL follows agreed standards — such as having trained mentors, defined learning outcomes, and cooperation agreements between schools and companies.

Adult learning policies

The annual plan for adult education (APAE) and the report (RoAPAE)¹⁵

AL in Serbia is guided by the APAE, adopted annually by government decision since 2022. The plan defines AL priorities and public interest areas, identifies target groups and assigns responsibilities among institutions at national and local levels. It operationalises the LAE and the SDES 2030, translating strategic objectives into annual measures.

The 2025 APAE focuses on two main policy areas:

1. Participation and inclusion in AL programmes, which includes formal AL – FBAE, secondary education for adults (17+), and programmes for retraining, upskilling and specialisation; and non-formal AL – training delivered by PROAE, the NES, other state bodies and institutions, and project-based initiatives.
2. Enhancing quality assurance in AL, which covers further development of RPL, CGC, improvement of quality assurance procedures, professional development of AL staff, enhancing social partnership and the promotion of non-formal education and lifelong learning

According to the 2024 RoAPAE, the number of **PROAE**-accredited programmes doubled compared to 2022 (2 133 programmes). The 2025 APAE further supports expansion of the PROAE network, the development of programme accreditation framework and the improvement of quality assurance procedures for PROAE. Implementation of external and internal evaluation remains partial, with the number of completed external evaluations carried out as part of the QA procedures (6 out of 30 planned) indicating the need for stronger institutional capacities (RoAPAE 2025b).

RPL implementation is still at an early stage, with 17 out of 40 planned procedures completed. The 2025 APAE sets RPL system development as a continuing priority, with the aim of establishing uniform procedures and strengthening the capacities of institutions conducting RPL.

Activities in **CGC** progressed through staff training and the CGC practitioner competences framework, aligned with the 2019 Rulebook on CGC service standards and reflected in APAE/GPOO-2025 training priorities (*Official Gazette RS, 43/2019*; APAE, 2025)¹⁶.

¹⁵ <https://prosveta.gov.rs/prosveta/srednje-obrazovanje/obrazovanje-odraslih/>

¹⁶ The 2019 rulebook on CGC service standards introduced four sets of standards: career management skills, CGC practitioner competences, CGC service organisation, and CGC programmes. These standards are currently in the final stages of revision.

The network of **RTCs** remains in the consolidation stage. Four centres were operational in 2024 (out of eight planned), with limited cooperation established with NES and PROAE. Their potential for delivering retraining and upskilling programmes has not yet been fully utilised due to capacity and funding constraints.

Both the APAE and the RoAPAE function as complementary planning and feedback mechanisms within Serbia's AL system – the APAE defines annual objectives, measures, budget allocations and institutional responsibilities, while the RoAPAE consolidates implementation data, evaluates progress and provides evidence for planning and budgeting of the following cycle (MoE, 2025).

National performance against key EU targets on adult learning

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

Participation of adults in learning

EU target by 2025 and by 2030	National target/Serbia
At least 47% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2025.	12.4% of adults (25-64) participated in learning during the last 12 months (LFS 2022). 19.9% of adults (25-69) participated in learning in the last 12 months (AES, SORS, 2022) ¹⁷
At least 60% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2030.	No quantitative national target is defined. The SDES 2030 prioritises an increase in adult participation in learning but sets no numeric target

Source: Author, (based on Eurostat, SORS 2022, MoE 2024).

The SDES 2030 does not set a measurable target for the number of adults aged 25-64 participating in learning, but the country's strategic commitment is to increase adult participation in lifelong learning activities. Participation is planned and monitored by segments (such as for FBAE, secondary education for adults, retraining, upskilling and specialisation programmes, RPL procedures, RTC users, NES training etc.) via APAE and RoAPAE and ensuring comparability with EU targets.

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

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Serbia
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%.	Serbia's 15-year-olds scored below the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science (40th place in reading and science, and 42nd in mathematics, out of 81 countries). Low achievers represented 43% in mathematics, 36% in reading and 35% in science, far above the 15% benchmark. Only 4% achieved the top performance in mathematics and 2% in both reading and science, well below the 15% target (<i>PISA, 2022</i>). Serbia participated in an international computer and information literacy study (ICILS) in 2023; The national report shows that additional effort is needed to improve digital competences in the education system in order to reach the EU benchmark (MoE, 2024 <i>SDES 2030 Report</i>).

Source: Author (based on OECD PISA 2022, MoE 2024 Report on SDES 2030).

¹⁷ The AES covered those aged 25-64 until 2022, when it started covering the population aged 18-69 ([Adult education survey - Microdata - Eurostat](#)); while the European LFS covers those aged 15+ ([EU labour force survey - Microdata - Eurostat](#)). Figures are not directly comparable due to the different purposes and coverage of the surveys.

The country monitors learning outcomes through PISA and ICILS but has not set national quantitative targets corresponding to this 2030 UOS benchmark.

STEM in VET

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Serbia
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 being female.	SORS data on upper secondary VET enrolments for the 2023-2024 school year, by STEM-related field of work and sex, allow for an approximate estimate of 38-46% of students in STEM-related <i>fields of work</i> ¹⁸ , with 21-22% girls (roughly one girl for every 3.5-4 boys). (SORS 2024c). Therefore, Serbia is very close to the Union of Skills 2030 benchmark.

Source: Author (based on SORS 2024c)

SORS reports upper secondary VET (ISCED 3) enrolments by national 'fields of work', not by ISCED-F STEM classification. The STEM-related figures used here are based on an approximate mapping of selected technical, technological, natural science and ICT fields of work to STEM-related areas and are not fully comparable with EU STEM indicators based on ISCED-F and Cedefop/Eurostat methodologies. The RoAPAE 2024 confirms that these STEM-related fields account for a significant share of enrolment in medium-level AL and VET, but does not provide detailed, disaggregated data.

STEM in higher education

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Serbia
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 being female.	According to SORS tertiary enrolment data for 2024, when STEM is approximately defined as ISCED-F fields 05 'Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics', 06 'Information and communication technologies' and 07 'Engineering, manufacturing and construction', 34.8% of all tertiary students in Serbia (87 624 out of 251 812) are enrolled in STEM programmes, and women account for 43.4% of STEM students (38 033 out of 87 624) (SORS, 2025b). Therefore, Serbia exceeds the Union of Skills 2030 benchmark

Source: Author (based on SORS, 2025b)

SORS publishes tertiary enrolment data (ISCED 6–8) by ISCED-F 2013 field of education and sex (indicator 11040104), but without a pre-defined national STEM aggregate. In this report, STEM is approximated as the sum of fields 05, 06 and 07 and thus does not represent an official national STEM aggregate.

ICT PhD programmes

EU target by 2030	Current state of play in Serbia
The share of students enrolled in ICT PhD programmes should be at least 5%, with at least 1 out of every 3 students being female.	SORS doctoral enrolment data (ISCED 8) show that students in ICT programmes presents around 3% of all PhD students, which is below the Union of Skills benchmark (SORS 2025c). SORS does not publish ICT PhD enrolments simultaneously broken down by field and sex, and the female share among ICT PhD students cannot be derived from national statistics.

Source: Author (based on SORS 2025c)

Serbia's SDES 2030 sets the objective of strengthening the capacity of universities and providing adequate resources for teaching, research and digitalisation, while aligning higher education with labour market needs and the European Higher Education Area (MoE 2021, SDES 2030).

¹⁸ For example, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and metalworking, geodesy and construction, geology/mining/metallurgy, and related technical fields

Conclusions

Strengths

- Serbia has a coherent strategic framework for AL, embedded in the strategy for the development of education and upbringing in Serbia 2021–2030 (SDES 2030) and operationalised through action plans and APAE, supported by annual implementation reports.
- The policy orientation is consistent with the *European Skills Agenda* and *Union of Skills Communication* priorities, focusing on employability, lifelong learning, gradual operationalisation of RPL system, strengthening of NQFS and expansion of the publicly recognised organiser of adult education (PROAE) network and programmes.
- Inclusion is a cross-cutting principle. Target groups such as low-qualified adults, the long-term unemployed, Roma and young adults not in employment or in education and training (NEET) are explicitly recognised across strategies with relevant connections to AL.

Challenges

- The legal framework is only partially updated: amendments to the NQFS and dual education laws are in place, and the revision of the Law on Adult Education (LAE) has been postponed.
- Serbia has no stand-alone AL strategy, which may limit the visibility of AL policies. AL objectives are distributed across broader education, employment and youth strategies. The challenge is coordinating these AL relevant sectoral policies and objectives.
- AL initiatives remain narrowly focused on vocational and qualification-oriented learning, with insufficient emphasis on broader competences such as civic, personal and third-age education.
- Participation in AL remains modest, almost unchanged over the past decade.
- Monitoring mechanisms are mainly descriptive and do not provide an indicator-based evaluation that is comparable with the EU 2030 targets.
- Inter-sectoral coordination between ministries, local governments and social partners remains limited. While the MoE leads policy implementation, structured cooperation with employers and social partners in programme planning and validation is still developing. Reports highlight ad-hoc collaboration, mainly within donor-funded initiatives, without a permanent coordination mechanism or evaluation of partnership outcomes.

State of play¹⁹

- AL is positioned within broader education, employment and social inclusion frameworks rather than as a stand-alone strategy. The main policy priorities are linked to employability, lifelong learning, RPL, quality assurance and inclusion of vulnerable groups. SDES 2030 and the accompanying action plans provide continuity, while annual instruments (APAE and RoAPAE) operationalise and monitor AL measures.
- The **legal framework is broadly aligned with policy objectives** but remains incomplete: the LAE has not been revised as planned, while other acts such as the NQFS and dual education laws were updated. The quality assurance system, based on initial accreditation and evaluation of institutional performance, is in place but is continuously being improved in line with evolving requirements and conditions.
- **AL policies are partially fragmented**, dispersed across education, labour and youth domains. Coordination between national, regional and local levels is limited, and participation of non-state actors and social partners in planning and implementation remains weak.
- **Planning and monitoring mechanisms** such as the APAE and the RoAPAE provide regular collection and reporting of data on AL. However, they focus mainly on counting activities and participants, while information on outcomes and impact is still limited.
- Adult participation in learning remains below EU benchmarks, with no national quantitative target having been defined. Planning and reporting are structured by programme type (FBAE, secondary education for adults, PROAE, RTCs, NES training), rather than through an overall participation indicator.

¹⁹ This section is built around the guiding questions shown in [Annex I](#).

- **Alignment with EU policy frameworks is advanced** (NEAAL 2030, Union of Skills), **but not yet complete**. Serbia follows EU priorities on skills, inclusion and validation but lacks defined national indicators for STEM, ICT and adult participation that are comparable to EU 2030 targets.

CHAPTER II: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND GOVERNANCE OF ADULT LEARNING

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

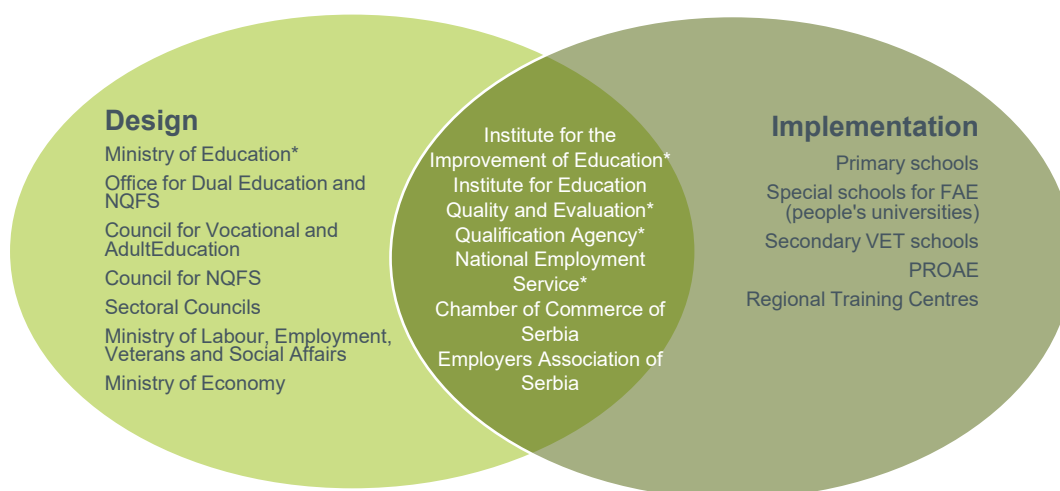
Institutional arrangements

Institutional architecture is vertically structured, with coordination flowing from the national to the local level. The law (LAE, 2020) defines a *centralised governance system* in which the MoE holds overall authority for policy, planning, financing and supervision of AL while decentralisation at the municipal level remains limited. Local self-governments may establish multi-stakeholder local councils to analyse labour market needs and propose adult learning programmes; however, their role is consultative and subject to MoE approval.

Other key national bodies include: the Institute for the Improvement of Education (IIE), responsible for developing formal AL programmes and RPL methodologies; and the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation (IEQE), which oversees standards and external evaluation of institutions in formal AL. Standards are adopted by the MoE. For non-formal AL, RPL and CGC, quality assurance functions are carried out by the QA, which also manages the NQFS and the accreditation of other organisations as PROAE, and supports the work of sectoral councils.

The Office ensures intersectoral coordination and coordinates the development and alignment of qualifications with the European framework. The NES implements training measures through ALMPs. Advisory roles are provided through the Council for Vocational and Adult Education and the Council for NQFS. VET representatives dominate the councils, with AL membership making up around 20%. The governance structure is complemented by sectoral councils within the NQFS system, which bring together representatives from employers, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS), unions and education experts, ensuring alignment between qualification standards and labour market demand.

The diagram below provides a brief overview of institutions involved in the design and implementation of AL.



* Monitoring & Evaluation (NES monitors ALMPs only)

Adult learning governance model

AL governance is highly centralised, with roles and responsibilities delegated at local level. The MoE prepares the APAE and the Government adopts it. Data is collected centrally by the MoE²⁰ and preparation is ensured by cross-sectoral input²¹. Decision-making and funding allocation are consolidated at national level. The model ensures coherence but limits bottom-up initiative and regional differentiation.

Intra-sectoral cooperation and coordination

Coordination across the AL system is primarily ensured through the NQFS, which functions as an institutional coordination platform linking education, employment and social partners. Within this structure, the NQFS Council, the Office and the sector skills councils enable joint work between ministries, QA, CCIS, employers and trade unions in the development and alignment of qualifications standards, training programmes and RPL procedures with labour market needs.

The IIE provides methodological support, while the NES contributes through its labour market analyses. Regular coordination meetings and joint data collection and planning for the APAE ensure the participation of regional stakeholders, although horizontal policy coordination remains moderate. The RoAPAE 2024 (MoE, 2025b) highlights progress in cross-sectoral cooperation, especially in quality assurance and RPL implementation, yet also notes the need for stronger interministerial synergy in funding and programme targeting.

A detailed overview of the institutional composition of governance and coordination bodies is provided in [Annex V](#).

Network of providers of formal and non-formal adult learning

Formal AL is delivered through a network of educational institutions under the MoE. Primary schools and specialised primary schools for adults implement FBAE. Secondary VET schools offer part-time programmes for adults, as well as programmes for upskilling, reskilling and specialisation. Satellite units of schools providing basic education for adults within correctional institutions provide basic education for adults deprived of their liberty.

Non-formal AL is implemented by PROAE, including schools accredited by the MoE and other organisations – training centres, companies, associations, NGOs accredited by the QA. PROAE may be either public or private. RTCs primarily deliver non-formal AL but may also complement host schools' formal VET offer. ALMP programmes funded by the NES are carried out through PROAE or directly by employers. NGOs play a marginal role, unrepresented in APAE except as training providers in some cases. Coverage is nationwide but uneven, with a greater diversity of programmes in urban areas compared to rural ones.

Funding of adult learning

The funding of AL is fragmented across ministries and budget lines, relying on a mix of state, local, employer and donor resources, which makes the overall financial volume of AL difficult to measure. The RoAPAE 2024 (MoE, 2025b) highlights that, beyond fragmented budget lines, stronger interministerial synergy is needed specifically to align funding allocations with programmes across MoE, MoLEVSA/NES and local levels.

AL in Serbia is financed by:

1. The state budget, mainly through allocations from the MoE and MoLEVSA.

²⁰ By regional school administrations, local self-governments, NES, CCIS and directly from relevant institutions.

²¹ 2025 APAE preparation was led by the IIE and involved a working group composed of members from the MoE, NES, CCIS, employers' organisations, QA, academic institutions, ministries, Foundation Tempus and the National Academy for Public Administration.

2. Budgets of local self-governments, which contribute partially, mainly for schools' maintenance and logistics.
3. Learners' self-financing, which remains the dominant source for non-formal programmes and upskilling, reskilling and specialisation.
4. Employers and companies, which finance or co-finance training for their employees.
5. Donor and project-based contributions, including EU funds (Erasmus+, IPA, bilateral projects such as the Swiss-funded 'Education to Employment').
6. The NES for the ALMP programmes it implements, where the state contracts accredited providers or employers to deliver training.

Public spending on education in Serbia averages 3–4% of GDP²², but there is no consolidated data on the volume of AL funding, which remains fragmented across ministries and budget lines. According to the RoAPAE 2025 (MoE, 2025b), AL programmes were financed mainly by participants (58%), employers (27%), NES support (6%), with the remaining shares coming from local authorities and donor initiatives.

Legally mandated funding of AL covers formal AL (FBAE, secondary VET leading to the learners' first vocation) and teacher training, while non-formal and short-term programmes rely on project or employer funding. A summary of the funding sources, types and available data on funding volumes is enclosed as [Annex VI](#).

Monitoring and quality assurance

Institutional roles and responsibilities

Quality assurance in AL is regulated by laws, supported by specific rulebooks and standards (LAE, 2018; LNQFS, 2023). The MoE accredits schools to provide non-formal AL, RPL and CGC, and verifies formal AL programmes, while the QA is responsible for the accreditation of other organisations, their external evaluation and approval of non-formal AL programmes. The IEQE ensures external evaluation of formal institutions, while PROAE conduct internal self-evaluation.

The QA has digitalised the PROAE accreditation process and the procedures for granting PROAE status at system level. In partnership with multiple institutions and with donor support from the SDC and the E2E project, it has also developed system-wide standards for PROAE self-evaluation and external evaluation and delivered online training to around 90 PROAE representatives (MoE, APAE 2025a). Monitoring and evaluation activities are integrated at multiple levels – including accreditation, external and self-evaluation of providers, supported by donor and EU-funded projects.

Monitoring of formal AL is integrated within the education management information system (EMIS)²³, a national digital system launched in 2022 which consolidates data from several registers, including registers of learners, education institutions, higher education institutions, education programmes and accredited study programmes (MoSTD, 2019). Within the EMIS, the QA maintains the NQFS register and its sub-registers, including the sub-register of PROAE, which contains system-level data on PROAE status, accredited AL programmes and employers providing practical training. EMIS datasets are used primarily for system management, planning and quality assurance. Personal data is not public, while selected institution-level indicators (e.g. on school infrastructure, staff, enrolments and programmes) are available through the Ministry's Open Data portal²⁴, ensuring public access to selected statistics.

²² <https://tradingeconomics.com/serbia/government-expenditure-on-education-total-percent-of-gdp-wb-data.html>

²³ <https://www.ite.gov.rs/vest/sr/6168/jedinstveni-informacioni-sistem-prosvete-jisp-i-otvoreni-podaci-iz-ovog-sistema-predstavljani-u-kancelariji-za-it-i-eupravu.php>

²⁴ <https://opendata.mpn.gov.rs/>

The RoAPAE 2024 (MoE, 2025b) notes that system-level data on non-formal AL, RPL and CGC is consolidated through the NQFS Register and PROAE sub-register, while the system still lacks data on formal adult education, which is dispersed across school statistics (MoE, 2025b).

Although the monitoring and evaluation of adult learning programmes are centrally organised, participation from learners, CSOs and independent adult education organisations remains minimal. Coordination mechanisms are in place, and stakeholder engagement in quality assurance, feedback processes and impact assessment is gradually developing. PROAE accreditation and RPL procedures follow defined frameworks, with limited flexibility, as reflected in findings from field research. Overall, AL quality assurance systems have been established and are functioning.

The table illustrating institutional roles in quality assurance is enclosed as [Annex VII](#).

Continuous professional development (CPD) of AL practitioners

The quality of trainers and facilitators in PROAE is regulated by rulebooks (see Annex IV) prescribing mandatory qualifications and training covering at least three of five core andragogical competences. FBAE teachers and andragogical assistants providing individual support to adult learners, particularly those from vulnerable groups, must complete accredited training programmes approved by the MoE. The 2024 SDES 2030 report highlights the strengthening of teacher competences and the professionalisation of PROAE staff as priorities, noting that CPD opportunities are largely project-based and unevenly available. However, there is no unified national system for adult educators' CPD across all types of AL provision, and quality assurance of AL facilitators is only partially covered in practice.

According to the RoAPAE (MoE, 2025b), the Tempus Foundation delivered professional development across the adult learning system – reaching teachers and andragogical assistants in schools, staff of PROAE providers and CGC practitioners in education, employment and social-protection services – through training courses, seminars, webinars, conferences and targeted consultations, with a total of 2 279 participants. In the same year, 629 facilitators (teachers, trainers, instructors) completed training covering seven andragogical modules: core principles, learner motivation, group management, interactive methods, assessment, inclusive planning and organisation (including for persons with disabilities) and evaluation.

Continuous upgrading of skills for AL practitioners is based on national projects, donor initiatives and targeted measures in APAE annual plans.

Conclusions

Strengths

- The AL governance framework is coherent and centralised under the Ministry of Education (MoE), with clearly defined mandates across the relevant institutions and sectoral councils.
- Institutional coordination is ensured through the National Qualifications Framework of Serbia (NQFS), the annual plan for adult education and sectoral councils linking education, employment and social partners, promoting consistency between qualifications and labour market needs.
- The network of publicly recognised organisers of adult education (PROAE) and regional training centres is expanding, offering diverse formal and non-formal AL opportunities nationwide, supported by the accreditation system and quality assurance procedures.

Challenges

- Governance remains highly centralised, with limited decentralisation and weak bottom-up input from municipalities and providers.

- Coordination among ministries is uneven; horizontal cooperation and data exchange between the MoE, NES and QA remain partial, particularly for non-formal AL.
- Horizontal coordination on funding and programme targeting remains weak: the report on the implementation of the annual plan for adult education 2024 (MoE, 2025b) documents that financial resources for AL activities in 2024 came from multiple sources – the state budget, provincial and local budgets, employers, participants and EU/donor projects – and are reported through separate administrative systems.
- Monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms cover mainly non-formal AL through EMIS and formal provision is still reported inconsistently.
- CPD is mostly project-driven and not yet systematised across all AL modalities, with limited institutional responsibility and resources.

State of play²⁵

- The AL system operates within a highly centralised governance model, where the MoE holds primary responsibility for policy development, coordination and supervision, while other bodies (QA, IIE, IEQE, NES and the Office) perform defined sectoral functions. Coordination is ensured through the NQFS and the APAE process.
- Financing of AL is multi-sourced and moderately adequate, combining national and local public budgets, self-financing by learners, employer co-financing and donor support through EU and bilateral projects. Funding information remains fragmented across ministries and levels.
- A broad participation of stakeholders – at least with advisory functions – is evident across AL governance bodies. Employers, CCIS, unions and education experts are represented in the advisory bodies and sectoral councils, while local authorities contribute mainly through consultations in the APAE process. Involvement of learners and civil society remains limited, particularly in monitoring and evaluation.
- Management of AL policies is to a large extent centralised, with national-level decision-making policy and limited local autonomy and flexibility. Implementation is vertically structured through MoE-led processes and centralised data systems.
- AL is fully integrated into the NQFS, coordinated by the Office. This integration ensures the recognition, portability and alignment of AL qualifications with EU frameworks.
- Quality assurance is ensured through legislation, accreditation, external and provider self-evaluation procedures. Monitoring of non-formal AL, including PROAE, RPL and CGC, is consolidated through the NQFS register, while the data on formal AL is partly reflected in the EMIS. The quality of trainers and facilitators is ensured through project-based CPD programmes and accredited andragogical training. Overall, QA mechanisms are developed to a considerable extent, with stronger coverage for non-formal than formal AL.

²⁵ This section is built around the guiding questions shown in [Annex I](#).

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 programmes

As noted previously, Serbia's adult education system has two tracks. The formal track includes functional basic adult education (FBAE), secondary education for adults (17+), adult reskilling/upskilling and specialisation within secondary education, and education in correctional institutions.

The non-formal track is delivered by PROAE, the NES and other public bodies, companies/employers, associations and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS). Provision focuses on competence-building (by the NES and PROAE) and qualifications for employed and unemployed adults, alongside career guidance. Company-based training is commonly aligned with the job that companies provide. Practical parts or WBL is delivered at the premises/workplace and employers fund compliance training (occupational safety and health, due diligence, green transition), while the CCIS runs instructor training for dual education (MoE 2025a, MoE 2025b) The table below presents the types of programmes in the formal and non-formal education systems:

Programme type	Duration	Providers	Target group	Certification / NQFS
Functional basic adult education (FBAE)	3 years total (three one-year cycles).	Schools for FBAE primary schools verified by the MoE for FBAE	Adults 15+ who have not completed primary education	Primary education certificate NQFS level 1
Secondary education for adults	3–4 years (part-time, flexible pacing)	Secondary VET schools	Adults 17+ who have not completed secondary education	Secondary school diploma NQFS level 3 (3-year VET) or level 4 (4-year VET/general).
Reskilling, upskilling, and specialisation	Individual duration; no formal time limit for reskilling, upskilling or specialisation	Secondary VET schools	Adults 18+ with completed secondary VET schools	Leading to recognised qualifications at NQFS levels 3, 4 or 5.
Education in correctional institutions	Same duration as FBAE and secondary AL	Satellite units of schools providing basic education for adults including at juvenile correctional facilities	15+ for FBAE, 17+ for part-time secondary VET and 18+ for reskilling, upskilling and specialisation	Primary or secondary certificates, the same NQFS levels as regular provision i.e. 1, 3, 4 and 5
PROAE non-formal programmes	Variable, determined by the qualification standard when the programme is aligned with it	PROAE providers (schools, NGOs, RTCs, companies*, when accredited as PROAE)	Adults 18+	Certificate of completion (no NQFS level by default); if programme aligned to a qualification

Programme type	Duration	Providers	Target group	Certification / NQFS
				standard NQFS levels 2–3 or 526
NES/ALMP (employer-led non-formal training) * and state-organised training	Short-term, and max 12 months for NES internships	NES via contracted PROAE and employers, state institutions	Registered unemployed adults 15–64, with focus on youth, long-term unemployed, vulnerable groups	Certificates of participation or recognised qualifications only if provided by PROAE

Source: Author

*Companies appear as PROAE only when accredited, otherwise they are an employer-led non-formal, non-PROAE provider. Employer-led training is mainly compliance or job-specific and carries no NQFS level unless the training is aligned to a registered standard and delivered through an accredited PROAE.

An insight into enrolments and graduates in these programmes in the period 2023-2024 can be obtained in [Annex VIII](#).

Functional basic adult education is organised into three cycles in primary schools for adults 15+. Cycle I covers grades I–IV, Cycle II grades V–VI, and Cycle III grades VII–VIII. Provision follows the adult primary curriculum, with compressed delivery. Upon completion the primary education certificate (NQFS 1) is awarded.

Secondary education for adults provides adults (17+) with part-time upper-secondary programmes in VET schools, progressing grade by grade to a full secondary diploma (NQFS 3 for 3-year VET and NQFS 4 for 4-year VET/general).

Reskilling/upskilling and specialisation pathways delivered by secondary schools is aligned to national qualification standards. The most frequent specialisations in 2024 were in transport, mechanics/metalworking and hospitality.

Non-formal AL provision delivered by PROAE, NES-organised ALMP training and employer-led in-house courses, CGC services and short courses offered by other ministries complete the picture, which is highly heterogeneous and varies by provider. In the APAE/RoAPAE this is shown as activities with provider / programme / participant counts (as well as often the funding source and delivery site).

Overall, the 2025 AL offer remained widely available and labour-market oriented, combining formal FBAE and secondary/upskilling pathways with a wide non-formal PROAE offer focused on technical trades, hospitality, business/administration, languages and digital skills, while cultural and creative fields remained marginal (MoE, APAE 2025a).

Publicly recognised organisers of adult Education

According to the RoAPAE (MoE, 2025b), 112 providers were expected to deliver 434 programmes for around 11 000 learners; in practice, 72 providers implemented 187 programmes reaching 8 124 participants. The gap was due to limited employer interest in upskilling, learners' financial constraints, and insufficient provider readiness or promotion. Delivery was adjusted to reflect actual demand and maintain quality standards.

²⁶ Accredited non-formal programmes issued by PROAE use certificates that indicate the extent to which a qualification standard has been achieved, e.g. certificate for fully achieved qualification standard, certificate for achieved standard of vocational competences, or certificate for partially achieved standard of vocational competences. These are tied to the relevant NQFS level defined by the underlying standard.

Regional training centres

RTCs are school-based hubs within secondary VET schools that deliver dual and non-formal adult learning – short upskilling, reskilling and specialisation – aligned with labour market needs and qualification standards. They support secondary VET, dual education and non-formal learning through hands-on training and specialised programmes, complementing school and PROAE provision and providing regionally accessible facilities (workshops, laboratories and skills labs). In practice, RTCs run short AL courses, practical components of dual education in partnership with companies, and targeted staff training (e.g. dual-education instructor training). Some RTCs are also accredited as PROAE and can directly deliver non-formal programmes for adults. Four RTCs are currently in place, with five more planned (MoE, 2025a).

Support measures and services to adult learners

Outreach and information

Outreach and information activities are implemented under the APAE, mainly within the FBAE programme. In 2024, schools and andragogical assistants conducted home visits, provided school supplies, transport and childcare support and language interpretation, and engaged former learners as role models. Efforts targeted Roma adults (76.5% of participants) and young adults under 30 (32%), supported by affirmative enrolment and financial incentives.

Despite visible results, outreach measures remain fragmented and project based. Planned actions for 2025 aim to strengthen the role of sectoral councils, promote education and training opportunities, and enhance dialogue between education and labour-market actors. Under the IPA 2020 project, further measures will improve social partnerships, visibility of non-formal AL, and networking of PROAE with social partners (MoE, 2025a).

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

RPL was firstly piloted in 2019–2021 in a group of secondary VET schools. It enables adults +18 to obtain partial or full qualifications at NQFS levels 2, 3 and 5 through the recognition of skills gained through work or informal learning. By 2024, seven PROAE schools were accredited, and seventeen procedures completed – less than half of those planned (MoE, 2025b). The system is operational and coordinated by the MoE, QA and IIE, yet implementation remains modest. RPL is predominantly self-financed by candidates, with cases of employer financing, with no dedicated public budget line documented in 2024 (MoE 2025b).

Field research for this factsheet indicates that procedures are often formalistic, administratively demanding and insufficiently supported, limiting uptake despite local promotion. Growth potential lies in greater flexibility and targeted outreach. Capacity is gradually improving: the APAE 2024 reports 26 counsellors, 61 school assessors and 19 industry assessors trained for RPL delivery.

Active labour market programmes (ALMP) and services

ALMPs are implemented by the NES under the MoLEVSA, delivered via PROAE providers and, where relevant, employers contracted by the NES. In 2024, the NES implemented a broad set of ALMP measures, including professional practice, traineeships, training for the labour market, and employer-requested or employer-organised upskilling for unemployed and employed adults.

Additional schemes such as FBAE within ALMP, My First Salary and Talents in the Public Sector targeted youth and new entrants to the labour market. The long-term unemployed benefited from subsidised on-the-job training and employment measures under the IPA 2020. Complementary career information and counselling services were provided through NES branches (NES, 2024; MoE, APAE 2024). A detailed table with programmes, users/target groups, providers, numbers of participants and funding sources is available in [Annex IX](#).

Career guidance and counselling (CGC) services

CGC for adults in Serbia is integrated across education and employment and regulated through APAE processes and related rulebooks. Its goal is to support adults in education, training and employment decisions.

The CGC Standards Rulebook (*Official Gazette RS, 43/2019*) sets out four groups of standards – career management skills, practitioner competences, service organisation and programme standards – all of which are now in the final stages of revision. In 2024, emphasis shifted to operationalising this framework through targeted training programmes, seminars and webinars (including Euroguidance/EPALE activities), support for rulebook implementation, and a quality assurance working group coordinated by the QA.

The revised and improved standards for CGC have been drafted and the final phase of the consultative process is in progress, with the improved standards for CGC expected to be published by the end of 2025. In line with LNQFS (2023), the Qualification Agency monitors the implementation of CGC services and the application of CGC standards. In 2024, 17 PROAE providers offered 19 CGC programmes serving 336 participants, while the NES delivered counselling to 9 377 jobseekers, including digital and employability workshops.

System-building measures underway include cross-sector data mapping, the creation of a national CGC portal, and full digitalisation of PROAE accreditation for CGC (completion expected in 2025). CGC and RPL are often operated jointly by the same providers, enabling adults to validate prior learning or access targeted upskilling/reskilling pathways (MoE, 2025a; MoE, 2025b; NES, 2024).

Adult learning by state bodies and other organisations

The APAE/RoAPAE also cover AL organised by state bodies (ministries, institutions), and other organisations and associations, CCIS, etc. With the exception of the training organised by the MoLEVSA and NES, the programmes reported are largely in-service training for public employees. APAE captures a substantial segment of AL in the civil-service, besides school-based and PROAE provision. Participation is highest within the National Academy for Public Administration (≈20 652 participants across its general and leadership programmes) and the CCIS (≈13 985 across licensing/CPD and sectoral training), with further volumes reported by line ministries and provincial bodies. In total, this amounts to approximately 37 809 participants based on the RoAPAE 2024 (MoE, 2025b).

Conclusions

Strengths

- Flexible and diverse AL pathways enable adults to gain skills and recognised qualifications through formal programmes, while labour-market-oriented non-formal AL by publicly recognised organisers of adult education (PROAE) provide additional options, some of which are aligned to qualification standards recognised in the NQFS.
- Career guidance and counselling (CGC) is embedded across education and employment and is being systematised through standards, a practitioner competence framework, and a planned CGC portal.
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is formally established within the system and coordinated across institutions.
- Within PROAE, CGC and RPL are offered in a coordinated way, matching adults' needs and guiding them either towards RPL or to targeted upskilling/reskilling.

Challenges

- In formal AL, learner retention remains weak. Functional basic adult education (FBAE) has lower completion rates, with the highest number of dropouts in the first cycle. Adult upper-secondary learning also records notable dropout rates and limited completion of the grade started.
- There is a discrepancy between planned and delivered PROAE training in 2024, reflecting a mix of demand and supply factors, including lower employer interest, affordability considerations for adults, providers' delivery capacities and limited outreach.
- RPL implementation remains modest, with a limited offer and provider base; candidate self-financing is one of the constraints. Procedures are experienced as over-formalised and administratively demanding, which may influence uptake.
- The AL offer underrepresents non-work-related learning, as well as personal and social development, active citizenship, community learning and health and wellbeing, compared with occupational/VET provision.

State of play²⁷

- AL is organised into formal and non-formal tracks that are linked, where applicable, to the NQFS. It spans FBAE, secondary AL, reskilling/upskilling and specialisation, education in correctional institutions, PROAE/RTCs provision, NES-delivered programmes and civic service CPD.
- AL **largely matches** labour market and employability needs, while only **partially matches** the broader needs of diverse adult learner groups, such as civic engagement, personal development and cultural participation.
- An inclusion-oriented approach is reflected through FBAE and ALMP programmes with targeted outreach and retention measures. Nevertheless, FBAE records high dropout rates (particularly in Cycle I), secondary AL records modest completion rates, and access to many non-formal programmes still depends on learners' ability to self-finance, indicating that current inclusion measures partially ensure sustained participation.
- Non-formal AL is largely funded through participant contributions (58% of programme costs in 2024), which may limit access for low-income and unemployed adults. RPL, intended to ease access to qualifications, is still used on a limited scale due to complex, formalised procedures and candidate co-financing, so AL provision only **partially matches** the needs of adults with limited financial resources and those with work experience but no formal credentials.
- AL provision in Serbia can be considered **relatively well-developed**, offering multiple pathways linked to recognised qualifications within a structured NQFS framework. Adults can access formal routes with flexible pacing and RPL options, complemented by diverse PROAE provision in vocational fields. At the same time, the effectiveness of the system is still affected by affordability barriers, retention challenges in formal programmes and a comparatively narrow thematic scope in areas beyond labour market competences.

²⁷ This section is built around the guiding questions shown in Annex I.

CONCLUSIONS

Dimension I: Strategic and legal framework

Serbia has developed a **coherent strategic and legal foundation** for AL, embedded in the SDES 2030 and supported by annual planning and monitoring through the APAE and RoAPAE. The framework ensures continuity, systematisation and the integration of lifelong learning principles into education and employment policies.

Progress is visible in the expansion of the PROAE network, development of RPL and CGC systems, and stronger alignment with the NQFS and EU policy priorities on employability and inclusion.

However, **fragmentation of AL objectives** across education, labour and youth strategies limits visibility and cross-sector coherence. The absence of a dedicated AL Strategy and the postponed revision of the LAE constrain policy modernisation. Strategic orientation remains strongly **focused on VET and qualifications**, with underrepresentation of non-vocational and personal development learning. Future progress is closely linked to adopting a unified strategic document, revising the LAE, and setting measurable national participation targets consistent with EU 2030 benchmarks.

Dimension II: Governance and institutional arrangements

Governance is centralised under the MoE, with the involvement of bodies such as the Council, the Qualifications Agency, and the Office for Dual Education and the NQFS. A wide network of actors is in place (PROAE, RTCs, NES measures), while the APAE functions as a key coordination tool. Financing relies on multiple sources, although without a unified budget line.

Institutional consolidation and a clear division of roles have been achieved, but the role of social partners in policy-making remains limited, being mainly advisory, while civil society organisations are largely absent from the process. Monitoring of formal AL is developed through the EMIS, while for non-formal learning it remains fragmented and narrative. Monitoring could be strengthened through the use of measurable goals and indicators, to enable comparison with EU targets.

Financial allocations for AL are tracked by sectors within the APAE, but there is no aggregated overview of overall financing. PROAE largely depend on self-financing by learners and contributions from businesses, while incentives and targeted campaigns among employers are missing – measures that could help increase adult participation in learning. Strengthening the role of social partners and civil society organisations within the institutional framework of AL could contribute to more effective policy design and evaluation.

Dimension III: Provision and programmes of AL

Serbia's AL system offers diverse and flexible pathways linked to NQFS levels 1–5. PROAE and RTCs ensure access to labour-market-oriented learning, while FBAE targets Roma and vulnerable adults. RPL and CGC are integrated across institutions, though RPL uptake remains limited by complex procedures and costs. Retention in formal AL is weak, and adult participation remains low. The non-formal offer is dominated by technical and service fields, with limited presence of programmes for civic, personal, cultural or community learning.

Further development should focus on simplifying RPL procedures, broadening programme scope beyond VET, improving employer incentives, and expanding outreach and awareness campaigns to raise motivation for participation in AL.

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 country's 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 the 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 communication on the Union of Skills, as well as with benchmarking indicators and other national targets? (fully matched / partially matched / not matched at all) 	Desk review Interviews Data analysis
<p>Chapter 2. AL institutional arrangements & governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional arrangements 	<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 between ministries, 	Desk review Interviews

Chapters	Guiding questions [1]	Sources/ methods
<p>(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).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AL governance models (key features of the governance model, i.e. centralised/decentralised, participative, co-decision (diversity of players, autonomy of providers), supervision and coordination processes, relation to NQFs). ▪ Monitoring and quality assurance, data collection and analysis on AL, including evaluation. 	<p>agencies and other relevant stakeholders? Which coordination mechanisms are in place (e.g. AL council, interministerial committee on AL, Economic and Social Council, etc.) and their roles, i.e. advisory, consultative, decision-making?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 the 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 what extent do the relevant players participate in the different areas of AL governance? (high diversity of stakeholders / somewhat diverse / not diverse at all) 4. How well coordinated is the management of the implementation of AL policies as per the country's institutional arrangements? Do they correspond to the legal frameworks adopted and to a more centralised or decentralised model? (very centralised / centralised to a certain extent / decentralised) 5. How far are the recognition, portability and integration of AL outcomes/qualifications integrated/linked to national qualification frameworks / national qualification systems? (fully integrated / integrated to a certain extent / not integrated at all) 6. What mechanisms (at national, regional or 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 / covered to a certain extent / not covered at all) 	
<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 their 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 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 the AL provision match the needs of different groups of adult learners and address the issues of diversity, equity and inclusion? (fully matches / partially matches / does not match at all) 2. Which are the current providers of AL and are there significant differences between formal and non-formal provision? How attractive are existing programmes (formal and non-formal)? Are there significant gaps in AL provision? (highly attractive / moderately attractive / not attractive at all) 	<p>Desk review Interviews Statistical data analysis</p>
<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Main findings ▪ Main successes, what works well, challenges identified at each level (chapters 1, 2, 3). ▪ Specificities of AL findings, perspectives in AL, source of policy learning. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the main findings in each of the three 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 still remains a challenge, or what are the emerging challenges? 	<p>Expert's own analysis, based on key qualitative and quantitative information collected through desk research and interviews</p>

Chapters	Guiding questions [1]	Sources/ methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maximum one to three conclusions to be highlighted. 	<p>4. Do the findings in 1, 2 and 3 support the study assumption that AL is recognised as a priority and that there is progress?</p> <p>5. What are the sources of 'policy learning' (sources of inspiration: neighbours, EU countries, international practices, etc.)?</p>	

[1] These guiding questions were used as checklist for the authors to use while drafting the different sections of the reports, in particular in the conclusion boxes of each chapter – 'State of play' section.

ANNEX II – LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

List of group interviews

Position	Institution
Headmaster	VET secondary school, PROAE
Teacher	VET secondary school, PROAE
Teacher	VET secondary school, PROAE

Source: Author

List of individual interviews

Position	Institution
Professor, researcher, author	CSO University professor
Professor, researcher, author	Council for VET and Adult Education, university professor

Source: Author

ANNEX III – EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS ACHIEVED FOR THE STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA 2021-2030 (SDES2030)

Priority	Measure	Indicator	Result
1.Improve competencies & qualifications via formal AL (FBAE, secondary AL, reskilling/upskilling and specialisation)	Implementation of functional basic adult education (FBAE)	Adults enrolled / completed; schools implementing	FBAE in 65 schools (planned 66); 5,633 adults attended all 3 cycles; 2,930 completed (52%)
		Inmate FBAE completion	266 enrolled in penal institutions; 187 completed.
		Secondary AL (≥17of age, part-time)	Implemented in 180 schools, 447 learners (well below 2,776 planned but drop out level is small).
		Requalification / upskilling / specialisation in secondary schools	Implemented in 310 schools; 8,554 adults (reskilling 5,034; upskilling 2,412; specialisation 1,108) vs 23,772 planned.
2. Expand network and improve quality of AL providers	Provision of network of PROAE	Number of accredited PROAE /programmes accredited	28 institutions obtained PROAE status in 2019 for 79 training programmes.
2.1. Quality assurance	QA on acquiring PROAE status	QA regulations adopted / applied	Rulebook on acquiring PROAE status (Official Gazette 20/2019)
2.2. Capacity building	Training of AL staff and andragogical assistants	Staff trained; andragogical assistants	~260 teachers trained (FBAE basic andragogy, module 1); 34 andragogical assistants approved in 31 schools
3. Non-formal AL via NES / other bodies	PROAE + NES programmes	Participants in non-formal AL (PROAE/NES/other)	PROAE: 2,251 candidates attended; NES 2019 delivered multiple schemes (e.g. labour-market trainings 1,054 participants; employer-requested trainings 529 unemployed; 25 employed, etc.).
4. Upgrade staff competences in AL	FBAE teachers / PROAE staff professional development	Number of training courses / events	FBAE 260 teachers trained (module 1) in 2019; JPOA staff training courses (modules 1–7) implemented.
Cross-indicator	Adult participation in learning	Participation rate (Eurostat LFS 4 weeks indicator)	4.2% (LFS 2019), unchanged from 2018 (4.1%); 19.8% (AES 2016).

Source: Author

ANNEX IV – KEY RULEBOOKS RELEVANT TO AL

Rulebook on the methodology for developing qualification standards (2020) – defines the process of drafting and approving qualification standards.

Rulebook on detailed conditions regarding programmes, personnel, space, equipment and teaching aids for acquiring the status of PROAE (2021) – defines minimum standards that organisations must meet (in terms of programmes, staff qualifications, facilities, equipment, and teaching aids) in order to be accredited.

Rulebook on conditions concerning premises, equipment, teaching aids and the level and type of education of teachers and andragogical assistants for the implementation of the curriculum of adult primary education (2013) – sets the minimum requirements for facilities, equipment, teaching aids and staff qualifications for implementing adult primary.

Rulebook on the standards for self-evaluation and external evaluation of the quality of work of PROAE (2022) – provides standards and procedures for PROAE quality assurance, requiring periodic self-assessment and external review.

Rulebook on the type, name and content of forms and on the method of keeping records and the name, content and appearance of forms of public documents and certificates in adult education (2015, amended 2022) – regulates the types of forms, the way PROAE keep records on adult learners, staff and programmes, and the content and layout of public documents and certificates issued in adult education.

Rulebook on standards and the procedure for recognition of prior learning (2020) – provides the formal standards and procedural steps for RPL. It specifies eligibility criteria, documentation, assessment methods and competencies required for assessors.

Rulebook on standards for career guidance and counselling services (2020) – applies both to schools and accredited PROAE, ensuring that adult learners across both formal and non-formal settings have access to those services.

NQFS register and PROAE sub-register (online register)²⁸ – the NQFS register is a comprehensive national database of all qualifications attainable in Serbia through formal and non-formal education and RPL, organised in three sub-registers (national qualifications, qualification standards and PROAE providers). The PROAE sub-register contains data on accredited adult education providers, approved adult learning and RPL programmes, CGC services and employers where practical training is delivered.

²⁸ <https://noks.azk.gov.rs>

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

Participating institution	Council for Vocational and Adult Education	NQFS Council	Sectoral councils	Coordination of NQFS implementation
Ministry of Education (MoE)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Qualifications Agency (QA)		✓	✓	✓
Institute for the Improvement of Education (IIE)	✓		✓	✓
Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation (IEQE)	✓	✓		
National Employment Service (NES)	✓			✓
Office for Dual Education and NQFS		✓	✓	✓
Ministry of Economy / Labour	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employers' Association of Serbia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trade unions (representative confederations)	✓	✓	✓	
Universities and public VET schools		✓	✓	
Local self-governments (municipalities)	✓			
Civil society / NGOs active in AL			✓	
AL experts	✓	✓	✓	

* The Office for Dual Education and the NQFS Council play a key coordination role in the implementation of the NQFS and in connecting actors within the qualifications system and the adult learning sector.

ANNEX VI – SUMMARY OF FUNDING SOURCES, TYPES AND AVAILABLE DATA ON FUNDING VOLUMES

Source of funding	Type of programme	Available data on funding volume in RoAPAE 2024*
Central state budget (MoE, project 4007 from which the development of the adult education system is financed)	AL implemented by MoE and other institutions as formal adult education (FBAE, secondary VET leading to the learners' first vocation etc.). Provided by public schools with PROAE status.	Part of overall education budget, aggregate funding not specified in reporting
Participants' own contributions	Various AL programmes, accredited and delivered by PROAE; primary education and training for a first qualification must be free of charge for adult learners (LAE, 2020).	58% of programme financing in 2024
Private sector (companies, employers)	In-company training programmes, employer-ordered accredited PROAE training, employer co-financing of participants' training, etc.	27% of programme financing in 2024
National Employment Service policy driven	ALMP programmes (retraining, upskilling, training for known employer, etc.) through NES-related schemes reported via PROAE.	6% of programme financing in 2024
Provincial/local governments	Support for public primary and secondary schools providing FBAE and other AL programmes.	6.7% financed by autonomous province of Vojvodina and city of Novi Sad
Donor funds (EU, IPA, bilateral projects)	Pilot projects, innovation, outreach to vulnerable groups.	2% attributed to the 'Education to Employment (E2E)' project funded by Swiss SDC and implemented by NIRAS

*Percentages refer to the funding sources reported by PROAE for accredited training programmes delivered in 2024 and do not represent total adult-learning expenditure across all provision.

Source: Author, based on RoAPAE 2024 (MoE, 2025b)

ANNEX VII – INSTITUTIONAL ROLES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

Role	MoE	Pedagogical Institute of Vojvodina	QA	IEQE	IIE	The Office
Monitoring of the implementation of APAE	√					
Verification of formal AL programmes, RPL and CGC; accreditation of schools as PROAE	√					
Verification of non-formal AL programmes and CGC; accreditation of other organisations (legal entities) as PROAE; maintenance of the PROAE register			√			
External evaluation of schools implementing formal AL	√			√		
External evaluation of other organisations (legal entities) as PROAE			√			
Programme development for AL teacher training and professional development	√	√			√	
Coordination of NQFS and quality alignment with EQF. Preparation of draft bylaws related to the quality assurance system						√

Source: Author

ANNEX VIII – ENROLMENTS AND GRADUATES IN SELECTED AL PROGRAMMES 2023-2024

Programme	Enrolled (2023/24)	Completed	Notes
Functional basic adult education (FBAE)	6,008	1,251 (57,3%), Roma share 76.5%	63 schools, 813 teachers, 77 andragogical assistants
Secondary education for adults, part-time, 17+	Grade I: 436; Grade II: 252; Grade III: 356; Grade IV: 328.	210 → 48.1%. 184 → 73.0%. 229 → 64.3%. 225 → 68.6%	completion rate for the grade started is 63.5%. 114 VET schools, no enrolment in gymnasiums/general education
Reskilling/upskilling and specialisation	2,808	26% at NQFS L 3 58% at NQFS L 4 16% at NQFS L 5	Requalification: 1,295; Upskilling: 1,054; Specialisation: 459
Education in correctional institutions	893	374 FBAE 481 non-formal VET 38 secondary VET	Basic/secondary within correctional institutions
Non-formal AL – PROAE training	8,124	8,124	1,158 trainings via 72 PROAE; 187 programmes

Source: Author, based on RoAPAE 2024 (MoE, 2025b)

ANNEX IX – AL PROGRAMMES, USERS/TARGET GROUPS, PROVIDERS, NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Programme	Users / target group	Provider	Participants in 2024*	Funding source
Professional practice (internships)	Unemployed with at least upper-secondary education; no work experience in occupation	Employer (host) via NES; sometimes PROAE	458	NES / MoLEVSA (RS budget)
Traineeship for young people (secondary education)	Unemployed young people up to 30 without experience in occupation	Employer (host) via NES	201	NES / MoLEVSA (RS budget)
Acquiring practical knowledge	Unemployed (standard and targeted groups)	Employer/workplace host (via NES); PROAE where applicable	482	NES / MoLEVSA (RS budget)
Training for the labour market	Unemployed incl. persons with disabilities	PROAE contracted by NES	1,477 (incl. 131 Persons with disabilities)	NES / MoLEVSA (RS budget)
Employer-requested training – unemployed	Unemployed for specific employer needs	Employer + PROAE (contracted by NES)	498	NES / Employer (RS budget + employer share per model)
Employer-requested training – employees	Employees at the employer	Employer (with NES approval)	10	NES / Employer (RS budget + employer)
FBAE – within ALMP	Adults who have not completed primary education	Schools (PROAE)	1,036	RS budget (within ALMP scope via NES coordination)
'My First Salary' (youth employment incentive)	Unemployed young people placed with employers (private/public)	Employers (hosts), coordinated by NES	7,214	RS budget (NES), employer participation where applicable
'Talents in the public sector' (internship)	Candidates for internships in the public sector	Public-sector hosts via NES	514	RS budget (NES / public sector)
Youth Guarantee / IPA 2020 – Internship (HE youth)	Young HE graduates	Employer (host) via NES branches (Niš, Kruševac, S. Mitrovica)	100	RS budget (Youth Guarantee) / IPA 2020
Youth Guarantee / IPA 2020 – Internship (sec. edu. youth)	Young people with a secondary education	Employer (host) via NES branches	50	RS budget (Youth Guarantee) / IPA 2020

Programme	Users / target group	Provider	Participants in 2024*	Funding source
Youth Guarantee / IPA 2020 – Acquiring practical knowledge	Youth	Employer/workplace host (via NES branches)	11	RS Budget (Youth Guarantee) / IPA 2020
Youth Guarantee / IPA 2020 – Professional practice	Youth	Employer host via NES branches	42	RS Budget (Youth Guarantee) / IPA 2020
Youth Guarantee / IPA 2020 – Employer-requested training (unemployed)	Youth (unemployed)	Employer + PROAE via NES branches	16	RS Budget (Youth Guarantee) / IPA 2020
Youth Guarantee – Short courses (languages, digital, soft skills)	Youth	PROAE (and other contracted trainers)	planned 400	RS Budget (Youth Guarantee)
Youth Guarantee – Training for the labour market	Youth	PROAE contracted by NES	planned 300	RS Budget (Youth Guarantee)
IPA 2020 – On-the-job training with hiring subsidy	Long-term unemployed	Employer (host) via NES	40	IPA 2020 + RS budget
IPA 2020 – Training for the labour market	Long-term unemployed	PROAE contracted by NES	planned 100	IPA 2020 + RS budget
CGC/ – Career information (NES branches)	Students, jobseekers, workers changing occupation, etc.	NES (branches 'CIPS')	6,225	NES / MoLEVSA (RS budget)
CGC/ – Career counselling	Jobseekers and unemployed adults	NES	9,377	NES / MoLEVSA (RS budget)

Source: Author, based on RoAPAE 2024 (MoE, 2025b)

*For most NES programmes, the RoAPAE reports results for the period January–November 2024, while for Youth Guarantee short courses and labour market training the figures reported are planned targets.

ACRONYMS

AE	Adult education
AES	Adult education survey
AL	Adult learning
ALMP	Active labour market policies
APAE	Annual plan for adult education
AROPE	At risk of poverty or social exclusion
CCIS	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia
CEP	Centre for Education Policy
CGC	Career guidance and counselling
CNQFS	Council for the National Qualifications Framework of Serbia
CONFINTEA	UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education
CPD	Continuous professional development
CVAE	Centre for Vocational Education and Adult Education
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
CVTS	Continuing vocational training survey
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Commission
EMIS	Education management information system
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERP	Economic reform programme
ESRS	Employment strategy of the Republic of Serbia
ICILS	International computer and information literacy study
ICT	Information and communication technology
ETF	European Training Foundation

EU	European Union
FBAE	Functional basic adult education
GDP	Gross domestic product
IEQE	Institute for Evaluation and Quality in Education
IIE	Institute for Improvement of Education
IPA	Instrument for pre-accession
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
LAE	Law on Adult Education
LDE	Law on Dual Education
LDMSHE	Law on the Dual Model of Studies in Higher Education
LFES	Law on the Foundations of the Education System
LFS	Labour force survey
LSE	Law on Secondary Education
LNQFS	Law on National Qualification Framework of Serbia
MoLEVSA	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoESTD	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (until 2022)
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NAPA	National Academy for Public Administration
NEAAL	New European Agenda for Adult Learning
NES	National Employment Service
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NQFS	National Qualifications Framework of Serbia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PROAE	Publicly recognised organiser of adult education
QA	Qualifications Agency

RGF	Reform and Growth Facility (EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans)
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RS	Republic of Serbia
RTC	Regional training centre
RoAPAE	Report on the implementation of the annual plan for adult education
SC	Sectoral councils
SDES 2030	Strategy for the development of education and upbringing in Serbia 2021–2030
SO	Special objective (within SDES 2030)
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
UIL UNESCO	Institute for Lifelong Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UOS	Union of Skills
VET	Vocational education and training
WBL	Work-based learning

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