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**CONFINTEA VII Central Asia Sub-regional Report
Challenges, opportunities, and recommendations
for ALE in Central Asia and beyond**

Prepared for

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and Uzbekistan

and

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Contents

Abbreviations	3
Executive summary	4
1. Introduction and background	7
2. Scope and context of this report.....	8
2.1 Central Asia within the Asia Pacific region.....	9
2.2 Looking back while moving forward.....	9
2.3 Central Asia sub-regional consultation for CONFINTEA VII	11
3.2 Kyrgyzstan	13
3.3 Tajikistan.....	14
3.4 Uzbekistan	15
4.1 Policy	16
4.3 Financing.....	19
4.4 Quality	20
4.5 Participation, inclusion, and equity	22
5. Learning opportunities for equipping adults in the light of RALE	25
5.1 Literacy and basic skills, also linking schooling to learning through life	25
5.2 Continuing training and professional development.....	27
5.3 Active citizenship through community, popular and liberal education	30
5.4 Second chance programmes to make up for lack of initial schooling.....	31
5.5 Digitalisation, institutionalisation and professionalisation	33
6. Challenges, and ALE responses to key issues	35
6.1 Youth, gender and migration	35
6.2 Impact of the COVID pandemic.....	39
6.3 Contribution to SDG achievements	41
6.4 Strengthening ALE for active democratic citizenship	42
6.5 ALE in the bigger context of LLL	44
7. Priorities, perspectives for cooperation: recommendations.....	45
7.1 Specific issues and challenges facing the sub-region.....	46
7.2 Promising innovations in policy and practice.....	46
7.3 Impact of COVID-19 on ALE policies, provision, and participation.....	47
7.4 Prospects for forward-looking strategies with LLL throughout education and training.....	47
7.5 Contribution of ALE to sustainable development through all the SDGs	48
7.6 Priorities for ALE in the sub-region in the 2020s	49
7.7 Areas and mechanisms for sub-regional cooperation	49
7.8 Findings and recommendations	50
Resources.....	56
ANNEX 1. Central Asian experience in assessing adult literacy	59

Abbreviations

AED	Association for Education Development
AE	Adult Education
AES	Adult Education Survey
AEAT	Adult Education Association of Tajikistan
ALE	Adult Learning and Education
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
BFA	Belém Framework for Action
CA	Central Asia
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CONFINTEA	Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes
DVV	German Adult Education Association
DVV International	Institute for International Cooperation of DVV
EDI	Educational Development Index
EDS	Education Development Strategy
EFA	Education for All
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ETF	Exchange Traded Funds
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GNLC	Global Network of Learning Cities
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICAE	International Council for Adult Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
KAEA	Kyrgyz Adult Education Association
KazNU	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University
KASSD	Kyrgyz Association of Software and Services Developers
KOICA	Korean Agency for International Cooperation
KR	Kyrgyz Republic
KSUCTA	Kyrgyz State University of Construction, Transport and Architecture
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MEDT	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MHSD	Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MPE	Ministry of Public Education
MLMET	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Tajikistan
MLSD	Ministry of Labour and Social Development
MHSD	Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development
MoELR	Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations
NDS	National Development Strategy 2040 of Kyrgyz Republic
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSTRE	Problem solving in technology-rich environments
PVE	Prevention of Violent Extremism
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
RALE	Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education
RK	Republic of Kazakhstan
RVA	Recognition, validation and accreditation of prior learning
UZB	Republic of Uzbekistan
SDF	Skills Development Foundation
SISEQ	Supervision of the Quality of Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SVET	Secondary Vocational Education and Training
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WB	World Bank

Executive summary

This CONFINTEA VII Central Asia sub-regional report is an attempt to describe, document, and critically assess challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for adult learning and education (ALE) in Central Asia¹ and beyond.

The Report has been developed as a collaborative effort of the UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office and DVV International Regional Office for Central Asia in Bishkek. The research approach combined an extensive desk review of available resources from within the countries as well as those from international organisations, such as ETF and OECD, with an ad hoc exercise resulting in short country mappings of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The work on this report started with and took on board the presentations, discussions, and outcomes from the on-line Central Asia sub-regional consultation for CONFINTEA VII on 25th February 2021. It is intended to substantially inform and contribute to the forthcoming CONFINTEA VII Asia Pacific Regional Conference in July 2021.

Writing the Report during COVID-19 was a challenge. The pandemic had been dominating public and personal life for well over a year now. Most education institutions are in some form of lock-down, or they have moved into modes where contact still means working at a distance. This impacted implementing the country information and exchange with stakeholders, when trying to go beyond web-based material.

We are in the cutting-edge period between taking stock of the implementation of the CONFINTEA VI outcome document Belém Framework for Action (BFA) (UIL 2010b), and the forthcoming CONFINTEA VII which will be forming a new framework for action for Member States and stakeholders for the next twelve years, resulting out of the global conference in Morocco in 2022. The Report takes the perspective of looking back to what has been achieved at country level in respect to the five key areas of the BFA – policy, governance, financing, participation, quality – and analyses them through a sub-regional lens. A second orientation for the country mapping was a stronger focus on the current situation and learning opportunities for equipping adults in the light of the UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE); like literacy and basic skills, continuing training and professional development, active citizenship through community, popular and liberal education, second chance programmes to make up for lack of initial schooling as well as overarching aspects like digitalisation, institutionalisation and professionalisation.

A similar perspective has been taken for the 5th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) which is based on a survey and reports from Member States. This is currently under way and is planned to be published alongside CONFINTEA VII. Making use of these two lenses ensures taking the Education 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on board, as RALE was an attempt to bring ALE and lifelong learning (LLL) closely together.

CONFINTEA VII and the future orientation are behind the chapter where challenges and ALE responses to key issues are discussed: youth, gender, and migration; the impact of COVID-19; contribution to SDG achievements; and strengthening ALE for active democratic citizenship. All attempt to reflect ALE in the bigger context of LLL. Everywhere people are adults for most of their lifetime. As all spheres of life and work, society and technology, economy and ecology are constantly changing, there is the need also constantly to upgrade competences, capabilities, and skills; but at the same time to strengthen attitudes, behaviours and values that can cope with the up-coming challenges and realities. In all four countries, such experiences and examples could be identified even within the range of often limited resources. They include: projects to improve financial competencies; skills for in-coming or out-going migrants; CLC for adults as physical places to come together, and networks

¹ References to 'Central Asian countries' throughout this report refer to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, based on their sub-regional grouping under the UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office.

between them as service providers; second chance opportunities for prisoners and ex-inmates; and a good range of approaches to strengthening further professionalisation and institutionalisation. Digitalisation is a thread running throughout the Report; even more so when combined with educational pathways out of the pandemic.

This Report had the advantage of being able to follow up on previous work providing substantial guidance, starting with the Asia Pacific Regional Report presented to the CONFINTEA VI Asia Pacific Regional Pre-conference. Even more important, there was a report on “Ensuring lifelong learning for all in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: country evidence and policy recommendations”, published by UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office in 2020. This included recommendations for each of the countries, and for cooperation between them. Also in 2020, DVV International supported research into macro level ALE policies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, combined with a comparative analysis and synthesis report and published as “Analysis of Central Asian Country’s Policies on Adult Learning and Education (ALE), as a basis for strategic intervention: Regional Synthesis” (Duke, Hinzen 2020). These two studies were both deeper and wider. They therefore played a prominent part for formulating ideas, suggestions and recommendations of this report, which are contained especially in the final chapters of the report, with some brought forward into this Summary.

The Report starts with the conceptually broader perspective which takes the full range of lifelong, life-wide and life-deep dimensions of LLL into consideration, and thereby naturally produces findings, which go beyond ALE, and have all the other sub-sectors of the education systems in sight, as was done in and for the UNESCO study:

“... a number of common issues in relation to developing national systems for lifelong learning can be observed among Central Asian countries. Therefore, joint sub-regional projects could be beneficial for countries to support one another with successful practices and common frameworks... the country reports provide useful insights and policy recommendations, with regard to developing strategies for lifelong learning at the national level. Comparative analysis of these findings, however, ha[s] also allowed for the identification of common challenges and policy recommendations at a sub-regional level.” (Carlsen 2020, pp. 58, 59)

The DVV International study opened with country reviews concentrating on ALE within LLL, before moving into the comparative syntheses. Here as well, we point at some findings and suggestions which especially ask for more sub-regional exchange (Duke, Hinzen 2020):

- As for the macro level it was found that ALE policy, legislation, and financing, despite numerous achievements, need further improvements as they are of the highest importance, especially the financial aspects. Here, Governments and stakeholders of ALE could create mechanisms for joint work.
- The meso level has seen a number of achievements in the professionalisation and institutionalisation of staff and providers. This should be further strengthened through jointly developed and used virtual platforms, with applied mechanisms and tools for ALE implementation and for learning from one another.
- The key question for the micro level will remain: how can access and participation be improved so that ‘leave no one behind’ is secured for an increased part of the youth and adult population? The growth of CLCs and high-quality programmes should also follow the special needs and requirements of inclusive ALE.

This present study confirms all those findings and recommendations. In terms of bringing forward experiences from the countries and a sub-regional perspective for regional and global CONFINTEA VII orientation, the following suggestions are put forward:

- Deepen the emerging discourse on LLL as a human right and a public good, which is moving towards an LLL entitlement in all the dimensions of formal, non-formal and informal learning, education, and training. If such an entitlement is realised, then non-vocational and vocational ALE need much higher recognition.
- ALE and SDGs should be more strongly aligned. Implementing all the SDGs absolutely requires adults, who are capable, motivated, and skilled. Their potential should be unlocked now, well before a new debate on post-2030 points at failures.
- Financing of ALE must be increased to a level where it can really cope with serving the needs of all adults lifelong, life-wide and life-deep. The resources needed cannot come from the education budget alone: they require a complete change, to become embedded in all the SDG fields and areas of practice.
- Elaborate new forms of educational governance which integrate the requirements of the formal education sector with those of the other education sub-sectors. ALE currently is often marginalised, with training in the informal sector seen as lying outside educational governance and thereby fostering marginalisation.
- The findings point to the importance of recognition, validation, and accreditation (RVA) of prior learning in the variety of formal, non-formal and informal opportunities, inside the education system as well as in community, cultural, economic, health and social and other spheres of life. A regional exchange on RVA should be promoted, maybe through the on-line learning platform, together with regional training.
- The rapid development of science and technology requires human beings to develop and adapt to new conditions. More attention should be paid to support conditions for self-education. New views on the educational process, its opportunities and tasks should be studied. *Heutagogy* (as explained later) is positioned as a new approach to the organisation of ALE: teaching about self-education.
- Identify new ways and means for integrating community-based ALE in institutions at local levels like CLCs with the requirements and opportunities of digitalised contents and approaches such as blended forms of learning as are realised in other education sub-sectors; this requires substantial investment into CLC infrastructure.
- Digitalisation creates major challenges and opportunities for enlarging and deepening regional and sub-regional cooperation in ALE and LLL. Central Asia should move towards a sub-regional learning platform, and it should use it to exchange experiences and examples of ALE as an education sub-sector and as a profession.
- COVID-19 has enforced digitalisation processes and strengthened the infrastructure needed in respect to hard- and software for most education sectors. Governments, public and private organisations need to invest more into research and development of digital forms of ALE and respective virtual platforms and materials.
- Absence of data, lack of statistical records, and absence of research are running threads through reports on ALE. Some information may be available for formal adult and continuing professional education; much less is on record for non-formal ALE or informal learning opportunities. A sub-regional compact to improve this critical situation should be initiated.

All of these are important for CONFINTEA VII, and for further integration into and implementation of all 17 SDGs, and especially of Education Agenda 2030. They should be taken forward into the Asia Pacific Regional Conference and its Outcome Statement. They should also be considered by the CONFINTEA VII Consultative Group when preparing and drafting the framework of action coming out of the conference in Morocco.

1. Introduction and background

CONFINTEA (Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes) is the acronym commonly used for the UNESCO World Conferences on Adult Education held every twelve years since 1949, when the adult education community met for the first time in Elsinore shortly after the end of World War 2. In 1960 the end of colonialism and gaining independence was a major theme in Montreal. CONFINTEA III met in Tokyo in 1972 during an important era of educational reform; the professionalization of adult learning and education (ALE) was a central theme. This was also the time of the highly influential UNESCO Report *Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow* (Faure 1972).

The Cold War reached a peak when CONFINTEA IV met in 1985 in Paris with stronger civil society participation, advocating *A Right to Learn*. CONFINTEA V had the highest participation of civil society actors thus far (Knoll 2014) in Hamburg in 1997. A year earlier UNESCO published *Learning: the treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century* (Delors 1996). Strong orientation towards lifelong learning (LLL) was influential for the further development of ALE on to CONFINTEA VI in Belém in 2009. Belém is the starting point for this report, looking to CONFINTEA VII.

Meanwhile UNESCO has again invited an International Commission to reflect on the *Futures of Education* through a global consultation process using the potential of new social media and digitalized information and exchange. Its final report provisionally called *Learning to Become* will be published late in 2021, before CONFINTEA VII in 2022 in Morocco. Following an interdisciplinary consultation organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the document *Embracing a culture of lifelong learning. Contribution to the Futures of Education Initiative* (UIL 2020) was issued to inform this International Commission. Also, the global ALE movement International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), founded in 1973 following CONFINTEA III, issued *Adult Learning and Education (ALE) – Because the Future Cannot Wait* (ICAE 2020). Another contribution on *The role of Civil Society Organisations in 2050 and beyond. Contribution from UNESCO's Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education 2030 to UNESCO's Future of Education Initiative* (CCNGO 2021) discussed thoroughly the importance of community learning centres (CLC) as potentially important institutions to implement ALE.

The enlarged perspective on LLL as a human right and public good has been strengthened recently by a joint initiative of UNESCO and ILO with *A Review of Entitlement Systems for LLL* (Dunbar 2020). This entitlement gives ALE an even more important role for the future, as the majority of people are adults for the longest time of their life. If this is taken serious on a global level like in another ILO report on *Lifelong Learning in the Informal Economy* (Palmer 2020) then the importance and relevance of ALE, also as part of the LLL entitlement, must be in reach for the billions of adults in the informal sector. This must lead to new forms of educational governance which integrate the requirements of the formal education sector with those of the other education sub-sectors. Otherwise, the notion from the SDGs on *Leave no one behind* could not be achieved.

In addition, one should also look into recent developments of ALE as a profession which have concentrated on practical tools that can be used to improve and strengthen ALE through governmental or civil society initiatives. A prominent example is the *Curriculum globALE. A competency framework for adult educators* (Avramovska et al 2015) which was constructed by a consortium of partners and then introduced and tested in several countries globally, including from Central Asia, as shown and discussed later in this Report. Curriculum globALE is a modular training system for adult educators, and the modules include communication and group dynamics, teaching methods as well as planning, organisation and evaluation of ALE. Just now in May 2021, after an intensive period of harnessing and integrating all the experiences made so far, a global launch involving UIL, ICAE, DIE and DVV International (<https://uil.unesco.org/event/international-launch-curriculum-globale-reference-framework-training-adult-educators>) prepared the ground for wider acceptance and use in the training of staff already working in ALE. While the Curriculum globALE is a helpful tool to support

professionalization of ALE staff, the next step has been taken also in working on key performance indicators for adult education centres which have been taken up in *Curriculum institutionALE. Framework for Strengthening Institutions of ALE* (Denys 2020).

The 3rd GRALE was titled *Leave no one behind: Participation, equity and inclusion*, and its findings are based on survey responses from 159 countries. The report concludes: "...the impact ALE could have to better the lives of individuals and society is greatly reduced when large segments of the population are excluded. The promotion of equitable learning opportunities and the consequent possibility of enabling all to participate is the key to unlock the full potential of ALE." (UIL 2019b, p. 171) There are many ways to improve this situation, especially when it comes to support strengthening ALE as a sub-sector of the education system with related policy, legislation, and financing. Combining the three levels, micro, meso, macro is essential (Boeren 2019) when addressing the needs and advantages to strengthen ALE as a system when aiming for higher participation (Desjardins, Ioannidou 2020). This systemic vision and a systematic way for collaboration in ALE policy and practice between Governments and DVV International have led to an instrument called *Adult Learning & Education – System Building Approach (ALESBA). Toolkit for Implementation* (Belete 2020) and has been included by now into the ALE toolbox available globally (<https://www.dvv-international.de/en/ale-toolbox>)

These introductory notes show evidence of a higher level of discussion on the future of ALE within LLL, combined with a globally available set of tools for implementation. CONFINTEA VII should become the political instrument to strengthen ALE within national education systems, thus helping to contribute towards implementing the 2030 Agenda.

2. Scope and context of this report

ALE and LLL played only a minor role in the two highly important global agendas agreed upon in the year 2000 within the framework of the United Nations (UN) – the *Millennium Development Goals (MDG)* of the New York Summit and the framework of *Education for All* of the World Education Forum in Dakar. Only the goal of universal primary education made it into the MDG, and even this has not been achieved.

A larger number of follow-up reports and meetings requested and suggested improvements such as in 2003 the *Tashkent Call to Action* on "Education for All – Lifelong Learning in Central Asia" which came out of a conference of 15 countries of the Central Asia sub-region, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, who shared concerns about the low level of support to non-formal education and structures needed to develop ALE, the need for gender sensitive policies, and better data and statistics. (Ahmed 2009, p. 65) There were attempts to improve the position of ALE in preparing for CONFINTEA VI, and to identify the connections between ALE and EFA via studies like *Knowing More, Doing Better. Challenges for CONFINTEA VI for Monitoring EFA in Non-formal Youth and Adult Education* (Duke, Hinzen 2008). Since the last CONFINTEA VI in 2009, new forms of digitalisation and specially the social media have become more powerful. COVID-19 has exacerbated (rather than causing) these changes which we may call results of technological progress, but its impact is clearly universal.

The current CONFINTEA process informs Member-states to improve the position of ALE as a sub-sector of the education system and a key component of LLL. These reflections looking back surely show that the central challenge now and for CONFINTEA VII is to get policies and priorities carried through into actions yielding more tangible results; through vigorous and well calculated advocacy; to enlighten and inform the whole Education sector and the wider development community globally and locally of the vitality of ALE to their mission; and to convey the force of LLL as the key to achieving all the SDGs, not just part of Goal 4 through education and training opportunities for youth and adults. (Schweighöfer 2019)

Obviously greater visibility must be won for ALE to reverse the situation discussed as *The invisible friend: Adult education and the Sustainable Development Goals* (Benavot 2018). In parallel with the CONFINTEA VII process a growing consortium of more than fifteen actors and stakeholders, including ICAE and UIL, ASPBAE and DVV International, have come together for

the ALE campaign, signing a *Call to action*: “We are a global alliance of networks, associations and organisations for adult learning and education (ALE). We recognise the fundamental importance of ALE for justice, well-being and change. While Agenda 2030 identifies lifelong learning (LLL) as critical to attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ALE which is a significant part of LLL, is largely invisible. For ALE to be seen, understood, and valued, we need to advocate for greater involvement and investment by governments, donors, private sector, international organizations, and social movements...” (We are ALE 2021).

2.1 Central Asia within the Asia Pacific region

This is the first CONFINTEA Central Asia Sub-regional ALE report commissioned by UNESCO. In 2008, when preparing for CONFINTEA VI *The State and Development of Adult Learning and Education in Asia and the Pacific. Regional Synthesis Report* (Ahmed 2009) was based on ALE country reports submitted by Governments of the region, including those of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (Republic of Uzbekistan 2008). That Report took findings of the ALE situation to the CONFINTEA VI Asian Regional Preparatory Conference 2008, held in Seoul in the Republic of Korea. At that time 29 out of 46 countries had responded.

The 2009 Report had a special section on the Central Asia Sub-Region which concluded with a statement which seems to be relevant for today: “In each of the countries, greater efforts are needed to improve the quality and content of life and livelihood skills, and of cultural and civic education, as components in the development of a comprehensive structure of lifelong learning for youth and adults.” (Ahmed, 2008, p. 14)

This present report, as required in the original terms, relates especially to four countries of Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The report is greatly informed by four country mappings related to a common perspective and structure provided, which attempts to cover the major issues related to the UNESCO frameworks and recommendations as well as challenges and responses identified as key issues for the future, including sub-regional cooperation. UNESCO Bangkok is currently leading the Asia Pacific regional process towards the global conference of CONFINTEA VII through consultations in all five sub-regions, with a head-start for East Asia, and followed by Central Asia. This sub-regional consultation is taken up in the next section.

2.2 Looking back while moving forward

This report both sketches the situation of ALE in the countries of Central Asia and suggests ways and activities for more sub-regional cooperation in future. On the way there are still many challenges ahead. It may be helpful first to look at milestones since the Asia Pacific Report mentioned above was tabled, including the outcome documents who have certain guiding and normative functions for the development of ALE within LLL.

- **2009 – CONFINTEA VI and the Belem Framework for Action (BFA):** This conference gathered some 1,125 participants from 144 countries including Uzbekistan, also Mongolia and Iran. The BFA has been guiding the development of ALE since then. It recognized “that the fulfilment of the right to education for adults and young people is conditioned by considerations of policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion, equity and quality...”. To quote two important points: “We recognize that adult education represents a significant component of the lifelong learning process, which embraces a learning continuum ranging from formal to non-formal to informal learning.” In the para on “Participation, inclusion and equity” the BFA calls for “...creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centres and improving access to, and participation in, the full range of adult learning and education programmes for women, taking into account the particular demands of the gender specific life-course.” (UIL 2010b) The BFA was therefore an important statement to situate ALE deeply within LLL, and to see community learning centres (CLCs) as appropriate institutions providing an environment for community-based learning.

• **2013 – CONFINTEA VI Regional Follow-up Meeting for Asia and the Pacific:** This meeting was called “Four years after Belém: Taking stock of progress”. Its report stated: “Adult learning and education (ALE) is recognised by most governments as a vital response to the challenges societies are confronting in the twenty-first century. It forms an integral part of a holistic and comprehensive lifelong learning and education system, and it is a key element in sustainable development. However, as discussed in the meeting, ALE is the least institutionalised part of education systems. ALE remains invisible in most Member States, with little involvement of all relevant actors and with few effective implementation mechanisms and practices. As a consequence, inclusion and participation remain low.” In its Action Plan, a number of recommendations and suggested activities are listed which later found direct or indirect ways of being implemented in countries of the sub-region. These included “...Carry out comparative research in specific topics of ALE (policy, governance, financing participation, quality). Carry out cross-country impact research on Community Learning Centres; ...promoting Community Learning Centres as a potential model; ...improving capacity building and the professionalisation of adult educators.” (UIL 2013)

• **2015 – Education 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals:** Around a decade after beginning to implement the MDGs and EFA a process of looking back at achievements and challenges for the future led to the Education 2030 Agenda of the World Education Forum in Incheon. This in turn was fully integrated as Education Goal 4 into the 17 SDGs by the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. The other globally agreed SDGs are related to all areas of development: poverty, health, gender, inequality, water, energy, work, climate, cities, peace, and partnerships, aiming at people, planet, and prosperity (UNESCO, 2015a). The overarching education goal was to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. Its 7 targets cover the full spectrum of the education sector including early childhood, schooling, university, technical training, all in a LLL perspective. With respect to CLCs it is recommended: “Make learning spaces and environments for non-formal and adult learning and education widely available, including networks of community learning centres and spaces and provision for access to IT resources as essential elements of lifelong learning.” (UNESCO 2015a, p. 52)

• **2015 – UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE):** RALE was adopted by UNESCO Member States at the General Conference in Paris in November 2015. It had been asked for during CONFINTEA VI; and put as a task into the BFA “to review and update, by 2012, the *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* adopted in Nairobi (1976)”. RALE points to the “significant role of adult learning and education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. It acknowledges the Incheon Declaration and states that “Adult learning and education is a core component of lifelong learning. It comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work”. For implementation, Member States and stakeholders should support “creating or strengthening appropriate institutional structures, like community learning centres, for delivering adult learning and education and encouraging adults to use these as hubs for individual learning as well as community development”. (UNESCO 2015b, p. 11) In the Preamble of RALE, the Recommendation on the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (RTVET) is explicitly mentioned to underline “the relevance of improving technical and vocational education and training ... which contains specific provisions for continuing training and professional development”. (UNESCO, 2015b)

• **2017 – CONFINTEA VI Midterm Review and the Suwon Statement:** The theme of the Mid-term Review *Towards CONFINTEA VII: Adult Learning and Education and the 2030 Agenda*, is all about bringing closer together two processes and agendas – the five key areas of the BFA and the SDG Education targets – and providing an opportunity to have common indicators for joint monitoring. In preparation for the global review, a Regional Report on *The status of adult learning and education in Asia and the Pacific* concluded: “ALE in Asia and the Pacific is at a critical juncture as the countries embark on realigning their education policies and programmes with the long-term 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has to consolidate the gains

made in recent decades and envision a new agenda, one which is more holistic and built on the three overlapping principles of lifelong learning, global citizenship and sustainable development. Education is at the heart of this process. Youth education and ALE have to go beyond employability and foster the values of active citizenship, strengthen personal growth and secure social inclusion. They have also to imbibe values that underscore the inevitability of interdependence and collaboration, concern for environmental sustainability and the need for a new ethics combining enterprise and environmentalism, and learning to live together in a world of increased diversity and inequality.” (Govinda 2017, p. 74)

2.3 Central Asia sub-regional consultation for CONFINTEA VII

This consultation was an important point of departure for this sub-regional report. The meeting took place on 25th February 2021 with UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office, UNESCO Bangkok, UIL and DVV International, Regional Office for Central Asia, as organizers and key partners. The on-line mode created the possibility of wider participation with representatives from Governments, civil society, and various stakeholders. In addition to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan it was Turkmenistan that participated. Each of the five countries held presentations on the present status of ALE, policy level achievements and reported on developments in this area, showing their specific arrangements and situations. However, some common challenges and opportunities were also noted in the minutes of the meeting.

Challenges in ALE in the region:

- Low coverage by ALE, especially for senior citizens
- Recognition of qualifications by entities/counties in the sub-region and internationally
- Lack of scientific and research activities in ALE, particularly in the informal sector
- Quality assurance of ALE
- Issues around access to ALE in remote areas and for people with disabilities, including those coming from poorer households.

Opportunities:

- Use of ICT to expand coverage and inclusion to ALE
- Development of sub-regional and international cooperation for NQF, recognition of qualifications and mobility
- Professional development of teachers to improve quality of services and products
- Importance of integration of global citizenship in ALE programmes.

Following the country reports there were also contributions from ASPBAE with a civil society lens on issues related to participation, inclusion, policy, financing, and governance. DVV International presented findings from a comparative synthesis of country ALE policies and experiences which also suggested possible areas for regional cooperation like the leverage of structural support to embed ALE as a sub-sector of the education system within an LLL perspective; strengthen ALE in acts, laws, regulations, budgets through peer review and consultation by engaging key actors from Government, Parliament, Professional Institutes, and Civil Society. UIL summarised the discussions and presentations around the following themes:

- Policy support – constructing the right legal frameworks in support of ALE
- Support to basic literacy skills (ICT is part of them)
- Digitalisation – digital skills are needed everywhere (adults/learners)
- Need for international cooperation: neighbours, sub-regional, international (to learn from each other).

This Central Asia consultation ended with a discussion of issues and suggestions coming from country level for the regional and global conferences. The meeting therefore was right at the cutting edge between CONFINTEAs VI and VII: looking back while moving forward. This present report attempts to integrate the points raised in the country presentations with those from findings of the desk review and the country mappings.

3. Status, achievements, challenges: ALE and LLL in Central Asian countries

Looking briefly at each country, what differences and similarities are evident? We look out for gaps between policies in words, and effective implementation in actions; and for modes of governance, management skills, and scarcity of resources. Some data tabulation is helpful comparison, including ALE and other social and economic indicators:

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Area of the country, thousand square kilometres	2 669.7	191.8	139.96	425.4
Population, thousand people	18 877.1	6 636.8	9 707.1	34 036
Rural population, % (2019)	42	63	73	50
Share of population aged 15-64, % (2020)	63.0	62.6	60.7	66.4
Share of population over 65, % (2020)	7.9	4.5	3.0	4.4
Social indicators				
Level of employment	M – 51.7% W – 48.3% (2020)	M – 61,6% W – 38,4% (2019)	M – 59,5% W – 40,5% (2016)	M – 58,6% W – 41,4% (2019)
Official unemployment rate	4.5%	5,5%	2,1%	9.0%
Poverty rate	4.3% (2019)	20,1% (2019)	26,5% (2020)	11% (2019)
Economic indicators				
GDP, million U.S. dollars	169 836	7 740,5	~7 300	57 698,5
GDP per capita, U.S. dollars	9 055	1 319	800	1 685,5
Rankings				
World Human Development Index ranking (2020; out of 189 countries)	51	120	125	106
World Education Index ranking (2020; out of 189 countries)	35	70	96	71
Gender Inequality Index (2018)	0.203	0.381	0.377	0.303
Rating of countries in terms of Internet accessibility (2017)	28	139	(no data)	50
ALE indicators				
The existence of the ALE / LLL Law	-	-	+	-
National Qualifications Framework Approved	+	+	+	+
A validation mechanism is in force.	+	-	+	+
Existence of a strategy / program for the development of ALE / LLL	+ ²	+ ⁻³	+ ⁴	+ ⁵

² On December 27, 2019 (№ 988) The State Program for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025 of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved. According to this state program, adult education on the principle of "life-long learning" provides for the development of a mechanism for the creation of "silver universities" programme.

³ On May 4, 2021, the Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on the approval of the Program of Education Development in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021 - 2040 was signed. This program contains a section on "Adult Education".

⁴ Concept of lifelong learning in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2017-2023.

⁵ On September 23, 2020 (No. ZRU-637) Law About Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan accepted by Legislative house on May 19, 2020, approved by the Senate on August 7, 2020. Article 19 states that Adult Learning and Education are central components of lifelong learning.

3.1 Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan ALE and LLL for the period from 2015 to 2020, had changes and progress in the following sections:

- 2019 (December) – The State programme for the development of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025 approved.⁶
- 2018 (November) – State Programme of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development 2017-2021 (Enbek)⁷
- 2016 (December) – the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Probation" was adopted.
- 2016 (March) – the National Qualifications Framework approved⁸.
- 2015 (February) – ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁹.

The current status in LLL is focused on the development of formal, non-formal education, and informal or spontaneous learning and training of targeted learning. However, despite these measures, there is no clear mechanism for recognising non-formal learning in RK. Recognition of non-formal learning does not affect participation in TVET and does not facilitate student access to TVET. It is not yet possible to obtain professional qualifications in Kazakhstan by confirming informal and spontaneous training.

The challenges of the sphere of ALE for Kazakhstan are due to the following factors (according to the presentations of the Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran (February, 2021) and desk-based analysis):

- incompleteness of legal policy;
- ALE programme funding from the state budget is only available for the registered unemployed;
- the Classifier of Occupations does not include the profession of an andragogue;
- insufficient mechanisms for partnership between the formal and non-formal education sectors;
- difficulty for the adult population of adapting to new socio-economic conditions;
- lack of a methodology for analysing the learning needs of the adult population, including persons with disabilities.

3.2 Kyrgyzstan

The ALE sector is still not properly recognised in Kyrgyzstan. Implementing international agendas (Agenda 2030 of the SDGs) adopted and national strategies (National Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan 2040, Programme of Education Development in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021 – 2040) imply developing ALE. However, independent policies and laws governing this area have not yet been developed. The most significant achievements related to ALE in recent years are:

- In May 2021, the new 'Programme for the Development of the Education Sector in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021-2040' was adopted by the Government, including an action plan for its implementation for 2021-23. It provides definitions for the terms of "Adult Education", "Non-formal adult education", and contains a mention of "lifelong principles" for the first time. It also lays the policy basis for the "elaboration and implementation of a conceptual document on the development of education and training for adults in the Kyrgyz Republic".
- In 2020 (September) the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was adopted¹⁰. It defines a unified scale of qualification levels for the development of sectoral and cross-sectoral qualifications frameworks, professional standards. This would ensure inter-industry comparability of qualifications and be the basis for a system of compliance confirmation and assignment of qualifications of specialists. The NQF distinguishes nine levels of qualifications.

⁶ The State Program for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025 of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 27 December, 2019, № 988

⁷ State Programme of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development 2017-2021 (Enbek). Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 13, 2018, No. 746

⁸ Approved by protocol dated March 16, 2016 of the Republican tripartite commission on social partnership and regulation of social and labor relations. https://enic-kazakhstan.kz/en/analytical_materials/nacionalnaya-ramka-kvalifikacij

⁹ National plans to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities in Kazakhstan—amendments to the legislation. Manarbek M. Koishibayev, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09687599.2019.1698153>

¹⁰ Approved by the KR Government Decree No. 491 of September 18, 2020. Access mode: <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2709>

- 2019 (March) – ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.¹¹
- 2019 (January) – Probation Act came into force; institution of probation began to function.¹²
- In 2018 (August) the concept of social educational credit was introduced in the Law "On Education". This is a preferential loan subsidised by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to pay tuition fees in educational organisations of the Republic.

However, the following challenges for the adult education sector remain:

- lack of professional management and teaching staff in the field of adult education, due to absence of a sustainable system of training and retraining;
- insufficient mechanisms for partnership and easy connection between the formal and non-formal education sectors;
- lack of certification centres providing recognition of professional experience and competencies acquired informally;
- lack of public funding for adult education.

The problems listed are based on the presentations of the Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran (February 2021) and desk-based analysis. A list of source materials can be found in the Annex.

3.3 Tajikistan

Under the term adult education in Tajikistan is considered the full range of progressive processes of formal or other learning, through which adults - for the purpose of adult education is the population aged 25 years and older -, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical and professional skills or apply them in a new direction to meet their own needs and the needs of society.¹³

In general, Tajikistan has created a favourable legal environment for the development of ALE. The *Concept of Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2017-2023* (January 2017) was adopted, which gives an important role in the development of LLL in adult learning centres. The 'Law on Adult Education' was adopted in February 2017. This recognised the existence of formal, non-formal, and informal learning, introduced the concept of validation, defined state guarantees for adults' access to learning at all stages of life, introduced the norms of mandatory collection of statistics.

According to information presented on Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran, currently, there are 35 Adult Education Centres run by the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment; 4 Vocational Training Centres are run by higher educational institutions in Tajikistan. Short-term courses are offered by 18 higher education institutions, 24 secondary vocational education institutions, and 58 primary vocational education institutions as well as by 423 centres run by civil society organisations, sole proprietors, CLCs, and the Motorists Association.

Government and non-governmental educational institutions offer 1, 2, 3 and 6 month-long professional courses in construction, technology, and entrepreneurship-related fields as well as foreign language and vehicle driving courses. Annually, more than 100 thousand students graduate from short-term courses in the fields of construction, technology, entrepreneurship/accounting, language skills, tourism, and are awarded appropriated training certificates.¹⁴

Based on the information provided during the Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran, UNESCO, DVV International and country reports, the following challenges for the ALE sector in Tajikistan should be highlighted:

¹¹ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of March 13, 2019 № 34 "On ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 13, 2006 and signed on September 21, 2011".

¹² Law No. 34 on Probation of the Kyrgyz Republic of February 24, 2017

¹³ National Strategy for Education Development of the Republic of Tajikistan to 2020

¹⁴ Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran (25 February 2021; presentation from Tajikistan)

- the education system in Tajikistan does not train andragogues besides the implemented Curriculum globALE programme;
- the research capacity to study ALE is weak and there are very few manuals for organising adult learning;
- with the adoption of legislation on ALE in Tajikistan came the responsibility to collect statistics on ALE. But the current system of statistics collects data only on vocational training for adults, and it is incomplete. There is no published data from the ALCT statistics, although a statistical reporting system has been introduced since 2018. There are no data on short-term courses in State and non-state educational institutions, where the volume of training coverage may be several times greater than the available statistics;
- lack of public funding for ALE.

3.4 Uzbekistan

The policy documents setting the legal foundation for ALE and LLL in Uzbekistan are based on the Constitution of Uzbekistan (adopted 8th December 1992), the Constitution of Karakalpakstan (adopted 9th April 1993), Law About Education (2020); Strategy on Actions for Further Development of Uzbekistan for 2017–2021; Education Sector Plan of Uzbekistan for 2019–2023. ALE is implemented through formal education (vocational colleges, higher and post-graduate education, re-training and skills improvement) institutions and non-formal education (training courses under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and non-governmental non-profit organisations or NGNPOs, NGEOs, cultural centres, etc). A regulatory framework for implementing skill recognition, validation and accreditation mechanisms has been developed.

The ALE and LLL sector's most significant changes and achievements that happened between 2015 and 2020 are described below and in the following sections:

- 2020 (May) – the National Qualifications Framework System was approved.¹⁵
- 2020 (September) – Law on Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted.¹⁶
- 2020 (October) – the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted¹⁷
- 2020 (December) – the Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution No 824 dated 31/12/2020 "On measures to improve the organisation of education process in higher education institutions"¹⁸
- 2019 (December) – Uzbekistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- In 2017, a roadmap for the implementation of SDG 4 was approved.

According to the presentations of the Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran (February, 2021) and desk-based analysis, in Uzbekistan key ALE challenges are described below:

- insufficient ALE programme coverage, especially of the older/senior population;
- lack of uniform development of ALE institutions in remote rural areas.
- lack of a permanent statistics mechanism in the ALE sector, lack of research on ALE;
- lack of intersectoral cooperation on ALE
- the Classifier of Occupations does not include the profession of an andragogue;
- lack of involvement of cultural-educational institutions (theaters, museums, libraries, etc.).
- lack of a system of training professional adult educators (andragogues) for the ALE sector at the level of higher education.
- lack of research on ALE.

¹⁵ <http://www.uzdaily.com/en/post/57055>

¹⁶ Law on Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, September 23, 2020 No. ZRU-637

¹⁷ Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, October 15, № 03/20/641/1389.

¹⁸ The Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution No 824 dated 31/12/2020 "On measures to improve organisation of education process in higher education institutions"

4. Current situation and promising innovations across five key areas of BFA

4.1 Policy

In the *Republic of Kazakhstan* State policy on LLL is coordinated and implemented jointly by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MLSP) within the framework of the Law on Education, the Labour Code, and the Roadmap of Employment 2020. The State Programme for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025 became an organisational basis for implementing public policy in education, which guarantees continuity of the country's educational modernisation. Being an organisational basis for implementing public policy in education, the Programme provides for a set of interrelated measures covering changes in the structure, content, and technologies of education; and in the management system; organisational and legal structure of educational entities; and financial-economic mechanisms. According to the State programme for the development of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020-2025, ALE on the principle of LLL provides for the development of a mechanism for the creation of a 'silver universities' programme, to strengthen the offering of non-formal higher education opportunities for adults aged 50 and above.

The key legal acts regulating the education sector in *Kyrgyzstan* are the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of April 30, 2003, № 92 On Education. At the time of this review there is no separate legal act regulating the ALE sector. Adult education is enshrined in the legislation of the Kyrgyz Republic as 'additional education of adults'. It includes retraining and professional development of personnel. In accordance with the 'Regulation on additional professional education in the Kyrgyz Republic' approved by the KR Government Decree of February 3, 2004, #53 additional professional education programmes include professional retraining, professional development and internship programmes for qualified labour workers and specialists with higher and secondary professional education.

With regard to policies governing the education sector in general, and ALE sector in particular, the strategic document for the development of the education sector was the Education Development Strategy (EDS) for the period 2012-2020. According to this strategy, it can be concluded that the only recognised function of ALE is to train the population to acquire skills to enter the labour market. On April 13, 2021 the Development Programme of Education in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2021-2040 was presented for public discussion. The action plan for implementing this programme contains the following key activities for the development of the ALE sector: development and implementation of the concept paper on the development of ALE in the Kyrgyz Republic starting 2021; and to develop a model system for the formal recognition of qualifications, knowledge and skills acquired informally and through work experience in 2023.

The legislation of the *Republic of Tajikistan* on ALE is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, the law "On Education" (dated July 22, 2013), the law "On Adult Education" (dated February 24, 2017 № 1394) other normative legal acts of the Republic of Tajikistan, and international legal acts recognized by Tajikistan. Some of these are listed below.

- Republic of Tajikistan National Standard on Higher Professional Education (Republic of Tajikistan Government Decree #94 dated February 25, 2017)
- Regulation on Admission of Students to Short-Term Vocational Training Courses in the Republic of Tajikistan (Resolution #13/6 on August 29 2012 of the Republic of Tajikistan Ministry of Education and Science Collegium)
- The Law of the RT "On the training of specialists taking into account the needs of the labour market" (January 29, 2021). This law defines the legal, organisational, and economic basis for the interaction of state bodies, employers, and institutions to train specialists to meet the needs of the labour market for competent specialists within the national qualifications system.

- ALE in Tajikistan is also based on the national education standards; classification of vocational professions, areas and trends; the national AE policy, strategies and programs; and a model regulation on adult education institutions.

In *Uzbekistan*, a big step forward was taken on September 23, 2020, when the President of the Republic signed a new law on education which included the terms ‘Adult learning and education’ and ‘Lifelong learning’¹⁹. It mentions in article 4 “priority of education; the freedom of selecting a form of education; unacceptability of discrimination in education”; and guarantees equal rights to education irrespective gender, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, beliefs, private and social status article 5. In article 19 ALE is recognised as the “central component of lifelong learning. It includes all forms of education and learning as well as encompassing all processes of formal, non-formal and informal education”.

The Road Map for implementing the ‘Concept for the Development of the Higher Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030’ identified the following priority goals for ALE in Uzbekistan:

- Development of a knowledge-based society
- Promotion of moral and values education within learning programmes
- Improving the quality of content and developing diversity of modalities of the educational programmes in the view of lifelong learning.

On August 11, 2020, the President of Uzbekistan signed a Decree on additional measures aimed at attracting people to entrepreneurship, increasing labour activity and the vocational training of poor and unemployed citizens, as well as ensuring employment of the population. From 2021, by the presidential decree, each region of Uzbekistan was instructed to open mono-centres – ‘Ishga Markhamat’ or ‘Welcome to work’. Owners of private vocational training institutions will be able to receive State support.

4.2 Governance

In the *Republic of Kazakhstan*, the competent central authority on education is the MES. But Kazakhstan does not have a separate national coordination body for ALE sector. The development of strategic directions of education reform for 2020-2025 is to establish the key to quality and efficiency of the professionalism, leadership, and governance framework at both institutional and national levels for a competitive system. Improving coordination and cooperation between government agencies, interaction with stakeholders is a measure that is necessary to make further progress in the development of ALE policy. According to the *OECD Education Policy Outlook: Kazakhstan* a wider consultation and articulation with key stakeholders needs to become effective to ensure the legitimacy and appropriation of policy development and planning processes (OECD 2018). Based on UNESCO findings of the study on LLL, a number of policy options were identified to support the building of a LLL system in Kazakhstan, which needed to establish a national committee for the promotion of LLL and support legal frameworks and initiatives that can integrate formal and non-formal education (UNESCO 2020a).

There is no separate body responsible for implementing and coordinating ALE in *Kyrgyzstan*. The functions of ALE are assigned to different State bodies. The key role is assigned to the MES, but the Ministry has only one specialist responsible for ALE. Many parties are involved in the ALE sector in Kyrgyzstan. Separate ALE functions are available in different ministries, but there is no separate independent executive body. There are about 300 state providers of ALE – organisations of primary, secondary and higher education; more than 1.5k private providers of ALE. Developing governance and coordination mechanisms is urgent. Currently there is also no common platform for uniting State and non-state organisations for ALE in Kyrgyzstan. There are

¹⁹ <https://www.dvv-international-central-asia.org/uzbekistan/news/detail/adult-learning-and-education-included-into-a-new-law-on-education-in-uzbekistan>

however different coordination groups, and several mechanisms that allow non-state and state organisations to participate in decision-making processes:

- One form of interaction and cooperation between public and State bodies is *public councils*. Public councils are consultative and supervising bodies created on a voluntary basis from representatives of civil society, for interaction and cooperation with ministries, state committees and administrative departments, and also for the public monitoring of activity of these bodies.
- On November 3 2020 the "Laboratory of Project Initiatives in Education" was established under the MES KR. This is a platform for discussing public initiatives in the modernisation of education and science of the Kyrgyz Republic. The platform brings together representatives of expert, academic and business communities. It is a public initiative and does not yet have any legal force, so meeting decisions have only the power to recommend.

In *Tajikistan*, the management of adult education is carried out by the central bodies of State power; local executive bodies of State power, State-authorized bodies in the field of education; state-authorized bodies in the field of adult education and administration of educational institutions of adult education.

- The Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Tajikistan (MLMET) has the authority to manage ALE in Tajikistan. But this Ministry focuses only on vocational training for adults, as it is responsible for promoting employment policy.
- Until July 2020 MES managed the processes of issuing permits (licences) for educational activities; approval of curricula for State organisations; execution of the requirements of the State educational standard of primary vocational education by educational institutions; and accreditation. In 2020 the Agency for quality control of education and science was established, and took over the functions of licensing, accreditation and control of the learning centres.
- The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) is involved in the process of quantitative and sectoral planning of enrolment in the IVET (initial vocational education and training) and SVET (secondary vocational education and training) systems based on the State budget, while the Ministry of Finance is involved in the process of financing these systems from the State budget.

Scientific support of adult education is provided by the Academy of Education of Tajikistan; educational institutions of higher vocational education; branch research institutes; institutes of advanced training; and other scientific and methodological institutions in collaboration with creative associations and relevant organisations.

In *Uzbekistan*, the National Concept on Development of Public Education directly refer to some relevant ministries as responsible for its implementation, as for instance, the Ministry of Higher and Vocational Education, Ministry of Economics and Industry, Ministry of Public Education, Ministry of Finances. Also, central and local state bodies and authorities participate in the development, implementation and coordination of ALE. The education institutions are mainly managed by two Ministries: The Ministry of Public Education (MPE) and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education (MHSSE). Efforts continue to create a mechanism to implement the law 'On Adult Education' in Uzbekistan. However, full implementation of this law requires: a clear coordination system for LLL; including ALE under responsible ministries; defining a validation procedure; amending the SES and accreditation procedures; including the profession of andragogue (specialist in the science of andragogy) in the Classification of Professions; and creating a complete statistical system.

According to the Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023 The Special Secondary Vocational Education system is also being reformed to better support continuing Vocational Education and Training (VET) for adults. The SSVE reform also promotes the provision of adult training in existing vocational colleges, including vocational training and retraining for the unemployed. This change is aligned with international good practices in

lifelong learning, under which vocational colleges play the role of training provider' (Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023, p. 35.). As a basis for cooperation between Ministries on issues related to inclusive education, formally several laws or regulations serve: The Law on social protection of people with disabilities, the Law on Preschool Education, Order of President on Measures for implementation of new management principles in the system of public education, Order of President on Organisation of activities of the State Inspection on education quality supervision (№ 515 on 18.07.2017), Order of President on Approval of the Concept on Education Development in Uzbekistan by 2030) (№ 5712 on 29.04.2019), Law on Education which was approved by the Parliament Senate on August 7, 2020.

Earlier were mentioned two regional reports that looked into LLL and ALE, both based on country studies. In their recommendations they advocate a National Committee or Council that would help with wider consultation and educational governance:

- “In each country, a National Inter-sectoral Committee for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All should be established within the context of SDG 4. The Committee’s mandate should be to develop a National Strategy for Lifelong Learning, while ensuring the participation of relevant stakeholders. It would also address issues such as access, funding, quality, RVA, and NQS in order to promote flexible pathways both in formal and non-formal education.” (Carlsen 2020, p. 59)
- “The country reports float ideas and make suggestions about whether some sort of Governing Council or Consultation Committee related to ALE and / or LLL would be a mechanism to further strengthen the sub-sector. If it were a LLL Council, participation would need to reach into all areas of the education system; and to inform and raise awareness, through a biographical lens - from the cradle to the grave - and an institutional lens - from kindergarten via schools and colleges and on through adult education centres. An ALE Committee might be smaller, but it would still need an inter-sectoral approach with representatives of all of training programme providers included. Information and communication media could play an important support role.” (Duke, Hinzen 2020, p. 5)

4.3 Financing

It seems almost impossible to identify within each of the four countries the present aggregated level of funds for ALE, and therefore to compare to the respective benchmark of the BFA. The same is true for almost every UN Member State.

Kazakhstan aims to increase education financing from the current 3.4 percent of GDP to 7 percent by 2025²⁰. In 2019, “the expenditures of the Republic of Kazakhstan budget for the education system in *Kazakhstan* reached a record 2.33 trillion tenge. For a number of budget programmes, compared to 2018 this was up by more than 19.7%, while the overall size of the budget increased by 18.8%. Thus, the share of education spending in the budget increased to 19.4%, compared with 19.3% in 2018 and 15.9% in 2017. As for the share of GDP, this was 3.62%, also higher than the indicators of the two previous years (3.15 and 3.39%, respectively)”.²¹ The National Report on the State and Development of the Education System of RK provides information on the use of financial resources and allocation efficiency to state institutions and to the general public. For the financing mechanisms of the education system in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to provide adequate funding for various higher education institutions to increase the amount of government funding in proportion to growth of the country's GDP; and likewise, to develop additional sources of ALE financing, such as private financing, corporate financing (sponsorship from outside large manufacturing companies), etc.

²⁰ <https://primeminister.kz/en/news/rashody-na-obrazovanie-i-nauku-k-2025-godu-vyrastut-do-7-ot-vvp-kazahstana>, Expenditures on education and science by 2025 to reach 7% of Kazakhstan's GDP Thursday, 19 December 2019

²¹ https://forbes.kz/process/education/zakaznoy_pirog_1588226252/ Kazakhstan's state budget spending on education breaks records.04 May 2020

In *Kyrgyzstan* formal ALE institutions are financed from the State budget, international donors, employers and the learners themselves. The State budget finances:

- primary vocational education (for people aged 14 to 28 years who are taking their first vocational education)
- secondary and higher vocational education within the limits of the allocated grants
- education of unemployed citizens
- retraining and advanced training of teachers, doctors, and public officials.²²

Expenses for non-formal education are provided from founder funds received for carrying out statutory activities, loans, voluntary donations, and earmarked contributions of legal entities and individuals, including foreign ones. One of the tools for financing non-formal education is the execution of training orders by public procurement for unemployed citizens, allocated by the employment services, based on public tenders. Generally, 0.5-1% of total education spending from State budget in *Kyrgyzstan* is allocated to ALE programmes, not including primary, secondary and higher vocational education.

The State tries to increase annual financing of the education system in *Tajikistan*, which amounts (2019) to 5.5% of GDP or 18% of the state budget expenditures.²³ Overall, in *Tajikistan* it is planned to allocate 19.9% of total expenditures to the education sector in 2021.²⁴ State educational institutions of ALE are funded from the State budget, and non-state educational institutions of adult education are funded by founders. In addition, between 2016 and 2019, more than 62% of public expenditure on education was allocated to secondary education. Funding for secondary and primary vocational education does not exceed 5% and 17.7% for higher education. Although funding for ALE is increasing annually, its level still does not exceed 0.06% of government spending on education. What is allocated for the needs of AECT is sufficient only for the maintenance of buildings and staff. For the training process, almost one third of the trainees are paid by the Labour and Employment Agency through the State social insurance system, directing the unemployed to training; the rest is paid by the trainees themselves.

In *Uzbekistan* in the last ten years financing of educational expenditures has remained stable within 8.6–9% of GDP (6.4% for education) and continues to be one of the main priorities of government social policy. In *Uzbekistan*, the social responsibility of businesses boils down to the payment of the social infrastructure tax by businesses. The central and local education institutions in *Uzbekistan* are facing a need to collaborate with foreign lifelong education institutions, as well as industry and commerce.

4.4 Quality

According to the State Programme of Education Development in the *Republic of Kazakhstan* for 2020 – 2025, *Kazakhstan* needs to modernise its education sector with a significant and steady increase in investments in education and improvement of its quality. This includes the State Programme for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship (2017–2021). A new national vision is proposed: by 2020, *Kazakhstan* was to become an educated country with smart economy and a highly qualified labour force. Education development must become a platform on which the future economic, political, and socio-cultural prosperity of the country would rely. According to the Country Evidence and Policy Recommendations²⁵, report of UNESCO (2020) ‘most initiatives in *Kazakhstan* tend to focus more on access rather than quality of education. This includes the State Programme for the Development of Productive

²² On the basis of the laws of the *Kyrgyz Republic* "On Education", "On Primary Professional Education", "On Teacher Status".

²³ Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of *Tajikistan*. Statistical compendium on Education 2019. Part 2, pp.221-225.

²⁴ According to the Law of the Republic of *Tajikistan* № 1724 dated November 20, 2020 "On the State Budget of the Republic of *Tajikistan* for 2021", the total amount of state budget expenditures in 2021 will be 28,108,998 Somoni; the expenditures for the education sector - 5,597,083 Somoni.

²⁵ UNESCO (2020) Ensuring lifelong learning for all in *Kazakhstan*, *Kyrgyzstan*, *Tajikistan* and *Uzbekistan* Country Evidence and Policy Recommendations. <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/ensuring-lifelong-learning-all-kazakhstan-kyrgyzstan-tajikistan-and-uzbekistan>

Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship (2017–2021), as well as the adoption of the ‘Free Training Project in TVET’ within the framework of this programme ²⁶.

In 2016 (March) the National Qualifications Framework ²⁷ (NQF) was approved. The NQF of Kazakhstan contains eight levels which correspond to the European Qualifications Framework and educational cycles. Also, the Self-certification of the NQF for Higher education in Kazakhstan contains the results of two interdepartmental Working groups on self-certification established by the Ministry of education. ²⁸

In *Kyrgyzstan* in 2013, the Law ‘On education’ was amended to replace the State Accreditation by Independent Accreditation Agencies. However, at the initiative of MES of Kyrgyz Republic, the introduction of Independent Accreditation was postponed to 2016 and did not begin until 2017.²⁹ In 2020, the State Professional Standards for Teachers of Primary, Secondary and Higher Vocational Education were developed and submitted for discussion. In general, a system for evaluating the qualifications of andragogy that would meet the needs of relevant segments of the labour market has yet to be developed. However, it should be noted that in September 2020 the NQF was adopted in *Kyrgyzstan*³⁰. It defines a unified scale of qualification levels for the development of sectoral/sectoral qualifications frameworks, professional standards, which ensures inter-industry comparability of qualifications and is the basis for the system of compliance confirmation and assignment of qualifications of specialists. NQF distinguishes 9 levels of qualifications.

The adopted legislative and regulatory acts in the field of vocational education in *Tajikistan* do not clearly define the concepts of quality and quality assurance, or the potential systems of quality assurance, and tools for improving the quality of education. Regulations related to quality assurance are scattered across various legal documents. They contain numerous overlaps and repetitions of procedures and criteria. Not only do they lack a clear definition of the purpose and role of quality assurance in the system; a definition of the functions that are assigned to the quality assurance system or the bodies responsible for its implementation at system, institutional and programme levels is also lacking. Instead, the existing legal documents are used as tools for State control, but not tools for quality improvement.³¹

In general, State quality control in the field of formal adult education is carried out by the following methods:

- licensing
- state certification
- evaluation of educational institutions
- control of compliance with the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan in the field of ALE. ³²

In January 2021 a Law “On labour market driven training of specialists” was adopted, which stipulates the establishment of the National Qualification Framework, including job classifier, directory of professions, standards of competencies and procedures for quality assurance and

²⁶ UNESCO (2020) Ensuring lifelong learning for all in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Country Evidence and Policy Recommendations. 35 p. <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/ensuring-lifelong-learning-all-kazakhstan-kyrgyzstan-tajikistan-and-uzbekistan>

²⁷ Approved by protocol dated March 16 2016 of the Republican tripartite commission on social partnership and regulation of social and labor relations. https://enic-kazakhstan.kz/en/analytical_materials/nacionalnaya-ramka-kvalifikacy

²⁸ Approved by protocol dated March 16 2016 of the Republican tripartite commission on social partnership and regulation of social and labor relations. https://enic-kazakhstan.kz/en/analytical_materials/otchet-po-samosertifikacii

²⁹ INQAAHE Newsletter, March 2018. https://www.inqaahe.org/sites/default/files/201803_Bulletin.pdf

Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 670 of September 29, 2015 "On Approval of Acts on Independent Accreditation in the Education System of the Kyrgyz Republic" approved the procedure of recognition of accreditation agencies in the field of education; procedure of accreditation of educational organisations and programs; minimum requirements for accredited educational organisations of primary, secondary and higher professional education of the Kyrgyz Republic. <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/98206/35?mode=tekst>

³⁰ Approved by the KR Government Decree No. 491 of September 18, 2020. Access mode: <https://www.gov.kg/ru/npa/s/2709>

³¹ Torino Process 2018-2020. National Report of Tajikistan. Section D.3.1. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-01/trp_2018-20_national_report_tajikistan.pdf

³² Law "On Adult Education" Article 16.

confirmation of qualifications.³³ That is, Tajikistan begins a gradual transition to competence-based training in the field of vocational education of youth and adults at all levels.

In *Uzbekistan* State accreditation of educational institutions is organised on the basis of the Law of the Republic ‘About Education’ (2020) and the State Educational Standards on the criteria and technologies for attesting educational institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan. By the Resolution ‘On measures to organise the activities of the National System for the Development of Professional Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan’ (May 15 2020 No. 287)³⁴, the NQF and the Regulation on the Development of the System of Professional Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills were adopted. State inspection of the quality of education implements State policy on quality. Since 2018, attestation is carried out by the State Inspectorate for Supervision of the Quality of Education (SISEQ) under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan accrediting an educational institution. SISEQ also consulted various international organisations such as UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank in the process, to understand international treaties on the rights of children to education All education programmes and interventions based on the new standard created by the SDG 4 for education aim to *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*.

4.5 Participation, inclusion, and equity

This section provides information on the enrolment of adults and young people in CA countries.

Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education by sex, in % (indicator SDG 4.3.2)³⁵

Country	Both	Men	Women	Year
Kazakhstan	70.68	64.14	77.58	2020
Kyrgyzstan	42.32	37.39	47.44	2019
Tajikistan	31.26	35.47	26.85	2017
Uzbekistan	12.58	13.74	11.37	2019

Participation rate in technical and vocational programmes (15- to 24-year-olds), by sex, in % (indicator SDG 4.3.3)³⁶

Country	Both	Men	Women	Reference year
Kazakhstan	18.61	19.82	17.34	2020
Kyrgyzstan	6.05	7.06	5.00	2019
Tajikistan	No data			
Uzbekistan	23.82	23.73	23.92	2018

Technical and vocational education and training can be offered in a variety of settings including schools and universities, workplace environments, CLCs and others. Existing data often capture only provision in formal settings such as schools and universities. Participation rates do not capture the intensity or quality of the provision nor the outcomes of the education.

Inclusion

³³ Law on market driven training of specialists No. 1761 from 29.01.2021, available at www.mmk.tj

³⁴ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 515 (July 18, 2017) <http://www.lex.uz/docs/3273612>

³⁵ The gross enrolment ratio is a broad measure of participation in tertiary education and does not take account of differences in duration of programmes between countries or between different levels of education and fields of study. It is standardised to some extent by measuring it relative to a 5-year age group for all countries but may underestimate participation especially in countries with poorly developed tertiary education systems or those where provision is limited to first tertiary programmes (which are generally shorter than 5 years in duration). The population of the official age for tertiary education is estimated to be the 5-year age group immediately following upper secondary education. If the official entrance age to upper secondary is 15 years and the duration is 3 years, then a is the age group 18-22 years.

Source: UNESCO Institut for Statistics (UIS). <http://data.uis.unesco.org>

³⁶ The number of young people aged 15-24 years participating in technical and vocational education at secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary or tertiary levels of education is expressed as a percentage of the population of the same age group.

Source: UNESCO Institut for Statistics (UIS). <http://data.uis.unesco.org>

In 2015 *Kazakhstan* ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which has the purpose of protecting the rights and dignity of people with special needs. Ratification of international conventions was followed by the establishment of an appropriate legislative base and the State Programme for Education and Science Development 2020-2025, where inclusive education is outlined as one of the major trajectories for development. The first Concept on Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan presented by the MES in 2009, outlined the major steps in implementing the reform. According to the study 'Inclusive Education Reform in Kazakhstan: Civil Society Activism from the Bottom Up', local NGOs actively engage in the provision of methodological support to schools and professionals. They contribute to promoting cultural change about perceptions of people with special needs, and to inform parents and the State, and to cooperate more closely with civil society organisations, which serve as change-agents in facilitating inclusive education in Kazakhstan.³⁷ To date, Kazakhstan is an active signatory of international documents related to education, human and children rights protection. These are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, the Bologna declaration, and others.

Kyrgyzstan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2019. Later, the Concept for Development of Inclusive Education in Kyrgyzstan for 2019-2023 was approved. This concept does not however include ALE in a comprehensive form: only primary, secondary, and higher vocational educations are reflected. In 2021, these additions were made to the Law 'On Education':

- Students with disabilities have the right to receive education in the form of special education, inclusive education or education at home.
- Higher education institutions are obliged to create access to educational materials for students with disabilities by providing them in electronic format, on audio carriers or textbooks in Braille.

It is important that an ALE development strategy in Kyrgyzstan should take account of the needs of all vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities according to SDG Agenda 2030, as one of its key principles is 'leaving no one behind'. Box 1 shows a successful example of interaction between several actors in the implementation of an educational project for persons with disabilities.

Box 1 – Case of interaction of Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD)³⁸ with community providers and the university with the support of an international organization (Kyrgyzstan)

In 2019 MLSD together with MES, KASSD (Kyrgyz Association of Software and Services Developers) with the financial support of GIZ, launched a new course: Web development for persons with disabilities. Training providers on the form of NGOs upgraded their skills and provided logistical equipment (installed ramps, tables, etc.). The project involved 5 universities from the provinces of Kyrgyzstan and 3 providers in Bishkek. 85 people were trained.

Source: <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:HORoxQvfUE4J:www.giz-employment.kg/ru/event/Podpisaniie-Miemoranduma-Proghrammirovaniie-dlia-LOVZ-28.html+&cd=8&hl=ru&ct=clnk&gl=kg#.YNn8reqZY2w>

In 2018, *Tajikistan* signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ensuring inclusive education for youth and adults with disabilities is however still a problem. Inclusive education is one of the priorities for the development of the education system at all its levels. There has been a positive shift in this direction within the ALE system. As part of the EU project 'Promotion of social change and inclusive education' implemented by the DVV International's Country Office in Tajikistan, the needs of young people with disabilities in vocational training have been studied; a list of professions most in demand in local labour markets and suitable for young people with disabilities depending on the type of disability has

³⁷ Kamila Rollan., Inclusive Education Reform in Kazakhstan: Civil Society Activism from the Bottom-Up, 2018., https://nur.nu.edu.kz/bitstream/handle/123456789/3681/MSc_2018_Kamila_Rollan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#:~:text=In%20009%2C%20the%20Ministry%20of,are%20expected%20to%20become%20inclusive..

³⁸ In accordance with Jogorku Kenesh Decree No. 4357-VI of 3 February 2021 'On the Structure of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic', this Ministry was merged with the Ministry of Health and transformed into the Ministry of Health and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic.

been made; and a list of the material, technical, and human resources training needs of adult education centres in pilot areas for implementing the training process in a selection of educational programmes has been made.

As part of the EU project 'Promotion of Social Change and Inclusive Education' implemented by DVV International in Tajikistan, the inclusive education curriculum "Adult Training for Basic Literacy" was developed and handout materials were adapted for teaching people with special educational needs aged 14 and over who do not have basic literacy – writing, reading, counting skills. The curriculum of the programme was piloted and is already institutionalized at the State Adult Training Center of Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2019 (Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, October 15, № 03/20/641/1389). The Decree of the President of Uzbekistan dated December 1, 2017 'On measures to fundamentally improve the system of state support for persons with disabilities' (<http://lex.uz/docs/3436196>) provided preferential rights for persons with disabilities entering higher education institutions. The State waived the equality principle for all applicants and applied measures of positive discrimination – the provision of special privileges and preferences to individual minorities, based on gender, race, disability and other factors. Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, an additional 2% quota of admission to universities of the total number of admission of applicants was introduced for people in the I and II disability groups. The passing score for applicants with disabilities was reduced to 56.7 points (30% of the maximum possible score – 189 points) at the entrance examination, and those who scored the corresponding point entered the budget places, based on a state grant. This introduction of a 2% quota by the State is a big first step towards ensuring access to higher education for this category of people.

Equity

Commitments to free education and the prohibition of gender discrimination in education are enshrined in the national constitutional and legislative frameworks of all Central Asian countries. While the countries considered have achieved gender parity at the school level, the achievement of gender equality at the vocational education level varies across countries.

In *Kazakhstan*, girls accounted for 49.5 % of students in formal education in 2018. The share of women in vocational education is 47 %. In higher education, 64.6 % of postgraduate students in 2018-2019 were women.

Gender segregation in career choice persists at the tertiary education level in *Kyrgyzstan*. There are more women in the humanities and pedagogical sciences (86.6 %) and health and social sciences (74.8 %). Men are more likely to choose engineering and technology disciplines. For example, 91 % of students enrolled in transport-related fields are male.

In 2017, 35.9 % of the total number of entrants to higher education institutions in *Tajikistan* were women. As of 1 October 2018, the proportion of female students enrolled in primary and secondary vocational education was 23 % and 33.5 % respectively.

One of the strategies adopted by *Uzbekistan* to increase the number of girls in higher education is to conduct awareness-raising activities in rural areas to promote qualified women professionals as role models, for example through their contribution to the development of rural infrastructure. Special clubs ("Kizlarjon ") have been set up in universities, the aim of which is to increase the social and political participation of young women in society and their professional development.³⁹

Women's participation in the labour market is an important element of economic empowerment. However, participation rates vary from country to country in Central Asia (see table below)

Labour force participation rates in Central Asian countries in 2018, in %⁴⁰

³⁹ UN ESCAP. Beijing+25 Review: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in SPECA countries (Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia). 2020. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_B25_Central_Asia_Report_20200911_RUS.pdf

⁴⁰ UNDP. Human Development Report 2020

Economic activity rate (% of ages 15 and over)	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Total (both sexes)	70.8	61.6	43.6	65.5
Men	77.1	75.8	59.7	78.0
Women	65.2	48.0	27.8	53.4

While labour legislation in Central Asian countries prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, gender disparities remain characteristic of the respective national labour markets. Generally, women across the region have lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates (see statistics in the first table in Section 3). In Kazakhstan, the unemployment rate for women in 2018 was 5.6 per cent, while the corresponding rate for men was 4 per cent. Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, the unemployment rate was 8.9 per cent for women and 5.6 per cent for men.⁴¹

5. Learning opportunities for equipping adults in the light of RALE

5.1 Literacy and basic skills, also linking schooling to learning through life

Basic literacy – the fundamentals of the ‘three Rs’ of reading, writing and arithmetic – made generally encouraging if not entirely satisfactory progress in the later decades of the 20th century – the early serious post-colonial era years. It was also recognised that even when most of the population, young and adult, could test to a modest basic level, unless they made use of the new skills many quickly lapsed back into illiteracy. Functional literacy represented enhanced understanding as we moved into the present century. Meanwhile the need changed and extended dramatically in the new advanced digital era, with new electronic media giving almost infinite reach to those who has the equipment (especially smart phones as well as laptop computers) to take advantage of it. Where possible, schools and colleges rapidly switched to the new ICT. Remote or distance learning became normal in the richer countries, with those in the Central Asia sub-region and other less privileged following wherever conditions and resources permitted, and leadership was clear-sighted. The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically accelerated these changes, and home learning, with new tools, swept virtually every country, transforming learning along with business and other communication. The need for literacy and the disadvantages of geographical isolation persisted. IT skills along with e-access and financial skills became essential to live successfully by the time the SDGs were formulated.

National data on literacy are typically collected through self- or household-declaration in household surveys or population censuses that rely on the “able to read and write a simple statement” definition of literacy, although the questions asked in surveys vary between countries. Annex 1 provides information on adult literacy assessment methods in Central Asia. The Annex identifies activities carried out since 2000.

The following are data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics on adult literacy rate and the number of illiterate people in Central Asia⁴².

Country	Literacy rate			Number of adult Illiterate population		
	Both	Men	Women	Both	Women	Reference year
Kazakhstan	99.8%	99.8%	99.8%	28 584	18 023	2018
Kyrgyzstan	99.5%	99.6%	99.4%	17 656	10 953	2018
Tajikistan	99.8%	99.8%	99.7%	12 752	7 976	2014
Uzbekistan	99.6%	99.7%	99.5%	1 662	1 660	2018

To date no regular surveys to assess the functional literacy of the population have been conducted in Central Asia. Some project studies are being carried out. In Kazakhstan and

⁴¹ UN ESCAP. Beijing+25 Review: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in SPECA countries (Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia). 2020.

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAP_B25_Central_Asia_Report_20200911_RUS.pdf

⁴² UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). <http://data.uis.unesco.org>. The table shows the most up-to-date data available.

Kyrgyzstan. The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) was conducted in 2018-2019. A summary of PIAAC results is presented in Box 2.

As part of the EU project ‘Promotion of Social Change and Inclusive Education’ implemented by DVV International in Tajikistan, the inclusive education curriculum “Adult Training for Basic Literacy” was developed and handout materials were adapted for teaching people with special educational needs aged 14 and over who do not have basic literacy - writing, reading, counting skills. The curriculum of the programme was piloted and is already institutionalized at the State Adult Training Center of Tajikistan.

Box 2 – PIAAC in Central Asia

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is a programme of assessment and analysis of adult skills. The Survey measures adults’ proficiency in key information-processing skills – literacy, numeracy and problem solving – and gathers information and data on how adults use their skills at home, at work and in the wider community.

The results of the test determine one of six levels: 1-5 and below 1. At Level 1 in literacy, adults can read brief texts on familiar topics and locate a single piece of specific information identical in form to information in the question or directive. In numeracy, adults at Level 1 can perform basic mathematical processes in common, concrete contexts, for example, one-step or simple processes involving counting, sorting, basic arithmetic operations and understanding simple percentages.

Source: <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac>

Kazakhstan (2018)

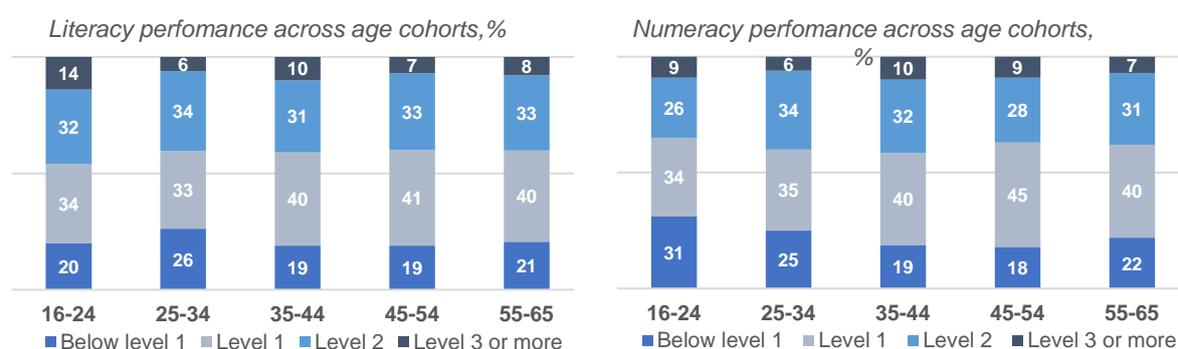
6,050 people aged 16-65 participated in the test between August 2017 and April 2018 in Kazakhstan.

- On average, adults in Kazakhstan perform below the OECD average in literacy and numeracy. In Kazakhstan, half (49 percent) of the survey participants reach literacy level 2, and only a quarter (25 percent) shows a higher proficiency level. A similar situation is observed in mathematical literacy (52%). Only 1% of adults in Kazakhstan (compared to the OECD average of 11%) have reached Level 4 or 5 and are able to understand a wide range of mathematical information that may be complex, abstract, or encountered in unfamiliar contexts.
- The proportion of adults scoring at the highest levels in the domain of problem-solving in technology-rich environments is also below the OECD average. Kazakhstan's youth ranked 34th out of 39 countries in terms of problem-solving skills in a high-tech environment.

Source: OECD (2019), *Skills Matter: Additional Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris. URL: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-matter_1f029d8f-en#page57; https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/publications/countryspecificmaterial/PIAAC_Country_Note_Kazakhstan.pdf

Kyrgyzstan (2019)

2,643 adults aged 16-64 participated in the test between November 2017 and April 2019. The labour market is increasingly seeking adults with strong foundational skills; however, a large portion of adults in the Kyrgyz Republic perform well below this foundational level. A significant share of the survey participants in the Kyrgyz Republic performed at or below level 1 in literacy (59%) and numeracy (61%).



Source: Hou, Dingyong, Karina Acevedo, Joost de Laat, and Jennica Larrison. 2020. “Building the Right Skills for Human Capital: Education, Skills, and Productivity in the Kyrgyz Republic.” Conference Edition. World Bank, Washington, DC. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan did not participate in PIAAC.

One important component of functional literacy is financial literacy as it is a limiting factor for the development of the financial market and the economy as a whole and leads to financial problems for the population (inability to plan the family budget, possible problems with repayment of loans). See Box 3 for an example of encouraging financial literacy.

Box 3 – Global Money Week (GMW) and other financial literacy programmes and projects in Central Asia

GMW is an annual global awareness campaign emphasising the importance of developing financial literacy from an early age. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to ensure that all children and youth have access to high-quality financial education, instilling a culture of mindfulness about money and teaching them about the importance of money so they can make smart financial decisions that can improve their future financial stability and well-being. The campaign has been held annually since 2012, usually in March and April, and takes place in more than 170 countries around the world. *Information website: <https://www.globalmoneyweek.org>*

Kazakhstan: 2013 – 2021

2020. As part of the implementation of the Action Plan on the Concept of Financial Literacy for 2020-2024 (adopted by Resolution #338 of the Government of Kazakhstan dated May 30, 2020), the Agency for Regulation and Development of the Financial Market launched the mobile application "Fingramota Online" on June 25, 2020. A web version of application is also available – the educational website – fingramota.kz. Educational content is also published on social media profiles. *Information website: <https://www.fingramota.kz/ru>*

Kyrgyzstan: 2014 – 2021

2016. The Programme of improving financial literacy of the population for 2016-2020 was approved (Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic #319 dated June 15, 2016). The Programme included 3 directions: 1) financial education of children and youth; 2) improvement of financial literacy of adult population; 3) providing access to financial information and financial services.

2019. The Kyrgyz Republic was the winner in the "Youth Inclusion 2019" category of the CYFI Global Inclusion Awards. *Information website: <https://www.finsabat.kg>*

Tajikistan: 2014 – 2021

In **2015**, the National Bank of Tajikistan (NBT) established the Division of Consumer Protection, responsible for financial education. In 2021 Tajikistan still does not have a National Strategy for Financial Education. In 2016, the Government approved the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030, which, among other things, provides for the development and implementation of a state programme to improve the financial literacy of the population. *OECD (2019), Roadmap for the National Strategy for Financial Education of the Republic of Tajikistan <https://www.oecd.org/education/financial-education-cis.htm>*

The official channel of the Financial Literacy Department of the Financial Services Consumer Protection Department of the NBT RT. Information website: <https://www.t.me/s/fingramtj>

Uzbekistan: 2015, 2018, 2020, 2021 (years indicated according to public sources)

2018. The Central Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Professional Development Centre 'Norma' began to implement the programme 'Improvement of financial literacy of entrepreneurs and population'. A free online course 'Fundamentals of Financial Literacy' (direktor.uz) was organized. Participants who successfully passed the face-to-face examination received certificates that could be used to obtain a loan from a bank. *Information website: <https://direktor.uz>*

2020. An informational and educational resource "Finlit.uz" was launched. This site is focused on training in the basics of finance and economics. Educational information is also presented on the official pages on Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and Youtube. The project is realized by the Department of improvement of financial literacy and re-training of bank specialists of the Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Information website: <https://finlit.uz>

5.2 Continuing training and professional development

From the 1990s Vocational Education and Training (VET) has become a highly prominent and at times almost the only ALE of interest to many governments. In more recent years, championed by global IGOs like the EU and UNESCO, LLL has regained its wider meaning, reaching back through early years and on to the end of life, well beyond conventional ages of employability. At the same time the approach to VET has itself become enriched as the rate of technological change, especially in ICT, has accelerated and altered most dimensions of life as well as work. Central Asia is wrestling with these changes, which have been dramatic in the years since Belém.

In *Kazakhstan* there is ongoing training and professional development of adult education, including formal and informal adult learning opportunities, in VET colleges, higher education institutions, private educational institutions, and centres.

It should be noted that there are private organisations involved in adult learning in all Central Asian countries. One interesting example is presented in Box 4 – Central Asia School of Professional and Continuing Education. Significantly, this organisation is present in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Box 4 – The Central Asia School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE)

SPCE was founded in 2006. It offers post-secondary and continuous education, giving young people and adults professional and vocational qualifications, and income-generating opportunities. Since 2006, more than 150 thousand students (53% women) have graduated from SPCE, completing one or more programmes from 450 available training modules. SPCE provides its services in 14 learning centres located in Dushanbe (3 centres), Khorog (2 centres) and Bokhtar (Tajikistan); Naryn, Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Tekeli (Kazakhstan) as well as Darwaz, Ishkashim, Faizabad (2 centres), and Shugnan (Afghanistan)

Trying to cover as many communities as possible, SPCE offers special courses for residents of remote villages who do not have direct access to SPCE resources. Short-term courses help solve such problems as obsolete curricula in public schools and preparation for State testing, which is especially important for rural communities.



Source: <https://ucentralasia.org/Schools/Spce>

Kazakhstan has already taken various steps to create a stronger training system of the ALE sector. Ministries have presented several state programmes to expand participation in all forms of adult education, such as the "Enbek" programme, the State programme Digital Kazakhstan for 2018-2022 ("Digital Kazakhstan"), and the State Programme for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025. The State Programme of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development 2017-2021 (Enbek)⁴³ provided short-term modular vocational education and training (VET) courses for the unemployed, underemployed and low-skilled people.

Kazakhstan has also adopted legislation that formally recognises learning outcomes through non-formal education and training and non-formal education providers. In March 2021, Kazakhstan validated the list of regulated occupations that will need to undergo obligatory independent certification for graduates as of 2021. It includes 72 occupations, of which 70 are in health care, 1 in accounting, 1 in auditing. Currently, Kazakhstan regulates professional activities in 202 occupations.⁴⁴

In *Kyrgyzstan*, the system for continuous training includes public and private providers, community learning centres, university-based and other continuing education centres. According to MES, from 2014 to 2019 1,443 legal entities were issued licenses for the right to conduct educational activities in 5,884 programmes of additional (that is non-formal) education. Special mention should be made of the activities of Skills Development Fund⁴⁵ in Kyrgyzstan (SDF). The objective of SDF is training and retraining through short-term courses on the basis of the State and non-state educational institutions of the country (vocational lyceums, colleges, private training centres). Also, the priority is to strengthen interaction between the vocational education institutions and employers of the Kyrgyz Republic. During the period of work 2016 to 2020, 22,794 people were trained in the SDF. Employability of those who completed the courses was 75%.

⁴³ State Programme of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship Development 2017-2021 (Enbek). Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 13, 2018, No. 746

⁴⁴ European Training Foundation, National Qualifications Framework Kazakhstan. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/Kazakhstan_0.pdf

⁴⁵ The Skills Development Fund (SDF) was established in 2016 with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank under the Second Vocational Education and Skills Development Project. In 2020, the Skills Development Fund was registered as an institution under the Ministry of Labour and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic (Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic № 550 of November 13, 2020). More information about SDF: <http://www.frn.kesip.kg/ru>

Currently there is little information about the quality and compliance of the education provided by private training centres. Mapping and accreditation of private training providers is needed. Continuing education is not coordinated at State level, and there is no system for monitoring its development or assessing its quality nationally.

In *Tajikistan* initial VET (IVET) is offered at vocational lyceums in two types of courses: two-year courses in 50 professions (after Grade 9), and one-year courses (after Grade 11) in about 90 professions. 85% of students receive state grants and only 15% pay for their education. Secondary VET (SVET) is offered at professional colleges where students can be enrolled in a four-year course after Grade 9, or in a two-year course after Grade 11. The IVET organisations are focused on the production sector, while the SVET organisations are focused on the service sector (education, health care). Based on this and the current economic situation in the country, the total number of educational institutions and students in IVET is decreasing, and that in SVET is increasing. Their share of students studying at the expense of the State budget in SVET is about 40%, in IVET 85%.⁴⁶ The IVET system has developed special integrated three-component (professional, language-cultural, and legal) programmes for the preliminary adaptation of potential labour emigrants to the needs of foreign labour markets. In addition, for the official recognition of professional skills acquired in the process of non-formal education, the Tajikistan Government adopted the "Procedure of recognition (validation) of adult competencies" (Decree #568 dated December 5, 2017). This procedure in practice mainly covers external labour migrants returning home and who have acquired certain (often high-level) professional skills in the process of work. This group of people needs appropriate state documents confirming their level of qualification for legal employment in host countries.⁴⁷

In *Uzbekistan* the President's Decree on "Measures to Comprehensively Improve the System of General Secondary, Secondary Specialised and Vocational Education"⁴⁸ approved on January 25, 2018. According to this document, in the context of expanding the GSE to 11 years of study, admission to vocational education will only be available for graduates of compulsory general secondary education (after grade 11) voluntarily and programme designed for periods ranging from 6 months to 2 years, depending on the specialisation. On the basis of the aim of the current reform to focus on the quality of the network of vocational colleges and based on national and priorities, it is expected significantly to reduce the number of colleges from 1,400 to 800⁴⁹. The SSVE system is also being reformed to better support continuing vocational education and training (VET) for adults.

According to the Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023, Professional Training Centres are established in Tashkent, Samarkand and Shahrissabz, in collaboration with the Korean Agency for International Cooperation (KOICA). MoELR provides initial vocational training for unemployed citizens between 16 and 50 years (no previous qualification of school leaving certificate necessary) to support them in finding employment. MoELR runs three large training centres in Tashkent (yearly throughput 520 students), Samarkand (yearly throughput 480 students) and Ferghana (to be opened soon). With support from KOICA two more professional training centres are under development in Fergana and Urgench⁵⁰

Box 5 contains information on one of the projects implemented in Uzbekistan for training and professional development.

Box 5 – Future Skills Uzbekistan: a new educational project for the training of IT specialists

On January 11, 2021, IT Park signed a memorandum of cooperation with the MoELR of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This event was the beginning of a new project "Future Skills Uzbekistan", aimed at developing and training new professions most often required by employers in the 21st century. The goal of the Future Skills Uzbekistan project is to increase the number of highly qualified IT specialists through a comprehensive training programme in information

⁴⁶ Torino Process 2018-2020. Tajikistan National Report. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-01/trp_2018-20_national_report_tajikistan.pdf

⁴⁷ Torino Process 2018-2020. National Report of Tajikistan. Section B.1.8.

⁴⁸ President's Decree on "Measures to Comprehensively Improve the System of General Secondary, Secondary Specialized and Vocational Education" dated January 25, 2018.

⁴⁹ President's Decree on "Measures to Comprehensively Improve the System of General Secondary, Secondary Specialized and Vocational Education" dated January 25, 2018.

⁵⁰ Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023

technology. Additionally, various events, internships, hackathons, accelerators, incubators, contests, and other activities will be organised for the project participants. A comprehensive training programme will last 9 months and cover 12 regions, the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the capital of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Source: <https://futureskills.uz>

5.3 Active citizenship through community, popular and liberal education

There is a growing interest in and concern for the local institutionalisation of ALE programmes, and the professionalisation of providers and their staff. CLCs have been suggested (Avramovska et al. 2017), analysed in their impact, including their wider benefits (Duke, Hinzen 2016), and widely adopted in recent years. CLCs are seen in the BFA, SDG and RALE as important opportunities for youth and adults. They may present important places to develop community confidence and nurture active citizenship. Here are a few examples of the early growth of CLCs in some parts of the sub-region.

Since 2002, with the support of UNESCO, Bangkok and UNESCO, Almaty, the project 'Establishing Community Learning Centres' has been implemented by the Association Education for All in *Kazakhstan*. Seven CLCs were established, including 6 Centres in Zhambyl and Almaty oblasts. Later, alongside these centres the CLCs involved also new groups – employed population, farmers, students of secondary and vocational schools, who wanted to update and improve their knowledge and skills in various areas. Four CLCs are legal entities registered as non-governmental non-commercial organisations.

In 1997, an informal network of CLCs was established in *Kyrgyzstan* and registered as the KAEA in 2006 with support from DVV International. Today, 13 CLCs are members of the Association. In 2019 the Association for Education Development in Kyrgyzstan (AED) became an officially registered NGO. This Association is dealing among others with ALE, youth and women empowerment, vocational training and education advocacy.

A significant number of NGOs are active in *Tajikistan* and have extensive experience working with different segments of the population – children, adults, senior citizens. The staff of NGOs are trained and educated to be trainers in different areas of economic and social knowledge. The boxes below (6 and 7) present examples of projects implemented by NGOs in Tajikistan.

Box 6 – Community Learning Centres in Tajikistan

In most remote communities of the country there are no educational institutions other than secondary schools. For vocational training, one must travel to a district or regional centre. To expand access to different types of training and learning, DVV International together with state and non-state partners decided to create a first pilot Community Learning Centre (CLC) in Nurek. This centre has been operating since 2019 through quadripartite cooperation, involving DVV International, the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment, the municipal administration, and a local partner NGO. A CLC is a resource and training centre, which provides information and conducts various activities (training, general cultural and informational events etc.) for the local population, aimed at the development of the local community in accordance with the needs of community members. The mission of the CLC is to support communities and develop a strong civil society. Services are provided to improve educational levels of the general population, offer second chance basic education, professional qualifications, opportunities for improved income and well-being. Furthermore, the CLC's programme will include offers to improve the psychological and social adaptation for people with disabilities, environmental preservation, arts and culture development, safe migration, small and medium enterprise development, and the basics of effective communication. Another function of the CLC is to expand 21st-century skills training and the acquisition of competency-based professions that promote sustainable local development, global citizenship education, information and communication technology education, and vocational training. Special attention is given to the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society.

"I didn't know that my life could change so much, as I thought my whole life would now pass within the four walls of our home. When I first came to the CLC, I saw young women and men who also have disabilities like me, and that I was not alone. Most importantly, I saw my abilities and opportunities in life and realized that there was no point in sitting around and waiting for a miracle; it was better to start using the opportunities that I had. I also realized that, like everyone else, I have the right to learn and develop."

A 28-year-old woman with a 2nd group of disability. She joined CLC in 2019. She gained not only new knowledge, but also confidence and new acquaintances.

Source: *Journal of Adult Education in Tajikistan*. 2020. Article "Analysis of the Development Opportunities of Adult Learning and Education in Tajikistan as a Basis for Strategic Intervention. Author: Kuddusov J. Article "Community Learning Centres as an effective tool to promote non-formal education in Tajikistan. Author: Rano Dzhumaeva.

Box 7 – Tajikistan Day Care Centre for the Elderly as Providers of ALE

Since May 2019, a day care centre for elderly citizens, those with disabilities and those in difficult living conditions has been operating in the city of Khorog, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast. The centre opened with the support of the State Agency for Social Protection of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of RT in cooperation with the Mushkilkusho NGO. The Centre provides social, domestic, rehabilitation, psychological, educational and legal services. One of the areas of work is folk crafts. Their products are successfully sold at affordable prices in special stalls in markets and stores, as well as at exhibitions. Source: *Journal of Adult Education in Tajikistan*. 2020. Article "A full life is the key to health and longevity. Author: Elchai Marodbekova.

5.4 Second chance programmes to make up for lack of initial schooling

This kind of work is an early element of ALE which remains important for many, perhaps all, countries, despite the advance in initial schooling participation and retention rates. It merges easily into updating programmes for adults, as even good initial schooling and literacy prove inadequate with the onrush of new technology and other changes, global and local.

Exact statistics on the number of adult citizens in Central Asia countries who did not receive a 9-year education could not be found. The following is the most up-to-date information on the proportion of the population in Central Asia with no more than a primary level of education.

Share of population with primary and lower levels of education (no schooling, incomplete primary), population 25 years and older, in %⁵¹

Country	Reference year	Population 25 years and older, thousand people			Share of population with primary and lower levels of education			Number of population with primary and lower levels of education (estimation), thousand people		
		Both	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women	Both	Men	Women
Kazakhstan	2018	10 815	5 030	5 784	0,541	0,351	0,709	58,6	17,6	41,0
Kyrgyzstan	2009	2 547	1 224	1 323	4,307	3,068	5,481	110,0	37,5	72,5
Tajikistan	2017	3 977	1 963	2 013	5,471	4,260	6,670	217,9	83,6	134,3
Uzbekistan	2018	17 617	8 579	9 038	0,095	0,043	0,146	16,8	3,7	13,2

It should be noted that the majority of the population in Central Asia with primary education and below are women. Below is the proportion of women in the population with primary education and below:

- Kazakhstan – 70%
- Kyrgyzstan – 65,9%
- Tajikistan – 61,6%
- Uzbekistan – 78,6%

According to UNESCO, in *Kazakhstan* a growing number of evening schools' programmes for young adults who had dropped out of school.

For the MES of the *Kyrgyz Republic*, at the end of 2019 only five evening schools were operating in Kyrgyzstan – 2 in Bishkek, one each in Chui, Jalal-Abad and Issyk-Kul regions. If necessary, an evening school class can be opened in case of receipt of 12 or more applications for education in a particular school. The Law on Probation, signed back in 2017, came into force in Kyrgyzstan in January 2019. The transfer of the probation service from the State Penitentiary Service to the Ministry of Justice, and the creation of the new Probation Institute, was an important step in the creation of a civil society institution responsible, inter alia, for the social reintegration of offenders. To re-socialise and adapt to life in society, probation clients without education are assisted in executive, penitentiary and post-

⁵¹ UNESCO Institut for Statistics (UIS). <http://data.uis.unesco.org>. Additional calculations by the authors of the report.

penitentiary probation to receive basic general education, secondary general education and secondary vocational education.

The main categories of citizens left without basic secondary education in *Tajikistan* are from poor and migrant families.⁵² The problem became acute after the beginning of the civil war in Tajikistan 1992-1997, and mass labour migration. In addition, there are children with disabilities who for various reasons cannot receive a general secondary education. In some villages there are only elementary schools with four grades. Secondary schools are several kilometres away, and usually have to be reached on foot, so children stop studying. These categories of children are at risk of dropping out of the educational process and will potentially require various accessible educational programmes for literacy and basic education.

According to the Decree of the President of the *Republic of Uzbekistan* 'On additional measures to further improve the vocational education system'⁵³, from the 2020/2021 academic year, in colleges and technical schools, training is carried out based on the principle of Long-Life learning'. Traditionally, those who have not finished school attend evening schools or centres of adult education, in 2018 approximately 93,000 students in technical schools only. In addition to traditional education and professional training, the adult education system must solve some other problems. The endorsed Education Sectoral Plan of Uzbekistan with the 2019-2023 Law on Education reviewed and updated, conducted an in-depth TVET Review with strategies for action and further improvement of the TVET System: "Employment issues in Uzbekistan: current situation, problems and possible solutions", and thematic studies and policy reviews on Inclusive Education Policy Review, International experiences on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models for expanding preschool education; and mobilising additional resources for expanding quality pre-school education, National Assessment Study on Learning levels of children conducted"⁵⁴.

This section additionally looks at the introduction of probation in the countries of the CA region. The institution of probation today functions in states with different levels of socio-economic development, political and legal systems. The use of probation and alternatives to detention is fairly new across the CA region. Brief country information is provided in Box 8.

Box 8 – Probation in Central Asia

Kazakhstan – 2016. In 2016, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Probation" was adopted, setting out the basic principles and mechanisms for the implementation of probation control in Kazakhstan. (Source: *Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 38-VI of December 30, 2016 "On Probation". (as amended on 27.12.2019)* https://online.zakon.kz/document/?doc_id=36232217).

Kyrgyzstan – 2019. The Probation Act was signed into law in 2017, went into effect on January 1, 2019. The transfer of the probation service from the State Penitentiary Service to the Ministry of Justice and the creation of the new Probation Institute was an important step in the creation of a civil institution responsible, inter alia, for the social reintegration of offenders. In order to re-socialize and adapt to life in society, probation clients without education are assisted in executive, penitentiary and post-penitentiary probation to receive basic general education, secondary general education and secondary vocational education. (Source: *Law of the Kyrgyz Republic of February 24, 2017 No. 34 "On Probation". URL: <http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/111517/10?mode=tekst>*).

Uzbekistan – 2019. The Probation Service was established on the basis of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 7.11.2018, № PP-4006 "On measures to radically improve the penal and correctional legislation". As part of this effort, Uzbekistan established a Probation Service, and is taking steps to improve conditions in correctional institutions; to review the system of prisoner classification and promote social reintegration of offenders; and to focus on applying alternatives to incarceration - prisoner education, vocational training and employment programme. This will draw on the work of the Probation Service, and the significance of civil society organizations, in ensuring effective social reintegration of offenders. Source: <https://lex.uz/docs/4045448?query=%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD>

The institution of probation has not yet been introduced in **Tajikistan**. The Strategy for Reforming the Penal Execution System of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period until 2030 mentions the creation of a probation service. Thus, the Strategy states: "Involve local state authorities, employment centres, education and health care centres, and other

⁵² <https://fergana.agency/articles/105997/>

⁵³ The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On additional measures to further improve the vocational education system', from the 2020/2021, on 6 September 2019.

⁵⁴ <https://uzbekistan.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Evaluation%20revised%20draft%20clean%20.pdf>

organizations in the process of social adaptation and correction of convicts through the establishment of a probation service. Source: Decree of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, June 25, 2020, № 385.

5.5 Digitalisation, institutionalisation and professionalisation

Digitalisation

All four Central Asian countries have noted the importance of digitalisation. Box 9 shows penetration in each of the countries. This trend is reflected at all levels of the state planning systems: both in the documents of the upper level and in mid-level documents and roadmaps:

- Kazakhstan – State programme ‘Digital Kazakhstan’;
- Kyrgyzstan – Digital Transformation Concept ‘Digital Kyrgyzstan 2019-2023’;
- Tajikistan – The Concept of Digital Economy in the Republic of Tajikistan;
- Uzbekistan – The Concept of the National Strategy Digital Uzbekistan 2030.

Box 9 – Statistics on Internet penetration and the number of users of social networks in the Central Asian region (Source: <https://datareportal.com>)

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Internet				
Number of Internet users	15.47 million	3.32 million	3.36 million	18.60 million
Increase of the number of Internet users relative to 2020	+741k (+5.0%)	+260k (+8.5%)	+948k (+39%)	+260k (+1.4%)
Internet penetration	81.9%	50.4%	34.9%	55.2%
Social media				
Number of social media users	12.00 million	3.20 million	1.00 million	4.60 million
Increase of the number of social media users relative to 2020	+2.5 million (+26%)	+700k (+28%)	+340k (+52%)	+1.4 million (+44%)
Estimation of the share of the population	63.5%	48.7%	10.4%	13.6%

The national programme ‘Digital *Kazakhstan*’ started in 2018. In the period 2018-2022 this programme works in five key directions: 1. “Digitisation of the economy branches”; 2. “Transition to the digital state”; 3. “Implementation of the digital Silk Way”; 4. “Evolution of the human capital assets”; 5. “Innovative ecosystem formation”.⁵⁵ Since 2017, based on the programme ‘Digital Kazakhstan’, courses on teaching digital literacy skills for the adult population were successfully launched in all regions of Kazakhstan. According to the Committee on Statistics, the level of digital literacy of the population in 2017 was 77.1%. To achieve the indicators of 78.5% of the level of digital literacy in the country, it is necessary to train up to 500k people in basic competencies”.⁵⁶

In 2019, the roadmap to implement the concept of digital development ‘Digital *Kyrgyzstan* for the period 2019-2023’ was approved. Part of the roadmap is the programme of digitalisation of the national education system for the period 2019-2022. This includes activities in the following areas: modern education management system, creation of a national digital library, electronic textbooks, and distance learning for higher professional education.⁵⁷ It should be noted that, despite the fact that the roadmap specifies the need to teach digital skills to all the country’s citizens, the prescribed measures are more focused on the higher education system. It is necessary to develop a comprehensive system of lifelong learning, which will affect all levels of education. Levels of ICT skills development in Kyrgyzstan do not meet the needs of the 21st century. 98% of respondents have, at most, level 1 PSTRE (Problem solving in technology-rich environments) proficiency, which means that respondents have only basic skills to use “widely available and familiar

⁵⁵ <https://digitalkz.kz/en/about-the-program/>

⁵⁶ <https://digitalkz.kz/cifrovoy-likbez-v-kazahstane-startov/>

⁵⁷ National Torino Process report (NRF), 2020 (B.1.4). https://openspace.efi.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-09/TRPreport_2020_Kyrgyzstan_EN.pdf

technology applications, such as e-mail software or a web browser. There is little or no navigation required to access the information or commands required to solve the problem.”⁵⁸

According to the 2018 Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS), only 21% of women aged 15 to 49 in Kyrgyzstan have information and communication technology skills.⁵⁹

Private projects aimed at improving the digital skills of various groups of citizens and acquiring knowledge in the field of ICT often prevail in *Tajikistan*. One practical example of digital skills development in the Central Asia, known as Impact Sourcing, is presented in Box 10. Impact Sourcing is a business practice where a company prioritizes suppliers that intentionally hire and provide career development opportunities to people who otherwise have limited prospects for formal employment.⁶⁰

Box 10 – Tajikistan: Impact sourcing (UNICEF)

Feasibility assessment conducted by the Ministry and UNICEF in 2018 on Impact Sourcing for remote jobs in Tajikistan showed that both domestic and international companies are in great need of young employees who can do specific digital jobs, known in the market as microwork – an opportunity that is especially advantageous for Tajikistan, where the vast majority of population are youth that live in remote areas and meaningful job opportunities are few and far between.

This model also helps address the lack of skills among young people for the current labour market, youth unemployment, and outgoing labour migration in low-wage occupations, allowing young people to earn competitive wages regardless of where they live. It will also reduce the impact of labour migration on children and women who then remain in the country. The model aims primarily to reach vulnerable young people who do not work or study (NEET), including girls and young people with disabilities. A specific feature for Tajikistan is that the vast majority of the population are young people who live in remote areas and provinces, where there are few employment opportunities.

Source: <https://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/press-releases/vulnerable-adolescents-find-international-opportunities>

Professionalisation

Educators are the key to high quality adult learning and education. Yet a shortage of professional adult educators in many countries around the world still hinders progress towards the provision of lifelong learning opportunities, and hence work towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. In a collection of contributions on *Rethinking adult learning and education – Asian perspectives* (Gartenschlaeger 2019) the article on *Looking back – professionalisation of adult education – lessons learned from Central Asia* (Razilova 2019) looks at different phases between 2006 to 2014, from Training of Trainer (ToT) courses to regular summer academies in changing environments. 150 participants from Central Asia joined together with adult education specialists from other countries of Asia and Europe. Ever since, modules of Curriculum globALE were tested, and gradually implemented in the sub-region with translation into Russian and national languages. A situation has been created where they are ready for wider use, and in digital format.

“In the light of the experiences gained of successes and, in some cases, failures in AE professionalisation in Central Asia enable us to capture lessons learned:

- Training of trainers is an effective method to enhance adult educators’ professionalism only if they are a part of a comprehensive programme on AE professionalisation that affects legislative aspects as well.
- Professionalisation of AE should cover both trainers and all andragogues in the broad sense of teachers, educational administrators, social workers, political decision-makers, etc.

⁵⁸Hou, Dingyong, Karina Acevedo, Joost de Laat, and Jennica Larrison. 2020. “Building the Right Skills for Human Capital: Education, Skills, and Productivity in the Kyrgyz Republic.” Conference Edition. World Bank, Washington, DC. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO

⁵⁹ Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2018.

Comments on the indicator. Percentage of women ages 15-49 who have performed at least one of the following activities in the past 3 months: 1) copied or moved a file or folder; 2) used the copy-paste function to copy or move information within a document; 3) sent an email with an attached file, such as a document, image, or video; 4) used a basic arithmetic formula in a spreadsheet; 5) connected and installed a new device, such as a modem, camera, or printer 6) found, downloaded, installed, and configured software; 7) created an electronic presentation using presentation software that included text, pictures, audio, video, or graphics; 8) transferred a file between a computer and another device; 9) wrote a computer program in a programming language.

⁶⁰ <https://gisc.bsr.org/about/what-is-impact-sourcing>

- Professionalisation of AE should be an integral part of the lifelong learning system and should be managed by both State and society through the engagement of State and non-state organisations in shared responsibility.” (Razilova 2019, pp. 157, 158)

Based on the positive experiences gained on 26 May 2021, UIL, ICAE, DIE and DVV International launched Curriculum globALE as a reference framework for training adult educators.⁶¹

According to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of *Kazakhstan*, by 2025 “all educational programmes should be updated, taking into account professional standards”. ‘As part of the implementation of the new State Programme for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025, the task is to 100% update educational programmes in accordance with professional standards’.⁶² In 2017 – in Kazakhstan, the project ‘Free Technical and Vocational Education Institutions for All’ (FTVET) began. According to the National Torino Process report (NRF), FTVET “project focuses on unemployed and self-employed young people, as well as people of working age who do not have a professional education. During the two years of this project, the mechanisms for obtaining free technical and professional education for workers’ qualifications, including through course training, have been expanded. On the basis of professional standards, new educational programmes are developed on the basis of a modular and competent approach. Development of Educational Programs (EP) for colleges is carried out by holding ‘Kasipkor’ with the involvement of Kazakhstan and international partners“⁶³

To date there are in the *Kyrgyz Republic* no systematic specialised training courses for ALE professionals, trainers and andragogues, in either formal or non-formal sectors. In the educational standards there are no disciplines directly related to the discipline of andragogy, although, as noted by MES, universities have the right to introduce this subject as an additional discipline.⁶⁴ Curriculum globALE is the only valid training course for trainers for adults (andragogy) in Kyrgyzstan as of 2020. This global programme defines the basic qualification framework for teachers working in ALE around the world.

Curriculum globALE was piloted in *Tajikistan* by DVV International in 2019 / 20. It is currently being implemented by the AEAT, in partnership with the Institute for Continuing Education of University Teachers and the Institute for Continuing Education in the Public Sector, with support from the representative office of DVV International in Tajikistan. This programme is institutionalised and officially approved by the MES of Tajikistan.

In *Uzbekistan* from 2020 the Curriculum globALE is the only valid training course for trainers of adults (andragogues). A platform for online learning in the framework of the programme has been already created⁶⁵. In 2020-21, about 100 education specialists from all regions of Uzbekistan completed the distance learning course on the first and second Curriculum globALE modules. In parallel with this work, the development of the third online module has commenced. It is planned that all Curriculum globALE modules will be digitalised for e-learning purposes and become available in Uzbek and Russian languages to all participants across Uzbekistan.

6. Challenges, and ALE responses to key issues

6.1 Youth, gender and migration

Demography is changing worldwide in different ways. Gender ratios remain roughly similar, but life expectancy continues to rise, though in some countries very little, with some life expectations falling and some total populations falling. Rising proportions of older adults are

⁶¹ <https://uil.unesco.org/event/international-launch-curriculum-globale-reference-framework-training-adult-educators>

⁶² <https://www.primeminister.kz/en/news/press/k-2025-godu-vse-obrazovatelnye-programmy-budut-obnovleny-s-uchetom-profstandartov-mon-rk>

⁶³ TORINO PROCESS 2018-2020 National Report, pp.7. https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-09/TRPreport_2020_Kazakhstan_EN.pdf

⁶⁴ Source: Analysis of the existing system of training and retraining of specialists in the field of adult education (ALE) in the Kyrgyz Republic, League of Innovative Development; study commissioned by DVV International, Regional Office for Central Asia; 2020 (Unpublished)

⁶⁵ <http://www.cgtvet.uz>

often a main focus of ALE. Ageing usually means a declining proportion of adults in paid or self-employment. Birth-rates fall below reproduction rates as countries become wealthier. 'Youth' is inexact, varying between and within countries. It may be from 14 or 15 to the early twenties; or extend to the mid-thirties. Such changes relate mainly to government policy, not changing physiology. There are in some places economic, social, and political pressures to push adulthood down into the mid to late teens, while other countries and policies prefer to raise the change-point, or to use different ages for different policies and purposes.

Migration can cause significant gender and age imbalance, if as in CA large numbers of young men seek employment outside their own country. It can also be a major phenomenon impacting on ALE within countries (from rural to urban or city) and between (mainly from Global South to wealthier North). In earlier times it was not possible to move freely between different parts of the many countries something that recurs during pandemic 'lockdown'. Migration has become a massive phenomenon in recent decades, with free trade and free movement dominant features of global economic liberalisation, generating a host of policy concerns, many impacting on ALE. The impact applies in both sending, receiving, and returning situations. It requires clear focus for policy and practice in ALE in CA, as in every other world region. Here are some examples from the sub-region.

Central Asian migration statistics (2019)⁶⁶

Country	Work Visas	Study Visas	Residence Visas
Kazakhstan	141,664	99,080	109,138
Kyrgyzstan	456,776	23,562	19,902
Tajikistan	1,180,647	45,950	77,874
Uzbekistan	2,118,931	58,920	63,716

For *Kazakhstan* developing a work and youth policy is one of the most important tasks of education system modernisation to form an intellectual nation. Its citizens need to have competitive knowledge, creative thinking, as well as high civil and moral principles, patriotism and social responsibility. Here the term 'youth' means young people 14 to 29 years of age, in line with the definition in Article 1 of Law N 581 of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On State Youth Policy' 7 July 2004, to define young citizens. In 2008, the youth organization "Zhas Otan" of the "Nur Otan" party was organized and consists of regional branches, branches of the cities of Astana and Almaty. In addition, within the framework of the project, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, a youth educational innovation camp is being held, which declares a good opportunity for active and talented youth to organize a discussion platform between representatives of government agencies, business and youth⁶⁷. As part of the implementation of the program "Zhastar - Otanha!" (Youth to the Fatherland!), more than forty concepts are being implemented on the basis of regional branches of "Zhas Otan"⁶⁸. In 2019, the youth health center "Salauatty Zhastar" (Healthy Youth), was opened at the State Enterprise on the REM "City Polyclinic No. 36", with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The purpose of the center is to support young people in gaining access to comprehensive services, including: medical, psychological, legal and social services.

In *Kyrgyzstan*, young people experience the highest unemployment and informal employment rates, and do not have adequate access to high quality health and education services. Poor functional literacy, high migration, and unemployment all contribute to the vulnerability of young people, including their susceptibility to criminal behaviour and violent extremism. Youth enrolment in vocational education should be increased. Currently it stands as follows (percentage of total)⁶⁹:

- Initial vocational education and training (IVET) of those aged 17-20 years – 10%
- Secondary vocational education of the population aged 17-20 – 24%

⁶⁶ <https://oxussociety.org/introducing-the-central-asia-migration-tracker/>

⁶⁷ https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%96%D0%B0%D1%81_%D0%9E%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD

⁶⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/kazakhstan>

⁶⁹ Data source: Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran; Presentation by MES (Kyrgyzstan)

- Higher professional education of the population aged 17-24 – 26.5%

Business incubators are a successful example of how to increase youth enrolment in education (particularly business education). Box 11 presents the experience of Kyrgyzstan.

Box 11 – Business Incubators in Universities in Kyrgyzstan

Project logo



In March 2021 Kyrgyzpatent (State Service for Intellectual Property and Innovation under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic), together with 11 higher educational institutions of Kyrgyzstan, opened business incubators. The business incubator is created to stimulate innovative ideas and support student projects at all stages of development: from idea development to its commercialization. The project will hold various Students StartUp competitions and networking sessions with representatives of business communities and entrepreneurs. *More info: <http://patent.kg/en>*

The lack of job opportunities and labour market-relevant training is contributing to emigration. Over 10% of Kyrgyzstan's active population has emigrated, predominantly to Russia and Kazakhstan. Another around 18% have relocated within the country. In 2018, migrants' remittances into Kyrgyzstan totalled \$2.7 billion, accounting for 33.6% of the country's GDP.⁷⁰

In 2018, based on data provided by *Tajikistan's* migration services, almost half a million of the working-age population, or approximately 10% of the labour force, left Tajikistan in search of work abroad. Several studies have questioned this number, stating that the actual number is much higher. For example, JICA (2018) study on migration, living conditions and skills notes that there were 780,829 labour migrants in 2018, corresponding to 14% of the total labour force.⁷¹

The lack of access to education for labour migrants today reflects the growing number of negative problems faced by citizens of CA countries. For example, labour migration, which tends to 'rejuvenate', is one of the reasons for the transformation of demography in *Tajikistan*. 30% of single migrants get married in Russia, over 50% of married men create parallel families', divorce or go to work abroad as a family.⁷² Migrants are subject to administrative or criminal prosecution, or even deportation, due to ignorance of the laws of other countries. They can fall under the influence of criminal groups, fraudsters, and unscrupulous employers. 2016 to 2019 ILO implemented the project "Applying the G20 Vocational Training Strategy. Partnership between the ILO and the Russian Federation". The ADB provided training for migrants in 2020-21, and allocated over 30m USD (ADB project for 2021-2026) to construction migration centres, where courses in the areas of tourism, energy, maintenance, and car repair could be conducted to improve the skills of migrants. USAID has allocated some 2m USD for CA 'for training and support for migrants in difficult situations. Russia, through its embassy and 'Rossotrudnichestvo', regularly conducts Russian language and vocational training courses for migrants.

In 2018 about 28% of *Uzbekistan's* estimated 32.98 million people were under the age of 14. Given current population trends, Uzbekistan should be able to benefit from its youthful demographic dividend until at least 2050, if the skills which are taught in school align with those required in the marketplace. Youth engagement support remains a high priority on the Government's agenda. The Government has adopted a dedicated Programme of Measures to further develop State Youth Policy, including establishing a new Youth Affairs Agency, promoting youth employability and entrepreneurship, giving support to talented youth, etc. The Youth Parliament was created under the Uzbekistan Senate of the Oliy Majlis to promote youth engagement in high-level policymaking, based on inclusive and equity principles. A digital platform for youth, U-report,⁷³ was launched in 2018 in Uzbekistan by UNICEF. This U-report platform provides an App for smartphones through SMS, Facebook, Telegram, an opportunity for young people to participate in issues that matter in their lives such as education, health and employment.

⁷⁰ United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Republic in 2018-2020

⁷¹ ADB. Technical and vocational education and training in Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries. Main results and policy directions. 2021. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/702306/tvet-tajikistan-central-asia-ru.pdf>

⁷² Tajikistan 2020: Updating Risks and Threats, Development Scenarios. Scientific and analytical report

⁷³ <https://uzbekistan.ureport.in/> U-report is a digital platform for youth launched by UNICEF in several countries.

6.2 Impact of the COVID pandemic

The pandemic has seriously affected the *Central Asia* sub-region, but not only for bad: both in terms of economic setback and the social and individual consequences, but also in the conduct of education and training, mainstream and in ALE. Another important dimension is access to and take-up of vaccine.

Negative impact. lack of knowledge in the field of new technology and unequal access to educational programs/resources; reduction of non-governmental organisations' income due to quarantine and unemployment; insufficient adaptability to the new reality on the part of the population. The worsening economic situation in *Central Asia countries* from the effects of COVID-19 and the restrictions it caused played a negative role in the provision of educational services to adults. COVID-19 revealed the need to introduce online learning, using various platforms and social networks. Because of limited access to the Internet, especially in rural areas, implementing many activities became possible only in the post-quarantine period.

Positive impact. development of the digitisation of education; new programmes and ways of learning in online formats; innovative teaching methods promotion; development of online resources and educational portals; impact of social media, etc. In particular, the professionalisation of andragogy began to take place in the use of digital tools. There was continuous capacity-building for andragogy, through online platforms, digital content, and approaches. ALE can further contribute positively to mitigating the effects of the coronavirus pandemic crisis by offering much needed training and education and social support. These interpretations and views are those of the authors. In switching to online processes, competent bodies need to take into consideration nuances to increase the efficiency of delivering online education services to ALE and LLL. The rapid expansion of COVID-19 demonstrates the importance of building resilience to face various threats in different spheres, from economics to education.

Education system has faced major challenges in the transition to online learning. For distance learning, the level of training and availability of the Internet has proved to be a serious barrier. Schoolchildren and students in rural areas could not study through online resources due to the lack of internet access in remote and mountainous areas. Moreover, the high cost and low speed of the internet made online learning an additional financial burden that not everyone could afford.

According to the statement of the MES of the *Republic of Kazakhstan* during the pandemic situation, the Kazakhstan educational system switched to new hybrid learning (online/offline) regime, where children in some remote rural areas studied at schools if there was a favourable epidemiological situation. Certain regions faced difficulties like internet access and its speed, access to modern technology, and knowledge of students, teachers, and adults about how to use it. MES has worked to improve Internet platforms for distance learning.

The World Bank has estimated “the effects of COVID-19 in Kazakhstan will have a decades-long impact on the economy unless authorities act to recover learning losses and indicate that, as a result of the pandemic, learning will decline by the equivalent of 8 PISA points”. The results of the World Bank study showed that “the loss in household incomes due to COVID-19 will also test households' ability to pay to keep students in school, increasing out-of-school youth and hindering the transition to post-secondary education⁷⁴.

Kyrgyzstan, as a small, landlocked country with an economy dependent on services, migrant remittances, and natural resources, has suffered massive negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. WB experts estimate that the poverty rate in the Kyrgyz Republic increased by 11% in 2020 from 20.1% in 2019. As a result, an additional 700k people have fallen below the poverty line – a huge figure for a country with a population of only 6.6 million. According to the NSC of the Kyrgyz Republic, 54% of households reported deterioration in their financial situation due to COVID-19.

⁷⁴ Kazakhstan Estimate of COVID-19 Impact on Learning Loss. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/>

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on Kyrgyzstan's income, employment, including unpaid domestic work, psychological well-being, and the education of youth and adults. The ALE sector has responded as follows:

- Work has been carried out to improve the qualifications of teachers. The Advisory Council was established under the MES of the Kyrgyz Republic; with the support of leading universities webinars were organised and held with the coverage of 9,000 teachers.
- The admission of applicants to organisations of secondary and higher vocational education institutions for the academic year 2020-2021 is managed by using the developed Automated Information System "Applicant Online".⁷⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an extremely adverse impact on *Tajikistan's* economy. Real GDP growth slowed to 4.2% in the first nine months of 2020, down from 7.2% a year earlier. Restrictions on labour mobility and economic activity at the domestic and foreign levels have led to a decrease in remittances by migrants and a drop in consumer demand and investment.⁷⁶

To reduce the negative impact of COVID-19, the government has adopted an "Action Plan to Prevent the Impact of Potential Pandemic Coronavirus Claims on the National Economy". This plan engages the health sector and social protection package to help the poorest and vulnerable, as well as economic measures to ensure food security and protect small businesses.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures have hit *Uzbekistan* hard, reducing exports and remittances and forced most small businesses across the country to close. The government reports that exports fell 18% in the first quarter compared to the same period a year earlier, while 475,000 or 85% of the country's small businesses were forced to close in March. The proportion of households with at least one person actively working fell by more than 40 percentage points, from 85% to 43%, from March to April. Among the self-employed, income fell by 67%, according to the World Bank.⁷⁷

One obvious and vital way that international aid can assist the sub-region, and thus help level the huge disparity between the wealthy countries and those of the Global South, is to help increase the flow of vaccine to the sub-region and other similarly deprived countries. As wealthy nations rapidly approach 'herd immunity' they could, if only out of self-interest, assist others to reduce the cost and damage of protracted COVID-19. See Box 12, also the Eurasianet 'dashboard' overview on this issue.

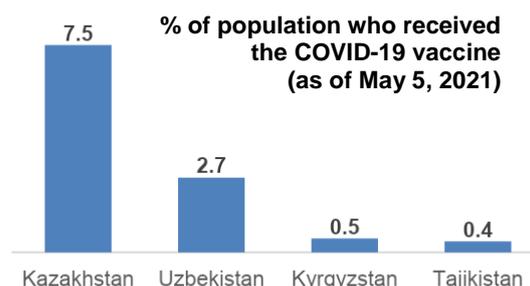
Box 12 – Vaccination against COVID-19 in Central Asia⁷⁸

Vaccination against coronavirus infection began in the countries of Central Asia in the winter of 2021.

Among all Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan is the "leader" in vaccination.

Start of vaccination in Central Asian countries:

- Kazakhstan – February 1, 2021
- Tajikistan – March 23, 2021
- Kyrgyzstan – March 29, 2021
- Uzbekistan – April 1, 2021



Despite the different timing of the vaccination campaign, the rate at which the population is being vaccinated differs. For example, in Uzbekistan over 5k people received the vaccine on the first day of the campaign and over 14k on the second day, while in Kyrgyzstan only 292 people were vaccinated in the first two days. Given the significant differences in the populations of the Central Asian countries, consider the number of people vaccinated per 100k of the population. In Kyrgyzstan 547 people were vaccinated for every 100k citizens, in Uzbekistan over 2.7k were vaccinated, and in Kazakhstan almost 8k were vaccinated.

⁷⁵ Source: MES Report. Summary of the implementation of policy measures in the field of education and science at the end of 2020.

⁷⁶ The World Bank. Report on the economy of Tajikistan, 2020. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/285721608614181243/pdf/Tajikistan-Economic-Slowdown-Amid-the-Pandemic.pdf>

⁷⁷ World Bank data. Unemployment (ILO model calculations). Section: Uzbekistan

⁷⁸ Data source: <https://eurasianet.org/dashboard-vaccinating-eurasia-may>; additionally was used data from the Ministries of Health of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Official data on vaccinated people in Tajikistan are not publicly available, and the Tajik media refers to the Ministry of Health, which does not publish information on the Internet.

Box 13 offers an example of a civil society intervention to support mitigation of pandemic consequences with a poster competition form of civic popular education.

Box 13 – First winners of the competition in Uzbekistan: "Marathon for adult education versus COVID-19"

During the COVID-19 pandemic DVV International Uzbekistan announced the competition "Marathon for adult education versus COVID-19". 'The aim of the marathon is to support ideas of civil society organisations and actors that focus on mitigating the consequences of the pandemic. In the first stage, the best posters on the topic were selected in a poster competition'.

Source: <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/worldwide/asia/central-asia/uzbekistan>



According to the presentations of the Sub-Regional Consultation for CONFINTEA VII 2022 in Central Asia and Iran (February, 2021), In *Uzbekistan*, the COVID-19 affected the form of economic recession, increased poverty, youth unemployment, loss of learning, and health. The major sector of education also affected by the COVID-19. In the context of the COVID-19, implementation of the above activities provided by the Development Concept until 2030 received an unexpected and, in many ways, forced acceleration. During the pandemic in Uzbekistan, the full education system was transformed on the principles of digital and distance education.

The UNICEF Uzbekistan was one of the first international organizations that supported the Government of Uzbekistan's COVID-19 response in the education sector. "UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Republican Education Centre (REC) under the Ministry of Public Education (MOPE) in designing distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and school closure."⁷⁹

6.3 Contribution to SDG achievements

It is too early to know how far ALE and the wider vision and practice of LLL will contribute globally to achieving the SDGs by 2030. It is also difficult to know with any confidence how in each of the four countries, awareness of the SDGs is widespread; or how far governments' knowledge of them seriously influences their practical decisions. In a few countries, awareness may be widespread nationally and in local communities, notably in terms of practices to tackle global warning. In the countries of CA awareness appears to be more spasmodic and superficial. There is also a question how well the SDGs are used to create and drive urgent policies rather than just noting existing activities relevant to different Goals. Here we give a few examples of specific events.

In *Kazakhstan* in 2019, two online resources were launched to learn about the achievements, as well as current programmes for the 17 goals.

As part of achieving SDG 4, UNESCO Almaty partnered with Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) to design a course on 'Globalisation and Global Citizenship' as an experimental international project. The curriculum explored global citizenship by teaching about the latest intellectual discourses on globalisation and global citizenship, and by working on a series of practical case studies and course projects focusing on local content. It provided students with an opportunity to study cross-cultural management techniques, international marketing, region-specific issues related to implementing the SDGs, and social aspects of

⁷⁹ Education Continuity in COVID-19 Pandemic times: Impressions on Introducing Distance Learning in Basic Education in Uzbekistan <https://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/media/eng.pdf>

developing eco-tourism in the region. During the 2018 spring semester, 14 students completed the course on 'Globalisation and Global Citizenship' at KazNU.⁸⁰

On July 19, 2019, Kazakhstan presented for the first time its Voluntary National Report on the Implementation of the SDGs in Kazakhstan. The Forum had central focus on six specific goals including SDG 4 "Quality Education".

In *Kyrgyzstan 2019* the *Sustainable Development Goals Youth Ambassadors Programme* in partnership with the State Agency for Youth, Physical Culture and Sports, the UN system launched the SDG Youth Ambassadors Programme to promote the role of young people in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Thirty-four young activists from the Kyrgyzstan were selected as Ambassadors (2 for each SDG) to raise awareness among, through holding presentations, trainings, etc. in various institutions.

In 2019, the Government of the *Kyrgyz Republic* committed to the preparation of its first Voluntary National Review (VNR), tracking the progress of implementing the SDGs nationally, to be presented at the High-Level Political Forum in 2020. (Due to COVID-19 the presentation of the 2020 report was online.)

In 2017 there were consultations with the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of *Tajikistan* and sectoral trade unions (agriculture, construction, education, trade) of Tajikistan on SDG 8.7 and Alliance 8.7 A consultation on SDG 2030 and Alliance 8.7 was held on 11 May with 28 trade union staff from the Federation of Independent Trade Unions and sectoral trade unions (agriculture, construction, education, trade) for an interactive dialogue to explore the root causes and ways to combat child labour, forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking in Tajikistan, and the role and capacity of unions in addressing these issues and in achieving the SDG 2030 Target 8.7 in the coming years. The Adult Education Association of Tajikistan actively promotes the integration of SDG 2030 Goal 4 indicators into existing statistics, especially ALE statistics - a number of studies, numerous trainings and consultations with key ministries and agencies have been implemented. ASPBAE also supports the promotion of SDG 2030 Goal 4 indicators, through an informal coalition of education organisations in Tajikistan. Key Goal 4 indicators are included in Tajikistan's new National Education Development Strategy 2030.

In 2018, an inter-agency Coordination Council for implementing the national SDG Roadmap was established in *Uzbekistan*. In September 2019, a Roadmap to prepare the first VNR of Uzbekistan was approved. According to this VNR on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, Uzbekistan pursues a foreign policy of openness, cooperation, and peace. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to slow down progress on the SDGs. In 2020 the Main Messages Voluntary National Review of the Republic of Uzbekistan on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals report took place online.

6.4 Strengthening ALE for active democratic citizenship

A recent study of community, liberal and popular ALE examined experience across three continents and concluded that choice of subject of study is best left for local people to determine within national policy laws and structures. Those that tend to empower active citizenship and might appear politically discomfiting are thus embedded in local needs and priorities, often with diverse economic and cultural results (Duke, Hinzen, Sarrazin, 2021). It is not evident without deep and intimate local knowledge to be confident how far in the CA countries ALE for active citizenship is anchored, and how confident people in diverse local communities of each country are to take local initiatives. The commitment of each country's government to achieve rapid development may facilitate this form of cultural change. Focusing on 'learning' in local places like libraries and CLC allows people to meet and determine their own learning needs and priorities, which are often highly practical. (See box 14).

⁸⁰ <http://en.unesco.kz/new-course-on-globalization-and-global-citizenship-was-launched-at-al-farabi-kazakh>

Box 14 – Adult Learning Centres in Libraries in Kyrgyzstan

As part of DVV International Kyrgyzstan's project 'Optimising Public Library Space for Adult Learning', training centres for adults and youth have been established in several libraries in Kyrgyzstan. Training and club activities take place in different areas based on the situational needs of the region in which the library is located (e.g., language courses, ICT skills training, handicrafts and crafts, and others).



Photo: Participants in a master class on weaving "Chiy", Talas region.

Source: *Adult Learning Centres in Libraries of Kyrgyzstan Facebook page*

https://www.facebook.com/AECLKR/photos/?ref=page_internal

Here in Box 15 are some examples of projects on strengthening the human rights of (ex-) prisoners in Central Asia region led by DVV International with donor funding and local partners. Other examples could doubtless be added.

Box 15 – ALE for (ex-) inmates in Central Asia. DVV International Projects

Uzbekistan. Re-entry pathways into society.

In partnership with the Uzbek NGO INTILISH and the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, DVV International recently launched the project 'Re-entry pathways into society for (ex-)prisoners' in Uzbekistan with funding from the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The project aims at contributing to establishing a human rights-responsive environment to protect and promote the social, economic, and cultural rights of vulnerable groups, particularly women detainees and ex-prisoners of both genders. In this process, the project aims at equipping civil society organisations (CSOs) with the necessary competences to plan and conduct relevant interventions in prisons; and to organise advocacy activities that promote the human rights of ex-prisoners. The CSOs involved will offer diverse vocational training on life, civic, health and business skills as well as social services, psychosocial support, and consultation services to the former inmates.

Source: <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/our-work/news/detail/re-entry-pathways-into-society-new-eu-project-on-strengthening-human-rights-of-ex-prisoners-in-uzbekistan>

Kyrgyzstan. Re-integration of ex-prisoners into society through adult education

This project aims to expand the economic capacity and access of detainees before and after release with socio-economic support which will prevent them from violating the law and returning to places of detention. It is planned initially to provide needs assessment of detainees for acquiring hard and soft skills, and to study the current situation in the field of education and preparation for release. Experts will develop training programmes on Preparation for Release, and Integration and adaptation of persons released from places of detention, with courses held based on these. Source: <https://www.dvv-international-central-asia.org/kyrgyzstan/news/detail/new-project-re-integration-of-ex-prisoners-into-society-through-adult-education>

Project "Promoting Access to Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights to Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners in Tajikistan"

This project is implemented by the Country Office of DVV International in Tajikistan in partnership with two local Public Organizations: "Bureau of Human Rights and Rule of Law" (BHR) and NGO "Jahon" and with funding from the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The two-year project will contribute to the protection of the rights of one of the most disadvantaged groups of the population - prisoners and persons released from places of detention, paying special attention to the realization of their social, economic, and cultural rights in Tajikistan. Source: https://www.dvv-international-central-asia.org/fileadmin/files/central-asia/documents/news/2021/20210415_Civic_education_for_prisoners_EU_DVV_ru.pdf

The Mid-term CONFINTEA Statement concluded that provision and investment in continuing education, professional development and TVET needs to be increased, and more so through non-formal approaches; to enable educational agents to offer high quality training for livelihoods in informal economies, paying particular attention to women and girls, youth and older persons, migrants, and refugees; and to provide credit for self-employment and entrepreneurship. Beyond work-related skills, it is important to support the development of capabilities such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, the ability to work in a team, and the ability to continue learning and be resilient to rapid change. These deeper and long-lasting gains from ALE, looking lifelong, need anchoring in a sense of participation in national development at local community level. Literacy and ALE programmes should be linked to non-formal TVET/income-generation training, and TVET should include literacy components.

Literacy skills and higher-level skills are increasingly required for decent work, active citizenship and lifelong learning. (UIL 2018, pp. 7-8)

6.5 ALE in the bigger context of LLL

An ever more vital issue for ALE in contributing to achieving the SDGs is recognising and anchoring LLL as the overarching fully encompassing understanding of learning in the new circumstances and conditions of today and tomorrow. The role of ICT in support of distance education and learning is recognised, especially under the restrictive condition of the COVID-19 pandemic; and in the potential of powerful data analysis systems which can be used to sustain big national systems of management, audit and assessment, as well as enhancing the quality of education and training. The context and content for recognition and application of LLL discussed here differs for each of the four Central Asian countries: from the meaning of non-formal education in Kazakhstan for example to digitalisation, to skills development and employability, and in relation to statistics.

But the educational lens adopted for most education and training systems and sector policy and resourcing takes little account of the full ICT revolution, as the Internet has become the prime source of information and analysis to anyone who can log in, and social media play a huge part in the formation of attitudes, opinions and culture formation. Numbers of social media users are reported to be 12m in Kazakhstan, 3.2m in Kyrgyzstan, 1m in Tajikistan, and 4.6m in Uzbekistan. Cultural change and public opinion can therefore change rapidly.

At the same time, especially in more remote and distinct areas and communities, local identity and the capacity to engage and learn in diverse local contexts and ways will remain and likely become even more important. How far can national centrally run big-system school-age learning and ALE be led and fed within local communities and, in a full sense embracing the economic, cultures? Can the countries of Central Asia embrace wide and permeative LLL, and be energised and inspired to pursue sustainable development (perhaps explicitly using the SDG goals) harmonising with national and global imperatives?

In *Kazakhstan*, the principle of continuing education or LLL is being implemented. By 2022 all educational programmes of the TVET level will be transferred to a modular and competency approach. A credit system began to be introduced in colleges from 2018. Non-formal education has been introduced into the legislation, but there are no mechanisms to recognise and confirm non-formal education; each person has a maximum of 10 years of formal education. To ensure the continuous improvement of the qualifications of employees, it is now necessary to develop and promote a system of continuous training involving employers, employees, and educational organisations.

Meanwhile, a clear policy on the development of lifelong learning and continuous education and training, as a tool for skills development for enterprises, within a holistic approach to lifelong learning, still needs to be adopted in *Kyrgyzstan*. Statistics on ALE in Kyrgyzstan (indicators of SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4) are practically speaking not maintained, and they are not identified as a separate block. The National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic provides general statistics on the coverage of the population at different levels of formal education, and the number of public educational institutions. It is possible to find out from other sources the number of unemployed citizens who took free short-term vocational courses, and the number of licenses issued to organisations to provide additional education courses. Significant disadvantages of the available data are that there is no unified format of accounting of issued licences; and there are no aggregated data on issued licenses. This complicates the process of data analysis. The register of issued licences can be used only for the purpose of checking data on the licence of an educational organisation. The statistics and analysis section with different dashboards need developing to improve the portal.

By Decree #28, 25 January 2017, the Government of *Tajikistan* adopted the Concept of Continuing Education for the period 2017-2023, based on the requirements of the Programme

of Innovative Development of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period 2011-2020, approved by Decree #227 on 30 April 2011. Section 15 of this Concept indicates that ‘The level of competitiveness of modern innovation economy is increasingly determined by the quality of professional personnel, the level of their socialisation and cooperation. A necessary condition of formation of innovative economy of any State is also creation of a system of constant updating of knowledge and competences of workers. Introduction of modern knowledge-intensive technologies in the economy dictates higher requirements on personnel qualification, its responsibility, and readiness to master new approaches to professional activity’. With the adoption of legislation on ALE in Tajikistan came the responsibility to collect statistics on ALE. But the current system of statistics collects data only on vocational training for adults, and so is incomplete. There are no comprehensive published data from these statistics, although a statistical reporting system has been introduced since 2018. There are no data on short-term courses in State and non-state educational institutions, where the volume of training coverage may be several times greater than available statistics reveal.

In *Uzbekistan*, the Education Sector is congruent with the National Action Strategy on Five Priority Development Areas 2017-2021, which is: ‘Children and youth prepared for life through quality education and life-long learning, leading to an improved quality of life, enhanced job opportunities and a consistent increase in real income’. The National Programme on Personnel Training is to provide a legal framework for radical reforming of learning processes in Uzbekistan. There is no system for monitoring its development, or for assessing its quality at national level. Adults could continue their education in the different types of educational organisations, extending their knowledge and experiences. The forms of education may be various: full-time training, training by correspondence, family, and extensive education. In February 2021 a Decree was signed ‘On measures to improve the system of social protection of the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2021-2030’. The decree approves the Concept Note of the National Strategy of Social Protection (NSSP) for 2021-2030, the roadmap for drafting the NSSP, and composition of the Republic working group to develop NSSP. The Concept Note was developed by the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the UN Joint Programme on Strengthening Social Protection in Uzbekistan⁸¹. The NSSPs Concept is included in the draft Decree of the President of Uzbekistan ‘On approving the Concept of the National Strategy for Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2021 – 2030’ and placed on the State www.regulation.gov.uz portal for public discussion.

Lack of statistical data is expected negatively to influence the process of ALE policymaking in the sub-region. It is therefore important to include in the functions of statistical offices the collection of necessary data on ALE, as well as to improve tools (reports, websites etc.) for providing and then using statistical information.

7. Priorities, perspectives for cooperation: recommendations

This chapter attempts to identify factors particular to the CA sub-region, and to look to ways that challenges to ALE, in itself and apropos the SDGs as well as beyond 2030, can be met, including by means of sub-regional cooperation. It acknowledges the problems that ALE shares almost worldwide, such as scarcity of resources, marginalisation or even absence in national policies and strategies, and difficulty in ensuring that policy intentions are carried out when the machinery and means for good management, audit of performance, and quality enhancement, are inadequate.

More fundamental is the recognition that to be effective in meeting societies’ 21st century needs, ALE must be understood and developed in the wider and deeper context of LLL policy and practice, and not only within a community culture and understanding of education as school- and college-based instruction being completed prior to full and productive citizenship.

⁸¹ Decree “On measures to improve the system of social protection of the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2021-2030”, on 17 February, 2021

Then ALE is seen mainly as a leisure-time fringe benefit for older adults, together with specific skill training in old and new kinds of literacy and skills honed to employment. The wider perspective, adopted and promulgated by international bodies like UNESCO and the EU, and shared by their non-governmental partners like ICAE and ASPBAE, has not penetrated much at sub-regional and country (Member States) levels since CONFINTEA VI in 2009.

Realistically speaking, how can the several CA countries in this land-locked sub-region work, separately and in partnership, to build on their progress since 2009 and achieve more in the current decade and beyond 2030?

7.1 Specific issues and challenges facing the sub-region

The perception and practical creation of a CA sub-region is still a new concept and a work-in-progress. The geographical realities, land-locked and in many areas mountainous and remote from large towns and cities, yet with great diversity of peoples and religions, and with different boisterous recent histories, need to be accommodated in purposeful and optimistic ways. The majority of people in the CA countries are Sunni Muslims. Progress and legacy from the soviet USSR remain a shared foundation, with external forces competing in development senses from socialism to western-driven neoliberalism. Technological change can be led from within the sub-region but with competing outside interests seeking to play a lead part. The sub-region may also be susceptible to what are often called fiscal and economic forms of neo-colonialism which are not sensitive to the different circumstances and traditions of the four countries.

Four countries here comprise CA. But several other countries at the heart of the world's largest landmass are also seen as part of the same region and share some of its characteristics. CA has gained distinct recognition since CONFINTEA VI to have this sub-regional report introduced into Asia-Pacific regional preparation. Similarly, the leading regional INGO ASPBAE has added CA as a 5th region to its constitutional and operating structure. However, it takes time for a shared identity to evolve; and the CA 'boundaries' may, in a productive sense, remain pliable rather than tightly bounded.

On the one hand, vital geographical and geopolitical factors remain powerful realities, and the region has become more visible and of strategic interest globally; on the other hand its newfound salience represents an opportunity for progressive collaboration between the countries of the sub-region. Cooperation in sustainable development within which ALE is nested as a vital aspect of LLL, can enhance confidence and community-wide understanding and acceptance that adult learning really matters. There are large and attractive opportunities for sharing – and where appropriate adapting and copying – good practice; and for making joint provision for example through workshops and staff training and programmes, and forms of collaborative benchmarking.

CA remains close to other republics in the former USSR, and a sub-region where European and other external interests are also active, including the EU. It is in several senses a world 'middle region': economically ambitious, environmentally challenged, with significant emigration of young people, mainly men, for better employment out of the country, but also significant shortages in some skill areas, especially in the new and now fundamental literacies of advanced all-permeative ICT.

7.2 Promising innovations in policy and practice

This Report identifies many local context-specific initiatives, some time-bound and not perhaps of wider interest, nor easily replicated in different circumstances. Of particular interest are efforts targeted at educational renewal in skill training and development, to equip nations and their citizens with what is required in modern complex ICT-mediated times; identifying areas of special skill and professional need and using new media to equip people more efficiently and effectively. This includes training and development programmes for enterprises that relate well to the urgent needs of an advanced economy. A difficulty is that not all

governments and employers are well able to judge and priorities future needs in a changing economy; they tend to focus on yesterday's rather than tomorrow's requirements.

Many of the challenges with which the sub-region is wrestling, such as the migration outward mostly of young men, and inward with immigrants needing to acculturate to the host nation, are familiar globally. Successful ALE programmes are needed to equip current and future generations to take a full and active part. Both new immigrants and returning citizens need support to enable full and constructive participation. The contribution and standing of women is also important to the countries' economic and social policy ambitions; as is reaching and reducing the disadvantage of remote rural and mountain communities. Overall, co-learning in respectful partnership, within as well as between countries, is more promising than just plucking out 'good practice' examples that may be highly specific to place.

7.3 Impact of COVID-19 on ALE policies, provision, and participation

As we have seen, communications are difficult in much of the sub-region for reasons of topography, within and sometimes between the countries. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated this, even as some communities have been protected by virtue of their isolation. Returnee migrant workers may represent a particular problem if they come from badly affected pandemic regions. Combatting high incidence in the home countries is very costly and difficult. The CA countries are not wealthy, familiar with, or well-equipped to handle all the checking, tracing, protection, and medical responses needed.

The impact of COVID-19 is not only in the costs of the epidemic and the problems of securing adequate vaccination when global supplies are scarce and tend to be pulled to larger and more wealthy countries. There is also the real impact on ALE practices and the capacity to participate. Levels of vaccination are, as would be predicted, very low, as we saw in sub-section 6.2 and Box 12 above, ranging from 7.5% in Kazakhstan to 0.4% in Tajikistan. The whole sub-region has been severely impacted economically speaking by the pandemic – increasing the poverty rate in Kyrgyzstan by 50% for example.

This has naturally also set back the development of ALE. On the other hand, the efforts taken, from a low base, to use the new ICTs to reach communities and support their learning in new ways may provide lessons of relevance elsewhere. The efforts have opened new toolkits for reaching all learners who are prevented by COVID-19 from meeting; and supporting more independent study guided from a distance. This Report was unable by virtue of the pandemic to visit communities and gather evidence on the way both teachers and learners have become capable of learning and teaching, and to continue doing this in ways that enhance efficiency and reduce the inequities caused by remoteness and other barriers to face-to-face participatory teaching and learning.

7.4 Prospects for forward-looking strategies with LLL throughout education and training

The best strategy for the sub-region to plan forward accurately, and at the same time realistically, in terms of what can be achieved, probably lies in close-grained partnerships: both between countries within the sub-region and with other countries. Behind short-life projects and innovations in teaching and learning, now fuelled by the constraints of the pandemic, lies the need for a deeper cultural shift on the part of national leaders and in popular opinion, understanding, and local practice.

This can be assisted by involving international and national donors, including the UN agencies, overseas aid departments and international and national NGOs: not only with resources but also by sharing understandings and ideas as well as by exchange of personnel and practical projects. At the same time, each country should build on its present experience and successes: building on what is already being tried in its leading national ALE sources, successes, and centres. Also, the sub-region can act still more as an entity and joint learning system.

This Report seeks to look back, in order to move forward. New efforts are now being made to do this by revisiting the ambitious and visionary ideas of early UNESCO studies led by Faure and Delors in the 1970s and '90s, which should be central to CONFINTEA VII deliberations. The CA countries make evident the need for popular as well as political recognition of the transformational change needed in the curriculum of pre-school, school, and college institutions, in adopting and acting in a LLL perspective throughout. Taking an adult education unit onto an established ministry of education is not an adequate response. Schooling and after-school-age teaching-learning methods and curriculum need connecting with a merged curriculum, practices, and learning experiences: through youthful years and on through all of life. Unless people all through the society value and support youth and adult learning and education equally, ALE will remain the poor cousin, and no part of the education system will become fully fit for modern purpose.

Campaigning and popular education and advocacy should be supported in each country in its own way, and equally as a sub-regional priority with collective campaigns like common annual Adult Learners' Weeks and other initiatives where countries can compare efforts and the results.

Prospects will be enhanced when governments are confident to support different projects in both similar and different kinds of situations; and giving mutual aid in monitoring the outcomes closely and collaboratively. This includes trial and error learning from failures; giving projects a long enough initial time to work their way up a learning curve; looking at spin-off and less obvious results. It also means (a) being willing to try different things and seeking to emulate the best that can be found elsewhere (b) building up the essential central infrastructure of new ICT-mediated support so that credit recognition and transfer becomes possible, and evaluation and audit can be conducted accurately and with sensitivity. This means creating a favourable national climate, and core resources for the ALE professional community to review, share, reflect and improve. The flow of innovation must be built with mutual respect and an equal flow of ideas and decisions up as well as down.

7.5 Contribution of ALE to sustainable development through all the SDGs

Section 6.3 takes note of the extent to which ALE can promise to deliver on SDG aspirations, both within Goal 4 which is explicitly about education, and across the full spectrum of the 17 Goals. The key to this is the extent to which a lifelong LLL approach can be grasped and applied practically across the whole SDG endeavour. The challenge is to achieve more conventional development measured by growing GDP in times of international tension and high self-focused competitiveness between nations and regional blocs; and at the same time to make that growth sustainable above all in terms of global warming and the catastrophic crisis threatening the whole ecosystem and the future of humankind.

It is now evident that the SDGs cannot be treated successfully, each in independent isolation. The natural governance tendency to separate tasks and allocate them to different departments and divisions each with their own targets does not deliver on the sustainable development mission. SDGs are set out as separate goals and sub-goals, but they are not really self-contained. Each depends on working to achieve other goals, without walls between them. ALE as a part of transformation to LLL throughout all programmes and activities, means embedding its processes and understandings of learning and changing into all the other Goals, within and between the CA countries. Achieving sustainability through development is not easy. It will be unattainable unless people understand why ALE matters, and that it is essential to achieve or even approach all 17 Goals. ALE within Goal 4 requires winning attention, policy priority, and resources for the learning needs of adults, and their practical enactment of new learning, throughout this longest phase of peoples' lives. ALE has to be a crosscutting theme used to achieve results: a 'learning impact indicator' across the whole 2020 aspiration.

This requires effective advocacy for ALE; and driving a culture shift to end the view that the only real education is in institutions for the young. It means addressing 'curriculum' head-on as including all forms of structured education and training, for both sustainability and

development. Demography and changing ratios of 'economically active' to other categories also alter, defining the truly dependent as a 'fourth age', while all active older adults remain socially and economically active. Continuing supported learning within and for the SDGs therefore requires deeper understanding of the several ages of humankind, ensuring that almost all contribute rather than being a social burden. Adults must stand out within Goal 4; and LLL must be pressed as a permeative requirement of each Goal – an essential means to system and cultural change, so that the sub-region itself learns and adapts, along with its institutions, towns, cities and villages, and individual members as productive citizens.

7.6 Priorities for ALE in the sub-region in the 2020s

ALE must itself absorb the full meaning of LLL across all areas of social and individual need. It must purposefully connect campaigns and advocacy for policies, strategies, and rules for adults' learning with the shared vital priorities of the sub-region. There is a growing acceptance that ALE as a sub-sector of the education system needs structural support embedded in a LLL perspective. It is therefore suggested that in line with special requirements, a mechanism is created for peer consultation and review by representatives of all country's governments, parliaments, professional institutes, and civil society in the sub-region to further strengthen macro level ALE in acts, laws, regulations, and budgets.

The absence of data on ALE and the lack of statistical records is a challenge in this regard, as it can lead to failing to track successes in meeting the needs of population for training, increasing their incomes, and contributing to societies' development. Some information might be available for formal adult and continuing education, much less is on records for non-formal ALE. The informal learning opportunities might not even be recognised. This also can have an implication on providing an evidence base for developing training programmes and education policies in order to meet SDG commitments the CA countries have made.

ALE advocates must forcefully argue the case for learning at all levels at CONFINTEA VII – global, Asia-Pacific regional, CA sub-regional and national, through to its shared and separate institutions, networks, communities, and localities. The sub-region should aim to serve as a model of constructive sustainable development for other, wealthier and more dominant but perhaps also thereby less flexible larger world sub-regions. This means succeeding by improving the living conditions of its citizens. Learning processes, whether in kindergarten, universities, local centres, on the street and in the home and workshop, must enable growth and build confidence from success, and build the capacity for mutual help between the several members of the sub-region.

ALE within a LLL frame must include the full spectrum of individual and communal learning needs: for a good social life, healthy, productively economic, with employability, peace, and safety through demand driven training offers, well established systems for recognition, validation, and accreditation of prior formal, non-formal and information leaning, evidence base and far fetching education strategies and policies. Above all ALE must make existential challenges as environmental shifts in the nearest future and decreasing conflict potential at the borders of the countries the central overriding priority, and collectively work, for example by becoming more conscious in using and distributing natural resources and living within each country's means, taking 2030 as its target date.

7.7 Areas and mechanisms for sub-regional cooperation

Strong cooperation between these four CA countries, and with neighbours across the sub-region's borders, can further exploit the many means of collaboration that already exist, and exercise them as fully as limited resources, restrictions caused by pandemic and other irresistible factors, allow. New means of teaching-learning and other distant communication via new ICT, now well tested, lend themselves to general cooperation, information exchange, joint benchmarking, and other means of cooperation in policymaking and review, as well as in teaching-learning within ALE itself. Exchanges of information and experience, and, when

possible, of personnel, through webinars, seminars, and joint projects, can be multiplied. Sub-regional campaigns can extend the impact of one-country-only efforts, and can accelerate culture change throughout the sub-region as a key to sustained development.

The CONFINEA process itself will provide opportunities for cooperation and support ALE development through the status of CA-countries as UNESCO state members. This opportunity should be taken. National Commissions of UNESCO will play a key role. They should be contacted and lobbied early. The UNESCO Cluster office in Almaty and DVV International Regional office in Bishkek, together with UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) are creating opportunities for actively engaging civil society throughout. A regional Central Asian initiative is recommended that actively supports this process. Another initiative could be considered for combining and integrating the SDG-goal requirements in regulations and processes across ministerial portfolios. The importance of Education Goal 4 for achieving all the other sixteen SDG Goals should be part of awareness-raising materials and campaigns.

The Central Asian Synthesis report on Adult Learning and Education⁸² suggests that some sort of Governing Council or Consultation Committee related to ALE and/or LLL would be a mechanism to further strengthen the sub-sector. If it were a LL Council, participation would need to reach into all areas of the education system; and to inform and raise awareness through a biographical lens – from cradle to grave - and an institutional lens – from kindergarten via schools and colleges and on through adult learning/education centres. An ALE Committee might be smaller but would still need an inter-sectoral approach including representatives of all training programme providers. Information and communication media could play an important support role.

Last but not least there may be growing opportunities to share examples and experiences of good practices within Central Asian countries and beyond, contributing to an emerging learning region. One possibility is the development of one of the cities to become a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities or the PASCAL Learning City Network. This could further deepen the understanding of ALE and LLL with perspectives from personal level through community engagement and globally.

The CA sub-region is wrestling with big challenges. Migration out, mostly of young men looking for work, and inward with a need to acculturate to the host nation, are familiar globally: so are ethnic tensions, and equipping all in next generations to take an active part. This includes enabling the full participation, contribution, and standing of women in traditionally men-dominated cultures; and reaching and reducing the disadvantage of remote rural and mountain communities. Overall, co-learning in respectful partnership is more promising than plucking out 'good practice' examples specific to one place.

7.8 Findings and recommendations

Recommendations for national and sub-regional action are suggested throughout this Report, with ideas and approaches from projects, including delays and disappointments, from which we can also learn. Collaborative actions illustrate how cooperative development and respectful mutual learning for sustainable development are possible: between similar and unlike countries; beyond the sub-region as well as within. We make a limited number of recommendations here for each of the four CA countries, and for the sub-region as an entity.

The Report reveals ways in which government and civil society sectors can cooperate, each playing distinct but complementary roles according to their different character and strengths. Based on direct experience of continuing collaboration over many years with the civil society sector of one advanced European country that draws down national overseas development

⁸² DVV International (2021d). Policy Paper: Central Asian Countries' Policies on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) – Synthesis for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Bishkek: DVV International Regional Office for Central Asia.

aid funds, we suggest, also, how possible future collaboration at national and sub-regional level can develop, supporting the SDGs through ALE and LLL.

UIL is the key global UNESCO body responsible for delivering the CONFINTEAs. Its former Director observed that "...in each of the four countries, there is a need to invest in more research on lifelong learning. This is both in terms of the national context, as well as cross-country comparative studies, so that they can inform policies and improve practices. Sound research methods are required to be able to collect necessary statistics, especially with regard to the NFE sector. This could be supported by the establishment of studies in andragogy at university level, which could also establish the profession of adult educator." (Carlsen 2020, p. 58))

Here we draw on the DVV International ALE sub-regional comparative analysis which was based on country studies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, but not Kazakhstan, as it currently does not belong to the project countries of DVV International.

Policy, laws and rules, resources

Every nation, within CA as elsewhere, needs a LLL perspective that permeates all policy areas and serves as a critical quality assessment scanning tool of sustainability for every policy initiative. It is recommended that each of the CA States persists with transforming its education portfolio to connect together and integrate pre-adult and adult learning, with curriculum reform of all kinds and at all levels of education, training and learning environment support. Wherever responsibility is located between ministries, it must connect with all major portfolios. It may normally also need some form of national consulting and oversighting LLL Council with authority and adequate servicing.

Policy is useless if it is not executed. Failure to implement is a recurrent problem in the story of ALE. Policy requires conversion into legislation, with specific laws and rules to see that it is carried out, and the means to achieve this, including staff, space, and materials development. Adequate resources are seldom available in the CA sub-region countries, especially at a time of crisis. Local learning spaces, including school classrooms, laboratories, and places of work and of recreation etc, are latently part of an essential accessible infrastructure for ALE which can be integrated in some places with other primary uses for production, recreation, health services etc and through some of these.

Absolute levels of government funding are impossibly elusive. No country has a clear and complete answer to the level, which is dispersed in many places and ways. CA countries should focus on local (eg community-CLC) levels, identify what ingenuity can make best use of existing resources, and advocate confidently, on a basis of local-regional need, for what is needed for its ALE. It is important that the means for ALE growth, support and audit are left for the local region and its communities to set the learning agenda within national policy frameworks, giving equal support to and valuing freedom to meet general and diverse literacy needs, 'catch-up' core subjects, technical training and updating, popular civic education, etc. If this choice is not made at local level, the work will be of limited value and Centres will tend to fail.

Most recommendations apply to the sub-region generally.

Recommendation 1: For the development of an ALE system, it is necessary to combine the interests of various government departments and develop a national and regional strategy for ALE.

Recommendation 2: Optimising the progress of an ALE system in CA, countries require well-informed local, state, and government decisions. We strongly recommend strategic and sustained investments in a coordinated and systemic approach to programme improvement and evaluation, to support adult learners.

Availability and quality of statistical data

Absence of data on ALE and lack of statistical records is a thread running through most reports on the sub-region and its different countries. Some information may be available for formal adult and continuing professional education; much less is on record for non-formal ALE. Informal learning opportunities may not even be recognised. This applies also much beyond CA states. CONFINTEA stocktaking in respect of such data has often been and still is guesstimates. This keeps ALE in a state of uncertainty and vagueness.

Recommendation 3: Governments and partners could try to build and follow-up on current AES (Adult Education Survey) research efforts and the EMIS (Education Management Information System) to monitor the Education Goal of the SDG. ALE statistics should become as normal and regular as those for schools or universities, presented as part of the total Education portfolio as well as accessible separately.

Joined-up arrangements for ease of movement through Education and Learning

Studies of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan point to the importance of recognition, validation, and accreditation (RVA) of prior learning across the variety of formal, non-formal and informal opportunities: inside the education system as well as in community, cultural, economic, health and social and other spheres of life and development. These RVA processes have important implications for ALE at macro, meso and micro levels. They reach into the classification of professions and the respective national qualification frameworks.

Recommendation 4: A regional exchange on RVA could be tried, maybe through the on-line learning platform, together with regional training.

Recommendation 5: There is a lack of balance between commitments to literacy and basic skills, and continuing education and vocational skills, with less coverage of ALE for the development of citizenship skills. State education development programmes should ensure that professional development and technical assistance for the adult population are widely accessible and consistent with the best research on ALE and LLL.

Technological change and the potential of the new ICT

Digitalisation creates major challenges and opportunities for enlarging and deepening regional cooperation in ALE and LLL.

Recommendation 6: During the Covid-19 pandemic situation, education systems moving to the distance learning process and online adult education programmes should evolve quickly, to build and expand the existing adult digital literacy education system and support the use of Internet resources, curricula, materials, and tools, and assessments of learners' correspondence to (a) knowledge of reliable digital techniques; (b) research on the effectiveness of instructional approaches; and (c) research on adult education development.

Recommendation 7: Central Asia should move towards a sub-regional learning platform, and use it for exchange of experiences in policy, legislation, and financing; for the use of teaching materials for Curriculum globALE; and with shared materials and activities that support staff development for diverse forms and examples of professionalising all who work in different roles (teaching, research and development, management, administration and monitoring of ALE). This applies to those in key national and sub-national as well as sub-regional centres for ALE. Material to assist CLCs should be systematised, documented, and up-loaded to strengthen CLCs at local levels and for partners in all the CA countries.

This would strengthen the capacity of macro, meso and micro levels to support one another, and could be allied to use of the social media enabled by new ICT for advocacy of ALE within LLL, nurturing popular cultural change to recognise its utility and importance.

Recommendation 8: At country level, an analysis of the existing supply (public and private) of ALE is recommended. It is possible to create an interactive online portal on available training opportunities in the country, and on career choice and career development, ensuring that it is updated and actively communicated to the population.

Recommendation 9: Organise financial support (grants, subsidies) to organisations involved in re-training and training of specialists, for practical application of digital in priority sectors of the economy and in industries with a large release of human resources.

Development and promotion of andragogy

Recommendation 10: Establishing Andragogy is urgent. It means forming and developing a regulatory and legal framework within the system of training and retraining ALE specialists; and a law on adult education indicating the requirements for andragogy specialists of different qualification levels. It is recommended to require compulsory advanced training in andragogy for all ALE specialists working in public educational organisations.

In the absence of a central agency to develop, promote, control, and monitor andragogy, most departments and private sectors are trained in the format of ToT, which has no systemic basis. The term andragogy is not used by specialists working in the educational organisations of the informal sector, and often not in public educational organisations. It is necessary to hold scientific conferences and other events to discuss issues of andragogy, to promote awareness of the need for andragogy specialists, and to include the profession of andragogy in the national classifiers of professions. The pool of trainers with different areas of andragogy expertise needs training and expanding.

From Andragogy to “Heutagogy”

The rapid development of science and technology requires human beings to develop rapidly, and to adapt to new conditions. In this regard, much attention in the modern world is paid to developing conditions for self-education. New views on the educational process, its opportunities and tasks are developing. *Heutagogy* is positioned as a new approach to the organisation of adult learning: *teaching about self-education*.

Recommendation 11: To implement the principles of heutagogy in the educational process, approaches to the production of educational content should be studied, amended and revised. They should be as simple and clear as possible: presented using game components, preferably in small portions in different formats. There are already examples of online courses: some 4,000 different courses in electronic format; Skyeng (teaching foreign languages), Netology (teaching online professions) and others.

Partnership and co-development beyond the sub-region

All ALE can be related at macro level to national, regional, and global developments. Partnership, collaboration, and co-production have been a growing dimension throughout the time of the CONFINTEAs. CONFINTEA VII will take place at a time where global warming and COVID-19 destabilise, along with a multitude of other social and economic concerns across food, safety, health, security, and sustainability, all in the menu of the 17 SDGs coming together. To avoid catastrophic collapse of the world UN order, and of good governance for many countries, new and successful forms of partnership become essential between government and civil society, including the commercial, financial, and industrial and other private sectors. The production of this Report exemplifies such partnership. Learning together openly and reciprocally between CA nations and with outside partners is an unfamiliar learning process. It allows less wealthy countries to share, learn, and give, celebrating and building on what they know and the way they work.

Recommendation 12: One practical possibility is the development of Samarkand towards becoming a Learning City, with all the requirements to become a member of the governmental UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), and of the civil society PASCAL Learning City Network. This could deepen understanding of ALE and LLL, with perspectives from the personal level towards community engagement locally, and orientation globally: a requirement of CA and OECD countries alike.

Recommendation 13: Ways and means should be sought to further strengthen cooperation between IGOs and INGOs. Both are well represented at regional level through the UNESCO Almaty Office and ASPBAE with its CA Executive Council Member. The DVV International Regional Office can have a facilitating role by using the CONFINTEA and SDG processes, at the same time expanding the networking and partnership with other important players and stakeholders, including development cooperation and funding agencies.

Recommendation 14: Much of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as Uzbekistan have mountainous areas with many remote settlements. It is necessary to take into special account the development needs of these regions, including border regions that can be singled out separately.

Country Recommendations

Kazakhstan

Recommendation 1: The Kazakhstan government should develop, modify, and innovate in its educational system in this time of COVID-19. Kazakhstan needs to develop an ALE education system that provides skills that meet the needs of the adults, the labour market, and the countries' future development priorities and international standards, with quality and proper accessibility.

Recommendation 2: In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic forced digitalization of education and rapidly pushed education and training systems to explore distance and online learning. Governments, public and private organizations, communities, and individuals should speed up developing and implementing innovations and creative solutions, to ensure that education systems can continue functioning in light of this.

Recommendation 3: Wider consultation and articulation with key stakeholders in the field of the ALE needs to become effective to ensure the legitimacy and appropriation of policy development and planning processes.

Recommendation 4: The main issues in the sphere of the ALE for Kazakhstan are the difficulty of adapting the adult population to new socio-economic conditions, a decrease in employment, the lack of required skills, and the loss of qualifications. Therefore, it is necessary to open regional professional training centres for rural residents, which, due to limited access to vocational education, are practically uncompetitive in the formal labour market.

Kyrgyzstan

Recommendation 1: Create a legal framework for ALE: adopt a law on ALE along with a law on LLL as Kyrgyzstan is undertaking an inventory of laws, sections on ALE (or LLL) may be included in a new single law 'On Education and Science', which will consolidate the existing six laws and over 50 by-laws regulating the education sector.

Recommendation 2: Form a State and public system of ALE management; and create an Interdepartmental Commission on ALE. This should include representatives of the KR Government, and key ministries and agencies in the development of an adult education and training system, ALE providers, civil society organisations, business associations and experts on ALE. The Interdepartmental Commission on ALE would be expected to be the strategic body that determines operations for implementing an ALE strategy.

Recommendation 3: Create regional programmes of ALE development, taking account of socio-economic, demographic, national, cultural, and other factors. They must include assessment of public educational needs and existing capacities, and integration of LLL.

Recommendation 4: In the next few years, specialists in big data analysis and personal data protection, and digital marketing, including the promotion of goods and services in social networks, are expected to come into high demand. To ensure that the labour market adapts successfully to these changes, it is important to restructure the vocational and further education system in advance, and to align it with the needs of the digital economy.⁸³

Tajikistan

Recommendation 1: Regulations and policies in Tajikistan should demonstrate an understanding of the need for ALE. Mechanisms should be developed to implement existing policies on ALE, with open national consultations involving a wide range of stakeholders, including education sector experts and civil society representatives.

Recommendation 2: Start the process of forming a fully-fledged mechanism for identifying the labour market demands for vocational skills in VET and ALE. Launch pilot tracer studies of VET graduates.

Recommendation 3: More funding for the ALE sector is needed to expand adult learning coverage and ensure quality of learning. Dedicated funding for ALE researches and studies needs to be made available.

Uzbekistan

Recommendation 1: In Uzbekistan there are regulatory legal acts that coordinate the field of adult education. But for the effective development of the adult education system, special State programmes and laws must be created.

Recommendation 2: Implementing mechanisms for recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning results. Organizing regular subregional workshops and conferences to share best practices in life-long education. Training ALE professionals at higher education level.

Recommendation 3: Internationalization of higher education, including faculty and student mobility. Cooperation in research, and networking policy (for example system for transfer of credits). Compliance with international regulations and quality standards.

⁸³ The concept of digital transformation "Digital Kyrgyzstan" 2019 – 2023

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ANNEX 1. Central Asian experience in assessing adult literacy

Country	Year	Data source	Literacy definition	Mode
Kazakhstan	2009	Population Census	The literate is the person who is able to to read and write.	Self-declaration
	2010	UIS estimates: MICS/GALP	UIS estimate based on 2010 MICS Survey data with assessment of reading skills of male and female population 15-49 years. Literacy rates based on a reading assessment are likely to be lower than literacy rates based on self- or household declaration.	Literacy test /UIS estimates
	2018	UIS estimates	UIS estimate based on 2010 MICS Survey data with assessment of reading skills of male and female population 15-49 years.	UIS estimates
Kyrgyzstan	2009	Population Census	Literate persons are those with primary general, basic general, secondary general, secondary specialized, incomplete higher and higher education according to population census data. Persons with less than primary general education are considered literate if they answer Yes to the question "Are you able to read and write".	Self-declaration
	2018	UIS estimates: GALP	2009 population census: Literate persons are those with primary general, basic general, secondary general, secondary specialized, incomplete higher and higher education according to population census data. Persons with less than primary general education are considered literate if they answer Yes to the question "Are you able to read and write".	Estimates
Tajikistan	2000	Population Census	Persons who can write and read [discretionary] of the language.	Household declaration
	2014	UIS estimates: GALP	2000 Population Census: A person is defined as literate if he or she can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his or her everyday life.	Estimates
Uzbekistan	2000	UNICEF MICS2	Literacy is defined as the ability to read easily or with difficulty a letter or a newspaper.	Self-declaration
	2013	Survey	Reading and writing test.	Literacy test
	2014	Survey	Reading and writing test.	Literacy test
	2015	Survey	Reading and writing test.	Literacy test
	2016	Survey	Reading and writing test.	Literacy test
	2018	Survey	Reading and writing test.	Literacy test

MICS: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (<http://mics.unicef.org>)

GALP: UIS estimates derived from its Global Age-specific Literacy Projections Model (GALP)

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)