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SELFIE, adult learning and non-formal learning

A pre-feasibility study

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1 Introduction

1.1 SELFIE: tool for discovering the digital potential of a learning organisation

SELFIE is a tool for schools to reflect on how they embed and use digital tools in their organisation and learning process. This tool was launched in October 2018 and is available in all official EU languages.¹ It can be used worldwide by primary, secondary (general and VET) schools and post-secondary non-tertiary education institutions. Furthermore, SELFIE is currently further developing SELFIE to be applied in work-based learning (based on a feasibility study).² The results and lessons learned of the pilot testing of the SELFIE work-based learning tool will be made available in a forthcoming publication.³ Between October 2018 and February 2021, more than 900,000 individuals participated in SELFIE.

SELFIE is a tool that brings together the perspectives of school leaders, teachers and students on how digital tools are embedded and used in the learning organisation. The upper secondary vocational schools' questionnaire consists of the following areas (besides a section on background characteristics of the respondent)⁴:

- Area A: Leadership: This area relates to the role of leadership in the school-wide integration of digital technologies and their effective use for the school's core work: teaching and learning.
- Area B: Collaboration and Networking: This area relates to measures that schools may consider to support a culture of collaboration and communication for sharing experiences and learn effectively within and beyond the organisational boundaries.
- Area C: Infrastructure and Equipment: This area is about having adequate, reliable and secure infrastructure (such as equipment, software, information resources, internet connection, technical support or physical space). This can enable and facilitate innovative teaching, learning and assessment practices.
- Area D: Continuing Professional Development: This area looks at whether or not the school facilitates and invests in the continuing professional development (CPD) of its staff at all levels. CPD can support the development and integration of new modes of teaching and learning that harness digital technologies to achieve better learning outcomes.
- Area E: Pedagogy: Supports and Resources: This area relates to the preparation of using digital technologies for learning by updating and innovating teaching and learning practices.
- Area F: Pedagogy: Implementation in the classroom: This area relates to the implementation in the classroom of digital technologies for learning, by updating and innovating teaching and learning practices.
- Area G: Assessment Practices: This area relates to measures that schools may consider in order to gradually shift the balance from traditional assessment towards a more comprehensive repertoire of practices. This repertoire could include technology-enabled assessment practices that are student-centred, personalised and authentic.
- Area H: Student Digital Competence: This area relates to the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable the confident, creative and critical use of digital technologies by students.

1.2 Aim of this report: SELFIE and non-formal learning

SELFIE is developed in reference to educational organisations or institutions. According to the foundational publication on SELFIE, Promoting Effective Digital-Age Learning, "the term *educational organisation* refers primarily to primary, secondary and VET schools as well as higher education institutions such as Universities,

1 European Commission (EC) (2021). SELFIE, online, https://ec.europa.eu/education/schools-go-digital_en

2 Broek, S., & Buischool, B.-J. (2020). Adapting the SELFIE tool for work-based learning systems in Vocational Education and Training. A feasibility study. Hippe, R., & Kampylis, P. (eds.) EUR 30079 EN Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, ISBN 978-92-76-10623-4, doi:10.2760/934724, JRC11970

3 Hippe, R., Brotpito, A., & Broek, S. (2021). SELFIE for work-based learning, in preparation

4 See EC (2020). All SELFIE questions: All statements and questions currently in SELFIE for each education level (e.g. primary, secondary schools). September 2020

University Colleges and Polytechnics.”⁵ The programmes provided by these educational organisations are programmes that lead to certificates and a qualification that carry rights in terms of access to further studies and access to the labour market. These programmes have clearly defined learning objectives (and learning outcomes); have curricula and explicitly defined modes of delivery. Even when it comes to apprenticeships, these programmes lead to formal qualifications. All in all, SELFIE is modelled primarily to formal learning contexts.

This short report aims at exploring how SELFIE relates to adult learning and non-formal learning. SELFIE is not yet specifically designed for non-formal learning contexts. This however does not mean that the SELFIE approach and the questionnaire is not applicable. This pre-feasibility study tries to prepare the ground for a thorough analysis of this issue by clarifying concepts and conduct a small consultation among stakeholders in the non-formal learning context. It is not the intention to define exhaustively concepts in this report, but identify issues that would need to be taken into account in a potential feasibility study on the applicability of SELFIE in non-formal learning.

1.3 Methodological approach and structure of the report

This short report is based on desk research on adult learning and non-formal learning and a first review of the SELFIE questionnaire in the light of applying it to non-formal learning. Furthermore, during the April meeting of the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning, SELFIE was presented and a discussion took place on whether SELFIE could be applying in non-formal learning contexts.

This report presents the outcomes of this pre-feasibility study and is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: Conceptual clarification on formal and non-formal learning.
- Chapter 3: Outcomes of the limited consultation.
- Chapter 4: First reflections on the current SELFIE questionnaire.
- Chapter 5: Emerging issues and considerations.

⁵ Kampylis, P., Punie, Y. & Devine, J. (2015). Promoting Effective Digital-Age Learning -A European Framework for Digitally-Competent Educational Organisations; EUR27599 EN; doi:10.2791/54070, p 39.

2 Conceptual clarification on formal and non-formal learning

2.1 Formal learning and the learning of adults

Formal learning is defined by Cedefop as “intentional from the learner’s point of view. It typically leads to certification.”⁶ A more extensive definition of formal learning is provided by the recent Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning: “formal learning means learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial vocational training and higher education.”⁷

In the main adult learning related statistical surveys PIAAC, the Adult Education Survey, the Labour Force Survey formal learning is further coded by ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) levels. The ISCED classification provides an indication of whether adult formal learning is comparable to primary, upper or lower secondary or tertiary education. It does however not provide an indication of where and how the learning is delivered.⁸ The table below provides an overview of the ISCED 2011 levels and the associated duration of educational programmes at the different levels.

Table 1. ISCED2011 overview of levels and the typical duration of programmes.

0	Early childhood education: no duration criteria, however a programme should account for at least the equivalent of 2 hours per day and 100 days a year of educational activities in order to be included
1	Primary education: duration typically varies from 4 to 7 years. The most common duration is 6 years
2	Lower secondary education: duration typically varies from 2 to 5 years. The most common duration is 3 years
3	Upper secondary education: duration typically varies from 2 to 5 years. The most common duration is 3 years
4	Post-secondary non-tertiary education: duration typically varies from 6 months to 2 or 3 years
5	Short-cycle tertiary education: duration typically varies from 2 to 3 years
6	Bachelor’s or equivalent level: the duration of Bachelor’s or equivalent level programmes typically varies from 3 to 4 or more years when directly following ISCED level 3, or 1 to 2 years when following another ISCED level 6 programme
7	Master’s or equivalent level: the duration of Master’s or equivalent level programmes typically varies from 1 to 4 years when following ISCED level 6, or from 5 to 7 years when directly following ISCED level 3
8	Doctoral or equivalent level: duration is a minimum of 3 years

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012), International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011.

Learning does not only take place in formal learning contexts. In fact, especially with regard the learning of adults, the Adult Education Survey reports that over the years (2007, 2011, 2016), participation in non-formal education and training is much higher compared to formal education and training. Furthermore, the percentage

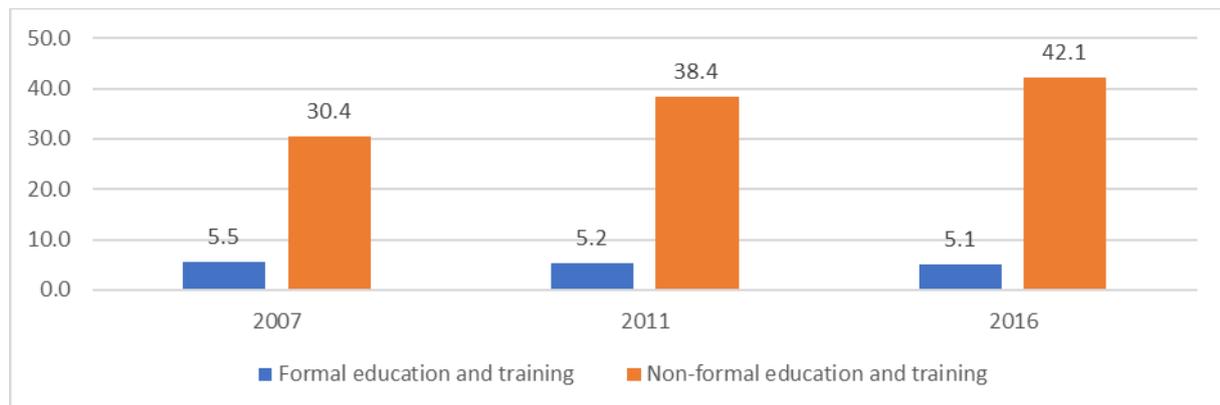
⁶ Cedefop (2014), Terminology of European education and training policy. Second edition a selection of 130 key terms, p. 99.

⁷ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning: OJ C 398, 22.12.2012: Annex: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2B01%29>

⁸ Ellen Boeren & Susan Whittaker (2018): A typology of education and training provisions for low educated adults: categories and definitions, Studies in the Education of Adults, DOI: 10.1080/02660830.2018.1520017, p. 6.

of participation in formal education and training is decreasing while the participation is increasing for non-formal education and training. This is illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 1: Participation of adults (aged 25-64) in formal and non-formal education and training in EU27 (last 12 months).



Source: Eurostat, adult education survey (AES): Participation rate in education and training by sex [trmg_aes_100]. Last update: 24-02-2021.

Hence, while adults do participate in formal learning, a majority of those that participate in formal and non-formal is engaged in non-formal learning, raising the question whether SELFIE would also be applicable in those learning contexts. As SELFIE is developed for formal learning (ISCED 1-4), in principle, SELFIE should also apply to adults that are enrolled in programmes at ISCED level 1-4. This however can be questioned, at least in the terminology applied, which is primarily oriented to initial education and younger learners ('school', 'teacher', and 'student'). For instance, many adults indicate as barrier for participating in adult learning 'negative experiences with schooling'. The AES 2007 for instance included as an obstacle 'Respondent was not confident with the idea of going back to something that is like school'⁹. Across ISCED levels, 13.5% indicated this as a main barrier; for the lower ISCED levels (0-2), 20.8% of the respondents mentioned this obstacle.¹⁰ Later versions of the AES use 'negative previous learning experience'. In 2016, for adults that wanted to take part in learning activities but did not, 4.8% of low-qualified adults reported negative previous learning experience as the main obstacle.¹¹ Furthermore, more than four out of ten adults in the EU who did not take part in learning reported that they did not want to.¹²

2.2 Non-formal learning and the learning of adults

Besides formal learning, international literature distinguishes between non-formal learning and informal learning. The most recent definition of non-formal learning is provided in the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning: "**non-formal learning** means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public. **Informal learning** means learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure and is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner's perspective; examples of learning outcomes acquired through informal learning are skills acquired through life and work experiences, project

⁹ See Eurostat (2007), Adult Education Survey (2005-2007) Manual, p. 31.

¹⁰ Type of obstacles by participation and the highest level of education attained 2007, EU-27, multiple answers (Eurostat: Adult Education Survey: Type of obstacles by participation and the highest level of education attained [trmg_aes_178]).

¹¹ Adult Education Survey 2016; See European Commission (2019), Who takes part in adult learning and how? P. 3.

¹² Adult Education Survey 2016; See European Commission (2019), Who takes part in adult learning and how? P. 3.

management skills or ICT skills acquired at work, languages learned and intercultural skills acquired during a stay in another country, ICT skills acquired outside work, skills acquired through volunteering, cultural activities, sports, youth work and through activities at home (e.g. taking care of a child).¹³

In this section, we focus on non-formal learning for adults. The main difference with formal learning is that it does not lead to a formal qualification. It can however be organised as learning and be organised similar to formal learning of adults. As discussed in Boeren 2018¹⁴, the main surveys (PIAAC, AES, LFS and CVTS) that cover non-formal education and training, differentiate types of learning activities. As can be seen in the table 2, the types of activities range from guidance sessions to distance learning and sources, seminars and workshops.

Table 2. Types of learning activities in the major surveys.

PIAAC	AES	LFS	CVTS
-organised sessions for on-the-job training or training by supervisors or colleagues; -seminars or workshops; -courses conducted through open or distance learning; -course or private lessons not already reported. Focus: mainly job-related or not.	-non-formal guided on-the-job training; -non-formal activities delivered through distance learning; -computer-based learning; -non-formal private lessons and course. Focus: related to a current job, a planned future job or voluntary work.	-attending a course or seminar to acquire or improve skills, knowledge and competences which may or may not lead to certification; -attending a seminar, a course or lecture to gain vocational guidance, to do a first step to working life (but outside formal education) or to improve basic skills in public or private institutions; -doing a correspondence course; -distance learning; -taking private lessons to improve skills, knowledge and competences, especially as a supplement to formal education. Focus: mainly job-related or personal/social.	-organised taught training activities -guided on-the-job training, job rotation, exchanges, secondments or study visits; -participation (instruction received) in conferences, workshops, trade fairs and lectures; -self-directed learning/e-learning. Focus: related to current job or workplace.

Source: Ellen Boeren & Susan Whittaker (2018): A typology of education and training provisions for low educated adults: categories and definitions, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, DOI: 10.1080/02660830.2018.1520017, p. 6.

These activities can be conducted in different learning environments and offered by different education and training providers. An indication of who are the providers of non-formal learning can be provided by looking at the categories used in the Adult Education Survey. This survey applied the following categorisation:

- Formal education and training institutions
- Non-formal education and training institutions (e.g. private training providers)
- Commercial institutions where education and training is not the main activity (e.g. equipment suppliers)
- Non-commercial institutions where education and training is not the main activity (e.g. libraries, museums, ministries)
- Employers
- Employers' organisations, chambers of commerce
- Trade unions
- Non-profit associations (e.g. cultural society, political party)

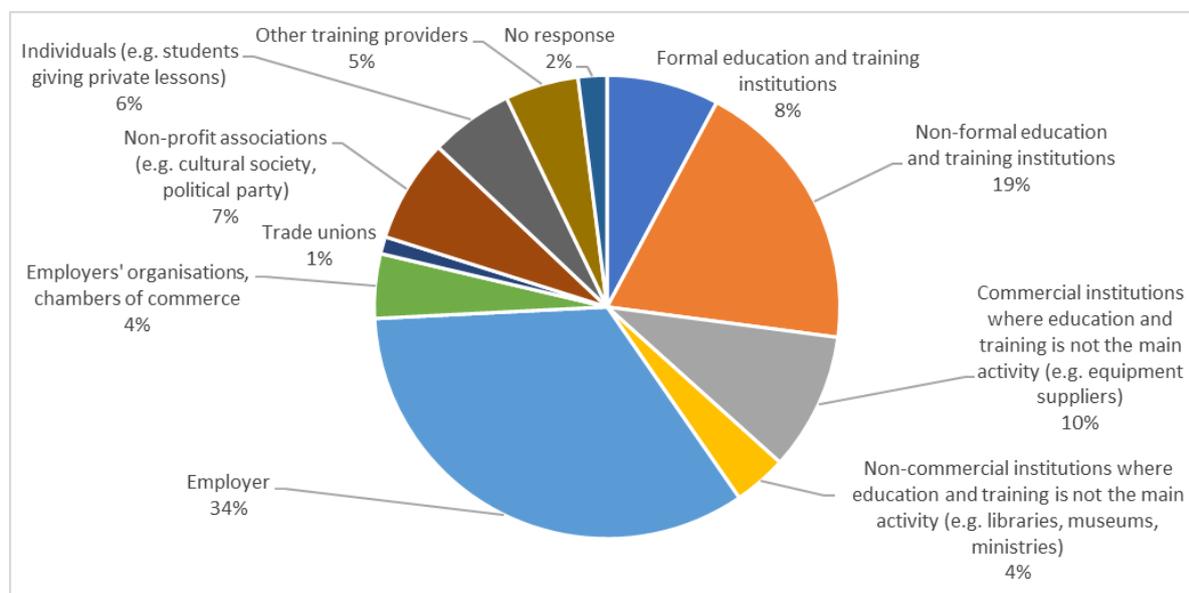
¹³ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning: OJ C 398, 22.12.2012: Annex: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2B01%29>

¹⁴ Ellen Boeren & Susan Whittaker (2018): A typology of education and training provisions for low educated adults: categories and definitions, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, DOI: 10.1080/02660830.2018.1520017, p. 6.

- Individuals (e.g. students giving private lessons)
- Other training providers

In terms of distribution of non-formal learning provided by these types of providers, the Adult Education Survey reports the following data.

Figure 2. Distribution of non-formal education and training activities by provider (2016)



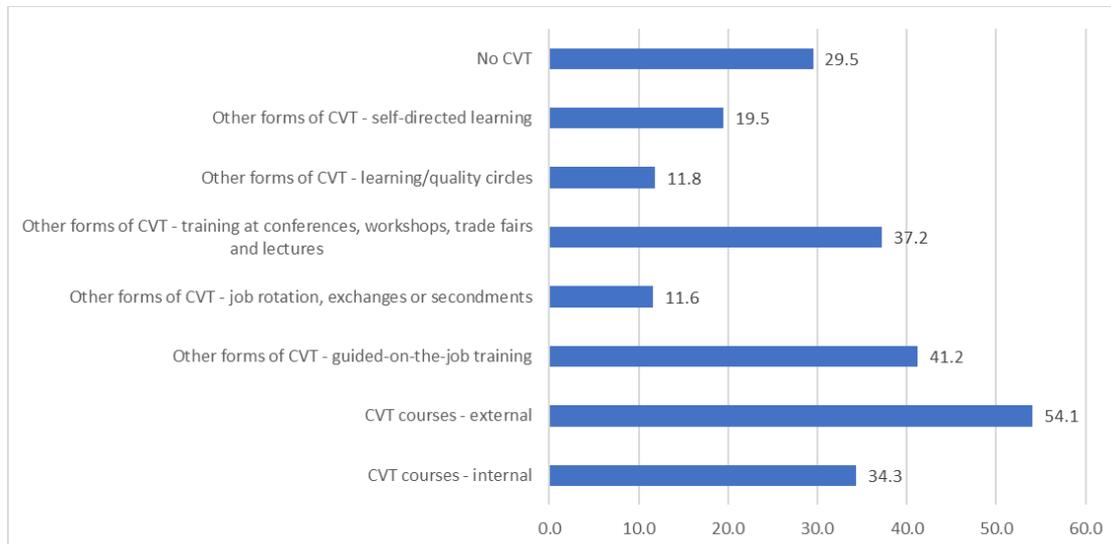
Source: Eurostat, Distribution of non-formal education and training activities by provider [trng_aes_170]. Last update: 24-02-2021.

The main providers are the employers (34%), followed by non-formal education and training institutions (19%) and commercial institutions where education and training is not the main activity (e.g. equipment suppliers) (10%).

Within non-formal learning, the learning can be institutionalised to different degrees. There are non-formal learning providers that operate similarly as formal learning providers, but there are also providers that operate quite differently. For instance, the learning provided by the employer can be less institutionalised and less structured compared to formal education. Here, the learning might be provided through learning while worked, being supervised by a company trainer or mentor. Still this is non-formal learning, but it has different characteristics compared to the learning provided in adult literacy or language courses. The figure below provides an overview of types of vocational training offered in enterprises (total, both small and large companies), as measured in the CVTS. It shows that the most offered training forms of Continuous Vocational

Training (CVT) concern external courses; guided-on-the-job training; and training at conferences, workshops, trade fairs and lectures.

Figure 3. Types of training offered in enterprises in 2015 in EU27 (% of all enterprises).



Source: Eurostat, Enterprises providing training by type of training and size class - % of all enterprises [trng_cvt_01s]. Last update: 24-02-2021.

To conclude, using SELFIE in non-formal learning opens SELFIE to a wide range of different providers and learning context. However, in all those contexts, the learning is somehow institutionalised and organised, making it largely similar to the formal learning that is already covered by SELFIE. Within non-formal learning, there are learning providers (or learning contexts) that resemble more the formal learning than others. SELFIE is best applicable in those contexts more similar to formal education. This makes that non-formal learning offered by employers (which is responsible for 34% of the non-formal learning) might be less suitable to be covered by SELFIE. Furthermore, SELFIE is not well suited for covering informal learning as here as well, the required level of institutionalisation is not in place.

2.3 A different way of classifying the learning of adults

In literature on adult learning typologies, the distinction between formal and non-formal learning is often criticised. A main critique is that the distinction does not help much in better understanding how the learning is organised and delivered and how participation can be increased. As put by Boeren and Whittaker “the distinction between formal, non-formal and informal is in fact not very helpful in furthering our understanding on the role of education and training providers in generating higher levels of participation.”¹⁵ Whether the learning leads to a qualification, does not determine the mode and organisation of learning. What is considered a non-formal learning mode, for instance on-the-job-learning, is effectively applied in obtaining formal qualifications. This is for instance the case in VET programmes leading to formal VET qualifications, that include school-based and work-based learning modes (internships or apprenticeships).

Based on the analysis of different typologies of adult learning (Myers et al. (2014)¹⁶; Desjardins (2017)¹⁷; Hefler and Markowitsch (2012)¹⁸, Boeren and Whittaker 2018 suggest a typology focussing on low-educated adults.

15 Ellen Boeren & Susan Whittaker (2018): A typology of education and training provisions for low educated adults: categories and definitions, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, DOI: 10.1080/02660830.2018.1520017, p. 6.

16 Myers, K., Conte, N., and Rubenson, K., 2014. *Adult learning typology: adult learning and returns to training project*. Ottawa: Social Research and Demonstration Cooperation.

17 Desjardins, R., 2017. *Political economy of adult learning systems comparative study of strategies, policies and constraints*. London: Bloomsbury.

18 Hefler, G., and Markowitsch, J., 2012. The qualification-providing enterprise? Support for formal adult education in small and medium-sized enterprises. In S. Riddell, J. Markowitsch & E. Weedon (Eds.) *Lifelong learning in Europe: equity and efficiency in the balance* (pp. 103–124). Bristol: Policy Press.

In the table, the types are linked to formal and non-formal learning. The table below also provides a short description per type. Each type has its own purpose, target groups, approach, organisation and providers.

Table 3. Typology focussing on low-educated adults, linked to formal and non-formal learning

Formal learning	Formal and non-formal learning	Non-formal learning	Further explanation
	(1) basic skills and basic education		Basic skills and basic education' as a category refers to adult participation in learning at an education level equivalent to primary or early secondary education, intended to act as the foundation for further learning, low skill employment, or forms of active citizenship.
(2) second chance education at upper secondary levels			The category of 'second chance education at upper secondary levels' refers to adult participation in learning at a level equivalent to upper secondary education, intended to act as a foundation for learning at tertiary level, intermediate skill employment or forms of active citizenship.
	(3) post-secondary VET		The focus of this category is on adult participation in VET at post-secondary levels, intended to prepare for employment in a specified occupation or sector or to provide access to other tertiary or post-tertiary education.
	(4) apprenticeships		Apprenticeships are therefore as employees' participation in dual training programmes in a specific occupation leading to recognised professional qualifications.
		(5) training that forms part of Active Labour Market Policies	Training as part of ALMPs may be defined as participation in work-related activity, either voluntary or mandatory, by those unemployed, at risk of unemployment or those requiring support to make the transition into employment.
		(6) workplace or job-related learning	Workplace and job-related learning is defined as participation by employed persons in learning activities within and relevant to the workplace that is not part of the formal education system.
		(7) personal or social learning	Personal or social learning is the term used to define participation in informal, non-job related learning activities that may serve the purposes of providing personal or social benefit.

Source: Ellen Boeren & Susan Whittaker (2018): A typology of education and training provisions for low educated adults: categories and definitions, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, DOI: 10.1080/02660830.2018.1520017, p. 8. Adjusted by author.

When reflecting on SELFIE a core factor is not whether the learning pathway leads to a formal qualification (hence differentiating between formal and non-formal learning), but whether the learning pathway is somehow structured, organised and institutionalised. This concerns whether the learning pathway that is self-evaluated is offered by a learning organisation in which school leaders (or similar); teachers (or similar) and students (or similar) are identified. These learning pathways are available in non-formal learning contexts as well.

3 Outcomes of limited consultation of ET2020 Adult Learning Working group

On April 1, 2020, JRC presented SELFIE in the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning. It provided a concise introduction to the tool and referred to the ongoing pilot to have SELFIE cover WBL as well. The presentation ended with a group discussion on the following questions:

1. Would SELFIE be helpful (or not) for formal and non-formal adult learning providers? Explain why.
2. What needs to be taken into consideration when looking into adapting SELFIE to non-formal learning (e.g. terminology used, types of learning context, providers, adult learning principles...)?

The members of the Working Group on Adult Learning have generally little knowledge about SELFIE, but based on the presentation only, at least some of them sees it as a helpful tool for adult learning providers to self-assess their digital readiness. In times of COVID-19, this becomes even more important and adult learning providers (especially small institutions) face various challenges in shifting their provision to online learning environments.

A specific aspect that needs attention for SELFIE is that in adult learning the learning is participatory and takes into account the prior experience of the learner. The learning is hence more a two-way channel instead of one-way channel from teacher to student in initial education. This aspect needs to be considered in making SELFIE suitable for adult learning. SELFIE will have to take into account the general adult learning principles and characteristics of adult learners.

Another aspect mentioned by the group is that adult learning is often fragmented and that it might be difficult to reach out to adult learning providers to participate in the SELFIE tool

4 First reflections on the current SELFIE questionnaire

In this Chapter some first reflections are provided on what aspects would not work well for adult learning, or non-formal learning providers. The starting point is that despite the variation in adult learning providers involved in non-formal learning, ranging from libraries, to large formal education providers; small training bureaus, to large private training providers having extensive online learning facilities, the learning provided is somehow structured, organised and institutionalised. The reflections on the SELFIE questionnaire are provided from this starting point.

4.1 Terminology issues and cross-cutting issues

The following terms do not work well in adult learning contexts:

- 'School leader': An alternative might be 'management'.
- 'Teacher': An alternative might be 'Trainer', 'Adult learning professional'.
- 'Student': An alternative might be '(adult) Learner'.
- 'School': An alternative might be 'provider' or 'center'.
- The reference to 'companies' in the work-based learning SELFIE questionnaire (in development) might be confusing as adult learning providers can also be private companies. This could be solved with added an explanation.
- 'Teaching': Adult learning is not only about teaching, but also involves other forms to learning new skills, knowledge and competences (or change attitudes), for instance through coaching, training, intervision, practice, etc. An alternative might be 'facilitate learning'.

In the 'a bit about you', additional questions could be added concerning the type of adult learning provider, the primary target groups, the type of learning (e.g. basic skills, liberal adult education, job-oriented learning, other).

4.2 Reflections on the eight areas

Area A: Leadership

The questions in this area are generally suitable to adult learning providers and non-formal learning when the adult learning providers have a certain scale (having digital strategies might not be appropriate for small-scale training providers).

Area B: Collaboration & Networking

This area can be relevant for adult learning. For instance when a training provider is supporting the HR strategy of a larger company and provides training to the employees.

Area C: Infrastructure and Equipment

The questions in this area are generally suitable to adult learning providers and non-formal learning. The current SELFIE questionnaire makes reference to the school as principal learning venue. In adult learning the learning can be traditionally classroom based, but it can involve also distance learning modalities, or supported self-study in other learning venues (for instance computer rooms of libraries). In any case, for adult learning, the questions on the use of digital tools at home that are in the SELFIE questionnaire (in the "a bit about you" section) could be used.

Area D: Continuing Professional Development

The questions in this area are generally suitable to adult learning providers and non-formal learning.

Area E: Pedagogy: Supports and Resources and Area F: Pedagogy: Implementation in the classroom

The questions in this area are generally suitable to adult learning providers and non-formal learning. An issue to look at would be the questions about 'Engaging students', 'Student collaboration', and 'Cross-curricular projects'. These questions generally relate to students being involved in study programmes with a long duration and multiple subjects. This is not necessarily the case for adult learning. Adult learners are involved in targeted

courses usually with a short duration or a single subject. It could be suggested to move these questions from the core to the optional questions.

Area G: Assessment practices

Assessment practice can play a role in adult learning, also in the non-formal learning context. The fact that non-formal learning does not lead to a formal qualification, but not mean that no assessment takes place. Hence, the questions in this area are generally suitable for adult learning and non-formal learning.

Area H: Students' Digital Competence

In this area, there are some questions which are not really suitable to adult learning. This applies for instance for 'Digital skills across subjects'. In adult learning, the learners are usually only involved in one specific course. Furthermore, 'Creating digital content' and 'Learning coding or programming' might not be applicable in learning courses for adults lacking basic (ICT) skills.

To conclude, at a first glance, there are no large revisions required (except for shifting some questions from core to optional) to the areas and the questions currently covered by the SELFIE questionnaire to apply them in non-formal and adult learning, given that this concerns some form of organised and structured learning.

5 Emerging issues and considerations concerning feasibility of SELFIE for non-formal learning

5.1 Mapping types of learning and positioning SELFIE

The organised and structured learning opportunities for young people and for adults can be found in formal learning settings and non-formal learning settings, whereby in non-formal settings, participants do not receive a formal qualification. It is therefore important to not only refer to the definition of non-formal, but also to the definition of adult learning. The following, standard, definitions are applied:

- **Non-formal learning** means learning which takes place through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher relationships); it may cover programmes to impart work skills, adult literacy and basic education for early school leavers; very common cases of non-formal learning include in-company training, through which companies update and improve the skills of their workers such as ICT skills, structured on-line learning (e.g. by making use of open educational resources), and courses organised by civil society organisations for their members, their target group or the general public.¹⁹
- **Adult learning** refers to the participation of adults in lifelong learning (Lifelong learning encompasses all learning activities undertaken throughout life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within personal, civic, social or employment-related perspectives. The intention or aim to learn is the critical point that distinguishes these activities from non-learning activities, such as cultural or sporting activities). Adult learning usually refers to learning activities after the end of initial education.²⁰

The following figure used these two definitions and provides an overview of the types of formal and non-formal learning types/levels and whether they apply for adults and/or young people. This overview is used to indicate what is currently covered by the SELFIE tool (red).

Figure 4. Types and levels of learning for young people and adults and the positioning of SELFIE

		Learning of young people	
Formal learning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood education • Primary education • Lower secondary education • Upper secondary education • Post-secondary non-tertiary education • Short-cycle tertiary education • Bachelor's or equivalent level • Master's or equivalent level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-formal learning taking place in pastime activities • Out-of-school learning activities • Youth work
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal basic skills and basic education • second chance education at upper Secondary levels • Formal post-secondary VET • Formal apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-formal basic skills and basic education • Non-formal post-secondary VET • Non-formal apprenticeships • Training that forms part of Active Labour Market Policies • Workplace or job-related learning • Personal or social learning
		Learning of adults	
		Non-formal learning	

Source: author.

¹⁹ Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning: OJ C 398, 22.12.2012: Annex: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2B01%29>

²⁰ Eurostat Statistics explained Adult Education Survey (AES) methodology: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Adult_Education_Survey_\(AES\)_methodology](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Adult_Education_Survey_(AES)_methodology)

SELFIE currently focuses on schools that offer formal education programmes, leading to a formal degree and that have a high degree of organisation and structure (curricula). With the addition of work-based learning, SELFIE already opened up to other learning venues than the classroom, namely the work-place as a place for skills acquisition.

While not explicitly targeting adults, SELFIE is applicable to the formal programmes for adults positioned at the left-side of the figure above. These programmes usually have an associated ISCED code (except specific basic-skills formal programmes) as they are linked to the initial formal programmes.

Currently, while covering formal learning (ISCED 1-4), SELFIE allows as well learning organisations to use SELFIE that target adult learners or that do not offer formal qualifications. This is however not yet a perfect fit in terms of terminology used and underlying pedagogical models applied (i.e. SELFIE more oriented to more 'teaching' and less on other forms of supported skills/competence acquisition).

5.2 Potential use of SELFIE in adult learning and non-formal adult learning

Currently SELFIE is used in formal learning primarily attuned to younger learners in ISCED level 1-4. For younger learners, the formal learning is far more important and better institutionalised compared to non-formal learning. For adults, this is not the case. As indicated by the Adult Education Survey (2016), far more adults participate in non-formal learning compared to formal learning. In that regard, there is a potential for SELFIE to extent its scope to non-formal learning to better serve the adult population in Europe.

In terms of digital readiness of adult learning providers, a European Commission study from 2015 concludes that²¹:

- Educators need digital and pedagogic skills. Adult educators need to be provided with training in the effective use of ICTs and OER, and to be fully involved in the design of programmes;
- Learning providers and organisations need appropriate organisational and support structures to enable educators to use ICTs and OER effectively in the development of adult learning;
- Learning providers and organisations need better sustainable institutional strategies for the use of ICTs and OER in the development of adult learning; and
- Learning providers need more extensive networking, the sharing of good practice and partnerships to create targeted and high-quality ICT-enabled learning content for their adult learners.

Based on the research findings, there is clearly a need to support adult learning providers further in their digital readiness. The consultation among members of the ET2020 Working Group for Adult Learning indicates that there are signs that there might be interest for SELFIE in adult learning as some group members responded positively about whether SELFIE would be helpful. The group members however also see challenges in reaching out to the many and diverse adult learning providers.

5.3 First reflections on potential adjustments

As a first reflection, some aspects need attention in aligning SELFIE to the learning of adults and non-formal learning. This mainly concerns adjusting the terminology used to liaise with adult learning providers and adult learners both in formal and non-formal adult learning (see for more details, Section 4.1). Furthermore, related

²¹ Ecorys (2015), *Adult Learners in Digital Learning Environments* (EAC-2013-0563) – Final Report, p. 98-99.

to the areas covered by the SELFIE questionnaire, no large revisions are required (except shifting some questions from core to optional) to apply the questionnaire in non-formal learning (see Section 4.2).

5.4 Input for a potential feasibility study

Given these emerging issues and considerations, a potential feasibility study should:

1. Clarify its scope: should it be about adult learning, both covering formal and non-formal learning?
2. Investigate whether specific types of adult learning and non-formal learning require different SELFIE approaches.
3. Investigate whether SELFIE needs to apply some form of demarcation in terms of the size of learning organisations, or the duration/intensity of learning pathways.
4. Assess the willingness of adult learning providers to conduct self-reflection on digital readiness. Related to the willingness of adult learning providers there are a number of obstacles/issues that need to be checked in a feasibility study:
 - a. Is there from adult learning providers a demand for self-reflection, or is it considered an additional burden?
 - b. Would learners be willing to participate as it takes time to fill in the questionnaire?
 - c. Can governments, or adult learning provider associations, incentivise/promote the use of SELFIE?
5. Identify what could be the larger markets of learning providers that would be willing to conduct the SELFIE self-reflection (which countries/ which types of providers).
6. Identify pathways to reach out to the adult learning providers (for instance through European/national association).

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