

FORMACIÓN DE PERSONAS ADULTAS EN FRANCIA Y ESPAÑA: UN ANÁLISIS COMPARADO DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DE LA SUPERVISIÓN EDUCATIVA

ADULT EDUCATION IN FRANCE AND SPAIN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISION

María Goretti Alonso-de-Castro

Inspectora de Educación de Madrid-Este.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4745-9364>

Virginia Araya Gutiérrez

Inspectora de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid-Oeste.

Icíar Rodríguez Parente

Inspectora de Educación de la Comunidad de Madrid-Norte.

Resumen

El artículo compara los sistemas de formación de personas adultas en Francia y España desde la perspectiva del aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, promovido por organismos como la Unión Europea y la UNESCO. Se analizan aspectos clave como el marco normativo, los modelos institucionales, la oferta formativa, las metodologías pedagógicas, los vínculos con el entorno laboral y los mecanismos de evaluación y certificación. Francia tiene un sistema centralizado, gestionado por el Ministerio de Educación Nacional, destacando, en lo referente a la formación de personas adultas, las instituciones de formación continua (GRETA) y las empresas de entrenamiento pedagógico (EEP), que fomentan la empleabilidad mediante metodologías activas y la alternancia con el ámbito laboral. En España, el modelo es descentralizado, gestionado por las comunidades autónomas, con una red de centros de educación de personas adultas de titularidad pública (CEPA) y una oferta que incluye alfabetización, educación reglada, competencias básicas y formación profesional. El análisis revela que, aunque ambos países comparten objetivos como la inclusión y la mejora de la empleabilidad, sus estructuras y estrategias difieren. Esta comparativa permite identificar buenas prácticas y áreas de mejora desde una perspectiva pedagógica, institucional e inspectora, enriqueciendo el diseño de políticas educativas orientadas a la formación continua.

Palabras clave: *APRENDIZAJE A LO LARGO DE LA VIDA, Educación para la inclusión, Empleabilidad, Metodologías pedagógicas, Formación profesional, Movilidad Erasmus+*

Abstract

This article compares the adult education systems in France and Spain from the perspective of lifelong learning, a concept promoted by organizations such as the European Union and UNESCO. It analyses key aspects such as the regulatory framework, institutional models, training offerings, teaching methodologies, links to the labour market, and evaluation and certification mechanisms. France has a centralized system managed by the Ministry of National Education. Regarding adult education, the GRETA (institutions that manage lifelong learning education) and the EEP (Pedagogical Training Companies) stand out, promoting employability through active methodologies and work-related interaction. In Spain, the system is decentralized, managed by autonomous communities, with a network of publicly owned Adult Education Centres (CEPA) offering a wide range of programs, including literacy, formal education, basic skills, and vocational training. The analysis reveals that while both countries share common goals such as inclusion and employability enhancement, their structures and strategies differ. This comparison identifies best practices and areas for improvement from a pedagogical, institutional, and inspection perspective, enriching the design of educational policies aimed at lifelong learning.

Keywords: *LIFELONG LEARNING, Education for inclusion, Employability, Pedagogical methodologies, Vocational training, Erasmus+ mobility.*

o INTRODUCTION

In the context of accelerated transformation marked by digitalisation, labour mobility, and population aging, adult education has become a strategic dimension of contemporary educational systems. It is no longer conceived exclusively as a response to previous educational gaps, but rather as a universal and continuous right, aimed both at professional development and at fostering active citizenship and social inclusion (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2021, 2024; OECD, 2022, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). Within this framework, knowledge of international educational models provides key insights for pedagogical and organizational reflection within our own systems, especially from the perspective of educational supervision.

International organizations such as the European Union and UNESCO promote lifelong learning as a guiding principle to ensure equity and the sustainability of educational systems. Within this framework, it is essential to analyse how different countries put this principle into practice through specific policies, structures, and methodologies. Spain and France, despite sharing common references, have developed different models for organizing adult education, with significant implications for quality, accessibility, and connections to the labour market. (Centre Inffo, 2023; Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Eurydice., 2015).

Erasmus+ mobility has established itself as an ideal mechanism for peer learning, the analysis of good practices and institutional cooperation (European Commission, 2024). This article stems precisely from the Erasmus+ project 2024-1-ES01-KA122-ADU-000237550, focused on the field of adult education, carried out

through a job-shadowing activity in various centres of the Académie de Versailles (France) (Académie de Versailles, 2025a, 2025b) during March 2025. This training experience enabled an educational inspection team from the Community of Madrid, together with a training advisor from the International Exchanges Training Centre, to analyse on-site the functioning, organization, and methodological approaches of the French system of adult continuing education.

Educational supervision and teacher training advisory services, understood as professional support aimed at improvement, find in this type of international experience a unique opportunity to broaden perspectives, compare institutional and methodological approaches, and enrich the criteria for evaluation, organization, and planning of schools within our own context (Galicía Mangas, 2019; Pérez Jiménez & García Ballesteros, 2022). Understanding how adult education is structured in France —its institutional frameworks (GRETA), networks of pedagogical training enterprises (EEP), mechanisms for the validation of competencies (VAE), and its connections with the labour market— provides valuable elements for assessing the strengths and areas for improvement of the Spanish system (Académie de Versailles, 2025c; Geoffray & Dupuy, 2023) .

Therefore, the objective of this article is twofold: on the one hand, to provide a comparative analysis of adult education systems in France and Spain, focusing on key aspects such as access, institutional structure, methodology, the relationship with the productive sector, and mechanisms of evaluation and certification; on the other hand, to generate concrete proposals for improvement from the perspective of educational supervision, aimed at fostering education that is more closely aligned with the real needs of adult learners and the current socio-economic context.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK: LIFELONG LEARNING IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

The concept of lifelong learning has been recognized by the European Union as a strategic axis for social, economic, and personal development. (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2024; OECD, 2019, 2022; UNESCO, 2016).

Both France and Spain have incorporated it into their educational legislation and extended it into adulthood through public policies aimed at ensuring access to lifelong learning. However, the institutional models, system organization, and methodologies employed show significant differences that deserve to be analysed from a comparative perspective, particularly with regard to their capacity for inclusion and their connection with the productive sector.

IDEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

If we analyse secularism versus confessionalism, France is characterized by a deeply secular educational system dating back to the Jules Ferry Law of 1882, which established free, compulsory, and secular education as fundamental principles of the republican state. This secularism also extends to adult education, ensuring the ideological and religious neutrality of all public educational institutions, including GRETA structures (in French *Groupements d'établissements publics locaux d'enseignement*) (Académie de Versailles, 2025c; Établissements Publics, 2025; Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale, de L'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, 2025b). These structures are groupings of public secondary schools and vocational training centres that provide continuing education. In Spain, the Constitution establishes the non-confessional nature of the State, recognizing that no religion shall have a state character. However, religious

education continues to hold an officially recognized place within the educational system, included as an optional subject in the network of public schools.

With regard to centralization versus decentralization, France has a highly centralized organization in pedagogical matters (curricula, qualifications, teacher training), while also incorporating elements of administrative decentralization in its territorial implementation (*rectorats, académies*). All adult education structures, including the GRETA, are under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education, which ensures consistency in policies and structures. Spain, by contrast, has a decentralized system of educational competences since the enactment of the Organic Law 1/1990, of October 3, on the General Organization of the Education System (LOGSE) (Organic Law 1/1990, 1990). Taking into account the applicable state regulations, the Autonomous Communities manage the provision, curriculum development and financing of adult education, which generates different models depending on the territory. This decentralization allows for adaptation to the local context, but it also poses challenges in terms of territorial equity and state coordination.

EDUCATIONAL STRCUTURE AND STAGES

At the preschool stage, in France, the *École Maternelle* welcomes all children from ages three to six free of charge, and since 2019 attendance has been compulsory from the age of three.

In Spain, this stage is divided into two cycles: the first (ages 0 to 3), which is neither free nor compulsory, and the second (ages 3 to 6), which is free and voluntary, although enrolment rates are close to 100%.

Primary education in France covers ages 6 to 11, while in Spain it extends from ages 6 to 12.

Regarding secondary education, France structures it in two stages: from ages 11 to 15 (collège) and from 15 to 18 (lycée), which may be general, technological, or vocational. The transition between these levels is guided by academic decisions and school reports.

In the case of Spain, Secondary Education is organized into Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO), which comprises four years, generally from 12 to 16 years of age, and the Baccalaureate, from 16 to 18 years of age, which is accessed with the ESO diploma, with a late diversification compared to the French system. Curricular design and pathways also differ in the different Autonomous Communities, reflecting the flexibility of the system, but also territorial differences.

ACADEMIC ORGANISATION AND CONTENT

The French school calendar is characterized by a four-day school week or, in many regions, four and a half days, with long (split) school days and vacation periods distributed more evenly throughout the year (All Saints, Christmas, winter, spring, and summer). This distribution is designed to improve student performance and prevent school fatigue.

In Spain, the school calendar is determined by the educational authorities and comprises a minimum of 175 instructional days in compulsory education. The school week generally consists of five days, with shorter daily schedules, and vacation periods concentrated in summer, Easter, and Christmas. Some regions

have introduced adjustments to redistribute the calendar and improve work-life balance, but with less uniformity than in France.

Regarding the teaching of foreign languages and curriculum content, France introduces foreign language learning from the first cycle of primary education, with reinforcement during secondary education. In addition, it promotes artistic and moral education as key components of the student's overall development.

Spain also introduces foreign languages in primary education, although the level of implementation and the number of instructional hours vary. Some regions offer bilingual or trilingual programs. In addition, regional educational authorities encourage an early introduction to foreign language learning in the second cycle of preschool education.

Values and citizenship education is part of the curriculum, albeit with more heterogeneous approaches and frequent revisions according to policy changes.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in France is fully integrated into the network of public lycées (Ministry of Education, 2011). It is structured around three main types of qualifications or diplomas: the Professional Baccalaureate (*Baccalauréat Professionnel*, *Bac Pro*), the Professional Certificate (*Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle*, CAP), and the Advanced Technician's Diploma (*Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*, BTS). Work-based learning (a combination of training in schools and in companies) is a common feature, even within adult education. VET is regarded as a well-respected and professionalized educational pathway, with strong connections to the productive sector (Centre Inffo, 2023).

Spain has strengthened VET through the creation of Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Vocational Training Cycles, and more recently with the enactment of Organic Law 3/2022, of March 31, on the organization and integration of Vocational Education and Training (LOOIFP) (Organic Law 3/2022, 2022), which seeks to strengthen dual education and employability.

With regard to access to university, in France it is sufficient to pass the *Baccalauréat* in order to pursue university studies, although some elite institutions (*Grandes Écoles*) require entrance exams and prior preparation.

In Spain, university access mainly requires obtaining the *Bachillerato* diploma and passing the University Entrance Examination (*Prueba de Acceso a la Universidad, PAU*), whose format and requirements vary across regions. This generates tensions concerning equity of access and interregional mobility.

EQUIVALENCES BETWEEN LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Table 1 provides an overview of the correspondences between the educational levels of both countries (Académie de Paris, 2025; Embassy of France in Spain, 2020). This comparison is especially useful for validating adult learners' educational pathways in processes of credential recognition, educational re-entry, reskilling, or international mobility.

French System	Approximate age	Spanish System
École Maternelle	3-6 years	Early Childhood Education (0-6 years)
École Élémentaire	6-11 years	Primary Education (6-12 years)
Collège	11-15 years	Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) (12-16 years)
Lycée (Baccalauréat)	15-18 years	Baccalaureate (16-18 years)

French System	Approximate age	Spanish System
Université	18+ years	University (18+ years)

Table 1. Equivalences between levels of education.

With regard to adult education, in France (Figure 1) it is integrated within a national-level structure (Académie de Versailles, 2025a). The GRETA (Académie de Versailles, 2025c; Établissements Publics, 2025), managed by the Ministry of Education, provide both formal and non-formal education, official certifications, and courses adapted to the local context.

The recognition of prior learning (FRANCE VAE, 2025; UNESCO, 2021) allows adult learners to obtain official qualifications by accrediting their work experience, thereby facilitating employment and professional mobility. This system is certified according to quality standards such as Qualiopi (*Ministère du Travail, de la Santé, des Solidarités et des Familles*, 2025) and ISO 9001.

Spain (Figure 2) adopts a more decentralized model, in which the autonomous communities manage publicly owned Adult Education Centers (*Centros de Educación de Personas Adultas*, CEPA), offering programs that include literacy, basic education, *Bachillerato*, digital skills, and specific training courses. In addition, courses are provided by the State Public Employment Service (*Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal*, SEPE), municipalities, universities, and other organizations. The system for accrediting professional competencies is still in the process of consolidation and does not yet reach the coverage or structure of the French model.

A key difference lies in the integration of adult education into the regular education system in France, compared with the existence of separate networks in Spain. This approach has direct implications for social perception, educational quality, and the possibility of continuous learning pathways. Moreover, the culture of collaboration among the state, companies, unions, and social agents in France contrasts with the more heterogeneous level of involvement in Spain.

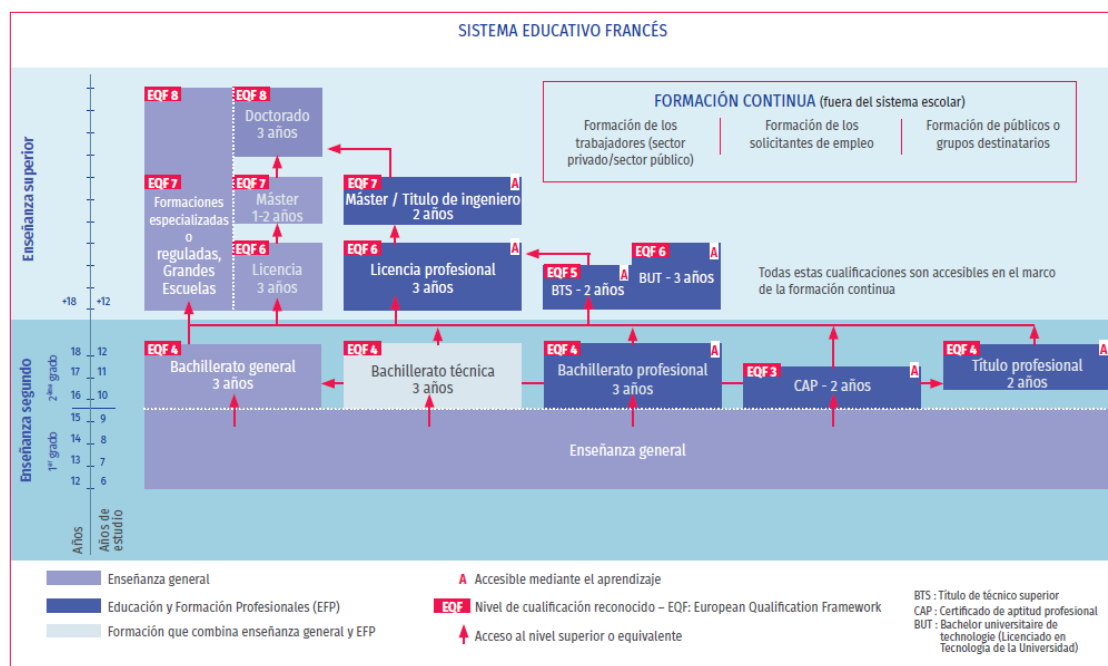


Image 1. French Education System (Centre Inffo, 2023).



Image 2. Spanish Education System (Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes, 2025).

COMPARISON IN ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Lifelong learning cannot be fully understood without a thorough analysis of public policies aimed at adult education (Fombona Cadavieco & Pascual Sevillano, 2019). This educational dimension, traditionally relegated behind compulsory and higher education levels, is essential for combating social exclusion, reducing structural unemployment, and promoting the continuous updating of skills in a context marked by technological, economic, and demographic changes (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Eurydice., 2015).

Within the common European framework, France and Spain have developed different models in terms of the organization, methodology and approach to adult education, and the differences between them offer important insights for improving our education systems (Ministerio de Educación, 2011).

France relies on a centralized regulatory framework that integrates continuing education as part of the national education system, under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale*) and in coordination with the Ministries of Labor and Economy. Since the well-known "Delors Law" of 1971, adult education has been recognized as both an individual and collective right. This approach has evolved in recent years through innovative instruments such as the Personal Training Account (*Compte Personnel de Formation*, CPF), which allows workers to accumulate training rights throughout their working life, thus promoting active co-responsibility in professional development.

In contrast, Spain regulates adult education through Organic Law 2/2006 of May 3 on Education (LOE) (Organic Law 2/2006, 2006; Organic Law 3/2020, 2020), complemented by sectoral and regional regulations. The right to lifelong education is legally recognized, but its management is decentralized, allowing greater territorial adaptation, although this carries the risk of generating inequalities in access and the quality of the training offered.

2.1 TRAINING NETWORK

As regards the types of institutions, there are no specific institutions for adults in France. Training is organized through the GRETAs, in the same facilities used by the other pupils attending secondary schools (college) and lycées. This concept reinforces the idea of a single system, with no watertight compartments between initial and continuing education.

In turn, the Educational Training Enterprises (in French *Entreprises d'Entraînement Pédagogiques*, EEP), structures that simulate the real functioning of a company allow students to acquire skills in a controlled environment that replicates actual workplace dynamics.

In Spain, by contrast, there is a specific network of Adult Education Centers (*Centros de Educación de Personas Adultas*, CEPA), designed exclusively for this group, with dedicated facilities and specialized teaching staff. This network is complemented by municipal schools, occupational centres, integrated vocational training centres, and programs promoted by local entities, NGOs, and community colleges.

The French system also has a regional network. The Regional Academic Delegation for Initial and Continuing Vocational Training (*Délégation Régionale Académique à la Formation Professionnelle Initiale et Continue*, DRAFPIC) plays a key role in defining and implementing vocational training policies. This entity advises the regional education rector and coordinates actions related to initial and continuing training, ensuring coherence across different training pathways and alignment with local economic needs (see Image 3).

At the operational level, the French continuing education system features a solid and decentralized institutional structure, with two key entities standing out: the Academic Centre for Continuing Education (*Centre Académique de Formation Continue*, CAFOC) (Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, 2025c) and the Public Interest Group, Continuing Education and Professional Integration (*Groupe d'Intérêt Public, Formation Continue et Insertion Professionnelle*, GIP-FCIP).

The CAFOC serves as a regional centre of expertise in pedagogy and innovation, responsible for designing and providing training for trainers, as well as developing methodologies adapted to the learning needs of adult learners.

Meanwhile, the GIP-FCIP is a public entity that coordinates continuing education and professional integration at the academic level, working closely with GRETA centres to implement training programs tailored to labor market demands and national education policies. Both institutions collaborate to ensure a high-quality training offer aligned with regional development strategies and the needs of citizens.

In addition, the Academic System for Validation of Acquired Competencies (*Dispositif Académique de Validation des Acquis*, DAVA) is responsible for validating skills acquired through experience, granting official certifications that recognize informal and non-formal learning (Urteaga, 2011).

The plurality of actors involved also presents important nuances. In France, the key stakeholders are the Ministry of Education, academic rectorates, the public employment service (Pôle Emploi), chambers of commerce, trade unions, and the so-called “sponsor companies,” which actively participate in the design and validation of training pathways. There is a deeply rooted culture of collaboration among the state, the business sector, and training centres.

In Spain, although there is growing inter-institutional cooperation, the involvement of economic and social actors is more heterogeneous. At the state and regional levels, educational and labour administrations (such as the State Public Employment Service, SEPE) participate, along with local entities, companies, trade unions, and third-sector associations.

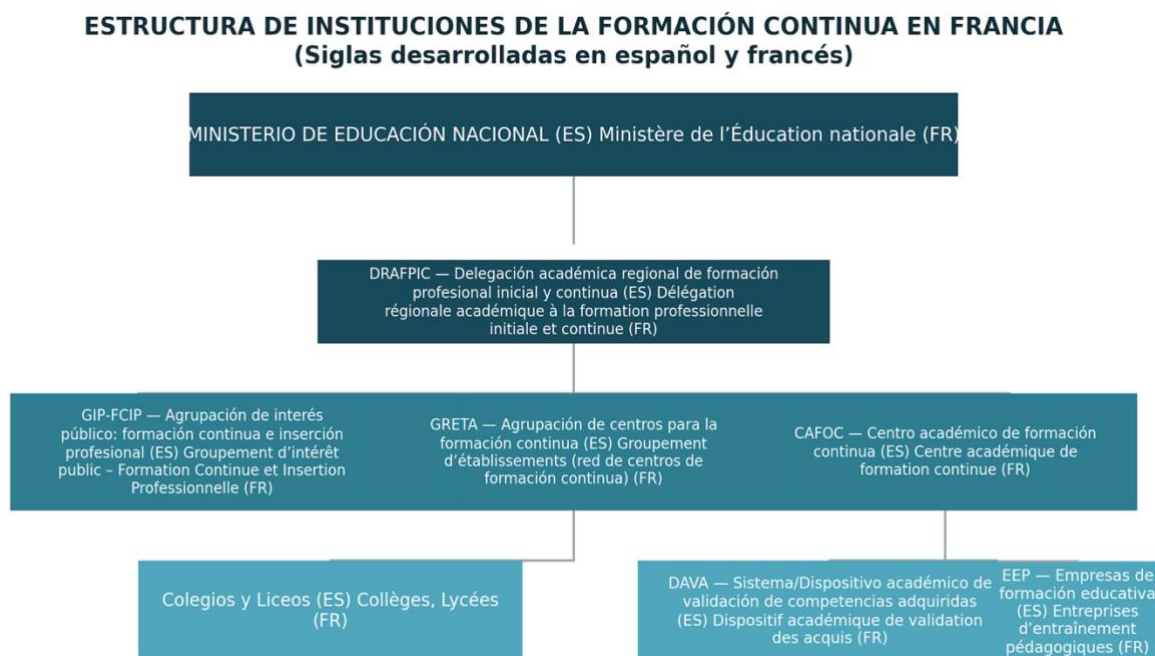


Figure 3. Structures of continuing training institutions in France.

2.2 ACCESS AND TRAINING OFFER

In both countries, the usual age for accessing adult education is 18, although entry is permitted from age 16 under specific circumstances such as employment, high-level sports, or legal emancipation. In both contexts, the student profile typically includes unemployed individuals, migrants, low-skilled workers, women re-entering the education system, and older adults undergoing professional retraining or skills updating.

The training offer also reflects structural differences between the two models. France provides a broad range of programs that combine formal education, leading to official qualifications such as the CAP, Bac Pro, or BTS, with non-formal

training focused on key skills, languages, or digital literacy. Particularly noteworthy is the system for Validation of Acquired Experience (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*, VAE), which, through the previously mentioned DAVA agency, allows professional experience to be formally recognized for the attainment of official qualifications.

In Spain, CEPA centres offer formal education (initial education, compulsory secondary education, and *Bachillerato*), alongside non-formal training in basic skills, citizenship programs, languages, digital literacy, and employability. Additionally, there are professionalization pathways offered through vocational training centres and employment services.

Although both countries have advanced toward mixed learning modalities, including face-to-face, blended, and distance learning, France has a more systematic and centralized implementation of digital environments. GRETA centres have common platforms promoted by the Ministry, whereas in Spain, despite initiatives such as Aula Mentor, the availability of technological resources and digital culture varies significantly across regions and centres.

Another noteworthy feature of the French model is the skills assessment system (*Bilan de Compétences*), a fundamental tool in the French continuing education system, designed to help individuals analyse their professional and personal skills, as well as their motivations and aspirations. This assessment allows for the definition of a coherent professional project and, if necessary, the identification of training needs. The tool is regulated by the Labor Code and can be financed through the CPF, as mentioned previously.

This resource is aimed at both workers and jobseekers and can be requested on a voluntary basis or in the framework of human resources policies. It is generally carried out in three phases: a preliminary phase to define objectives, a phase of research and analysis of competencies, and a concluding phase leading to a final report and an action plan. Its practical application is often carried out in collaboration with specialized centres and guidance professionals, and it is a key tool to promote career development and employability throughout life.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

From a methodological perspective, the French model is clearly oriented toward a competency-based approach, with content contextualized in personal and professional life situations. Learning is structured around concrete goals related to professional integration or career advancement, aligned with the needs of the productive sector. Spain has also incorporated a competency-based approach in its adult education programs, although its implementation shows a certain duality: more traditional and academic approaches coexist with innovative proposals based on active and inclusive methodologies. Notable initiatives include the CEPAlInnova, MapaTIC, and "Quijote" projects, which encourage active student participation. Although pedagogical simulation exists in both countries, France has developed a more extensive and structured network of Educational Training Enterprises (*Entreprises d'Entraînement Pédagogiques*, EEP), with differentiated roles within a simulated environment that faithfully replicates a real company.

Regarding the relationship with the productive sector, France has consolidated stable partnerships between training centres, companies, and chambers of commerce. "Sponsor companies" actively participate in defining training pathways, hosting internships, and evaluating learners, thereby promoting immediate employability. In Spain, collaboration with the business sector has been reinforced especially through Dual Vocational Training (*Formación Profesional Dual*) and employment training programs, though in a less structured manner and more dependent on the territorial context. Agreements between adult education centres and companies are being promoted, but their implementation remains partial.

France integrates work-based learning as a structural principle of the training model: adult learners combine attendance at the educational center with stays in companies, allowing them to apply acquired knowledge in practice. Additionally, professional certification is aligned with the National Directory of Professional Certifications (*Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles*, RNCP), ensuring coherence and national recognition. In Spain, work-based learning is mainly applied in formal vocational training, while in non-formal adult education, internships are not systematically implemented. However, pathways for accrediting skills acquired through work experience are being strengthened, in line with the European approach.

2.4 QUALITY SYSTEM AND EVALUATION

The system of evaluation and quality assurance also differs considerably. In France, quality certification is compulsory for all adult education institutions in order to receive public funding (Geoffray & Dupuy, 2023). From 2022, all must be

certified by the QUALIOPI system (Ministère du Travail, de la Santé, des Solidarités et des Familles, 2025), supplemented by international standards such as ISO 9001. This guarantees common standards throughout the territory.

In addition, a new quality review system, Eduform, has now been set up. (Ministère de L'Education National, de L'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche, 2025a), implemented by the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research. This system aims to guarantee the quality of continuing vocational training activities offered by educational institutions. It establishes a reference framework that allows training centers to evaluate and continuously improve their pedagogical, organizational and administrative practices. Through internal and external audits, it verifies compliance with specific criteria related to the planning, execution and monitoring of training actions, as well as the satisfaction of participants and the professional insertion of graduates. The implementation of this standard contributes to transparency and trust in the lifelong learning system, ensuring that training offers respond effectively to the needs of the labour market and the expectations of trainees.

There is no single quality system in Spain, although programs co-financed with European funds (such as Aula Mentor, Erasmus+, European Social Fund or Youth Guarantee) require monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Each autonomous community establishes its own monitoring and self-evaluation systems, which implies greater diversity in the measurement of results.

Regarding the assessment of learners, France applies homogeneous criteria focused on the certification of competences, with specific instruments adapted to each type of training. Both individual progress and the overall effectiveness of the

programs are assessed, considering factors such as job placement rates, continuity of training and participant satisfaction. In Spain, evaluation in formal education is similar to that of the ordinary system, while in non-formal or employment training, impact questionnaires, progress reports and, on occasions, direct observation are used. The degree of systematization depends on the type of program and the autonomous community responsible.

All in all, both models have strengths that can be a source of mutual inspiration. France stands out for its unified structure, integration with the working environment and culture of continuous evaluation. Spain, on the other hand, provides a model adapted to each regional context, with a specialized network of centers and a growing commitment to methodological innovation.

3. COMPARISON BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL INSPECTION IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

The monitoring and evaluation function of the education system is essential to guarantee the quality, equity and effectiveness of the teaching-learning processes. Both France and Spain have consolidated education inspection structures, although with significant differences in terms of their organization, functions and degree of centralization (Jardon, 2022, 2023). This section analyses the key elements of both models and their specific implication in the field of adult education.

3.1 ACCESS AND STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION INSPECTORATE

Inspection bodies in both countries are composed of highly qualified professionals with teaching experience.

In France, entry is through a national competitive examination with specific initial training and a hierarchical professional culture. Inspectors are required to demonstrate political-pedagogical analysis skills as well as institutional leadership capabilities.

In Spain, entry is also via a competitive examination and requires a higher education degree, pedagogical training, and teaching experience. After successfully completing the selection process, new inspectors receive specific training through inspection services or regional training centers. However, continuous and specialized training in adult education still requires further development.

France has a highly structured and centralized educational inspection system, directly dependent on the Ministry of National Education. There are two main inspectorates:

- General inspectors (in French *Les inspecteurs généraux de l'Éducation nationale*, IGEN): oversee education policy at national level, evaluate programmes and propose reforms.
- National education inspectors (in French *Les inspecteurs de l'Éducation nationale*, IEN): work at local or academic level, supervising curriculum implementation, evaluating teachers and advising schools.

In the field of adults, the IENs have specific competences in the coordination of GRETA and the quality of continuing training programs. Their role is based on external evaluation, pedagogical support and ensuring coherence with national policies.

Spain has a Corps of Education Inspectors, organized by Autonomous Communities and reporting to the Ministries of Education. Although their common framework is regulated by the LOE (Organic Law 2/2006, 2006), there is variability in functions and forms of action among territories. At the state level, the Ministry of Education coordinates inspection activities through the High Inspectorate, which, in the exercise of its powers, is responsible for verifying compliance with state regulations on educational matters, guaranteeing the coherence of the system, the validity of diplomas, equal rights and the proper management of scholarships and subsidies.

In short, both countries recognize the inspectorate as a key agent for the promotion of quality and educational innovation. However, the degree of autonomy and strategic involvement is greater in the French model, where general inspectors participate in the elaboration of national policies and structural reforms.

3.2 ADULT EDUCATION INSPECTION

Regarding the functions of educational inspection in France, the inspection approach combines control, support, and pedagogical improvement. Activities are based on annual strategic plans, school visits, interviews with teaching teams, and analysis of results. Common indicators and shared protocols are used, allowing for a homogeneous evaluation across the national territory.

In Spain, the inspection function is oriented toward continuous improvement, regulatory compliance, and support for innovation. In the field of adult education, inspections carry out advisory, supervisory, and evaluative roles both in CEPA centers and in programs associated with vocational training, employment, or

literacy. Their work adapts to the specific needs of adult learners and the flexibility of the programs. Visits to adult education centers include document reviews, classroom observation, and meetings with the management team and teaching staff. In many regions, inspectors also coordinate programs such as Aula Mentor, vocational training for employment, or Erasmus+ training activities.

Moreover, the inspection actively collaborates in the development of innovative programs, although sometimes with a more operational than strategic role. However, initiatives such as participation in Erasmus+ projects, advising on the digitalization of CEPA centers, or coordinating innovation networks indicate a path toward increasingly strategic involvement.

3.3 CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL INSPECTION

Both the French and Spanish inspection systems face common, complex, and dynamic challenges arising from current social, technological, and educational changes. Both models need to move toward more flexible, contextualized, and improvement-oriented supervision, capable of adapting to a diverse adult population with varied educational trajectories.

Among the shared challenges is the need to consolidate effective mechanisms for teacher professionalization in the field of adult education, which has historically received less attention in initial and continuing teacher training. Additionally, there is a pressing need to strengthen the link between basic education and employability, promoting integrated pathways that allow transitions between different levels and types of education, as well as the formal recognition of competencies acquired in non-formal or work-based contexts.

Ultimately, both countries face the shared challenge of reinforcing educational supervision as a tool not only for control, to ensure compliance with regulations, but also for support, innovation, and quality assurance. The role of inspectors must evolve toward more collaborative models, capable of integrating evaluation, advisory functions, and pedagogical leadership into continuous improvement processes, particularly in a sector as strategic as adult education.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The comparative analysis of continuing education systems in France and Spain reveals significant differences in their approaches and structures, reflecting the particularities of their respective socio-economic and educational contexts. The French system stands out primarily for its strong structuring, clear orientation toward labor market needs, and a methodology focused on practical experience. The close relationship with companies and the implementation of simulated professional practices are key elements that enable learners to acquire skills directly applicable in their work environment, thereby promoting high employability among graduates. However, this model may be perceived as more rigid, limiting flexibility for those seeking a more personalized or accessible educational development.

On the other hand, the Spanish system, characterized by its greater diversity and adaptation to territorial realities, presents a more inclusive approach focused on accessibility and educational equity. Despite progress in flexibilization and adaptation to different contexts, the Spanish system still faces significant challenges in terms of fragmentation and disconnection from labor market needs. Recent initiatives, such as Dual Vocational Training (*FP Dual*) and skills recognition,

demonstrate efforts to improve the connection between training and employment, contributing to a gradual integration of these two areas. However, challenges remain in achieving a more homogeneous and efficient implementation across the country.

Regarding educational inspection, both systems have mechanisms to ensure quality and regulatory compliance, although with notable differences. In France, educational inspection plays a key role in supervising continuing education institutions, ensuring that programs are aligned with labor market demands and national policies. The French system has a centralized structure that facilitates the uniform implementation of educational standards, but it has also been criticized for its lack of flexibility and limited capacity to quickly adapt to changes in the socio-economic reality.

In Spain, educational inspection is also a fundamental component for ensuring the quality of continuing education, though with a more decentralized approach due to the country's autonomous organization. Each autonomous community has a degree of autonomy in supervising educational offerings, resulting in diversity in how inspection and quality control are carried out. While this allows greater adaptation to local needs, it can also lead to inequalities in program supervision and evaluation. The introduction of Dual Vocational Training and other reforms presents an additional challenge for inspection, as a coordinated approach between the educational and business sectors is required to ensure that quality standards are maintained across all areas.

Both models, although with distinct characteristics, offer valuable lessons. France provides an example of how direct engagement with the business sector,

and the integration of work-based practices can enhance the quality and relevance of training. In contrast, Spain emphasizes accessibility, flexibility, and adaptation to local contexts, which is crucial for inclusive and equitable education. However, for both systems to continue improving, it is essential to strengthen inspection and evaluation mechanisms, ensuring that training programs not only respond to market demands but also adhere to principles of quality, equity, and inclusion.

The experiences of both countries underscore the importance of balancing theoretical and practical training, as well as the need to align educational policies with the changing demands of the labour market. In this regard, educational inspection plays a crucial role, as it not only guarantees compliance with quality standards but can also identify areas for improvement and promote adjustments that contribute to greater system efficiency and effectiveness.

In conclusion, the continuing education systems in France and Spain, despite their differences, make significant contributions to workforce development in their respective contexts. The lessons learned from each approach should be considered within a process of continuous improvement to ensure that training systems respond not only to students' needs but also to those of businesses and the challenges of the future labour market. Educational inspection must continue evolving to adapt to these changes and ensure training that is high-quality, equitable, and aligned with market demands.

6.

REFERENCES

- Académie de Paris. (2025). *Información, inscripción y escolarización de alumnos que han llegado recientemente a Francia*. <https://www.ac-paris.fr/informacion-inscripcion-y-escolarizacion-de-alumnos-que-han-llegado-recientemente-a-francia-122800>
- Académie de Versailles. (2025a). *Formation Continue et Insertion*. <https://www.ac-versailles.fr/formation-continue-et-insertion-122137>
- Académie de Versailles. (2025b). *Formation Tout au Long de la Vie*. <https://www.ac-versailles.fr/formation-tout-au-long-de-la-vie-122246>
- Académie de Versailles. (2025c). *Reseau GRETA Versailles*. <https://www.greta-versaillesformation.fr/>
- Centre Inffo. (2023). *La Formación Profesional en Francia. Una respuesta a sus preguntas*. Centre Inffo. <https://www.centre-inffo.fr/content/uploads/2023/03/fpc-en-france-2020-es-a4-mars-2023.pdf>
- Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Eurydice. (2015). *La educación y formación de adultos en Europa: Ampliar el acceso a las oportunidades de aprendizaje*. Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/824513>
- Embajada de Francia en España. (2020). *El sistema educativo en Francia y en España*. <https://es.ambafrance.org/El-sistema-educativo-en-Francia-y-en-Espana-4768>
- Etablissements Publics. (2025). *GRETA: Groupements d'établissements publics locaux d'enseignement*. <https://etablissements-publics.com/greta/>

- European Commission. (2024, noviembre 22). *Erasmus+ Guía del Programa*. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/es/erasmus-programme-guide>
- Fombona Cadavieco, J., & Pascual Sevillano, M. Á. (2019). Formación de personas adultas, aproximación a partir del análisis de buenas prácticas europeas. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 30(2), 647-665. <https://doi.org/10.5209/RCED.58882>
- FRANCE VAE. (2025). *Le Service Public de la VAE*. <https://vae.gouv.fr/>
- Galicia Mangas, F. J. (2019). La Inspección de Educación en la Unión Europea. *Aula*, 25(0), 129. <https://doi.org/10.14201/aula201925129146>
- Geoffray, G., & Dupuy, L. (2023). Evaluación de centros y planes de mejora en Francia a partir de 2019. *Avances en Supervisión Educativa*, 40. <https://doi.org/10.23824/ase.voi40.827>
- Jardon, E. (2022). LA INSPECCIÓN FRANCESA DEL TRABAJO INDIVIDUAL AL TRABAJO EN EQUIPO. *Supervision21*, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.52149/Sp21/64.6>
- Jardon, E. (2023). LA INSPECCIÓN FRANCESA DE LA CLASE AL SISTEMA EDUCATIVO. *Supervision21*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.52149/Sp21/70.6>
- Ley Orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo, Boletín Oficial del Estado, núm. 238, de 4 de octubre de 1990, páginas 28927 a 28942 (16 págs.) (1990). <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/1990/10/03/1>
- Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación, Boletín Oficial del Estado, 106, de 04 de mayo de 2006 (2006). <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2006-7899>

- Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, que modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación, Boletín Oficial del Estado, 340, de 30 de 12 de 2020 (2020). <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2020/12/29/3/con>
- Ley Orgánica 3/2022, de 31 de marzo, de ordenación e integración de la Formación Profesional, Boletín Oficial del Estado, 78, de 01/04/2022 (2022). <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2022/03/31/3/con>
- Ministère de L'Education National, de L'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche. (2025a). *EDUFORM : le label qualité de l'Éducation nationale pour la formation professionnelle*. <https://www.education.gouv.fr/eduform-le-label-qualite-de-l-education-nationale-pour-la-formation-professionnelle-41585>
- Ministère de L'Education National, de L'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche. (2025b). *La formation continue des adultes à l'Éducation nationale*. <https://www.education.gouv.fr/la-formation-continue-des-adultes-l-education-nationale-3035>
- Ministère de L'Education National, de L'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche. (2025c). *Une certification professionnelle en réponse à des besoins spécifiques d'un territoire ou d'une profession*. <https://vae.education.gouv.fr/2022/12/14/certification-professionnelle-cafoc/>
- Ministère du Travail, de la Santé, des Solidarités et des Familles. (2025). *Qualiopi | Marque de certification qualité des prestataires de formation*. <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/qualiopi-marque-de-certification-qualite-des-prestataires-de-formation>
- MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN. (2011). *La formación profesional en Francia y en España guía para la movilidad*. MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN DE ESPAÑA

SECRETARÍA DE ESTADO DE EDUCACIÓN Subdirección General de
Orientación y Formación Profesional.

https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/la-formacion-profesional-en-francia-y-en-espana-guia-para-la-movilidad-la-formation-professionnelle-en-espagne-et-en-france-guide-pour-la-mobilite_180204/

- Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes. (2021). *Marcos de evaluación para el Ciclo 2 del Programa para la Evaluación Internacional de Competencias de la Población Adulta (PIAAC)* (2021.^a ed.). Secretaría General Técnica. Subdirección General de Información y Publicaciones. https://www.libreria.educacion.gob.es/libro/marcos-de-evaluacion-para-el-ciclo-2-del-programa-para-la-evaluacion-internacional-de-competencias-de-la-poblacion-adulta-piaac_174863/
- Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes. (2024). *PIAAC 2023. Programa para la Evaluación Internacional de las Competencias de la Población Adulta. Informe Español*. Secretaría General Técnica. Subdirección General de Información y Publicaciones. <https://www.educacionfpydeportes.gob.es/inee/evaluaciones-internacionales/piaac/piaac-2-ciclo.html>
- Ministerio de Educación, Formación Profesional y Deportes. (2025). *Sistema Educativo Español*. <https://educagob.educacionfpydeportes.gob.es/enseanzas.html>
- OECD. (2019). *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en>
- OECD. (2022). *Education Policy Outlook 2022: Transforming Pathways for Lifelong Learners*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c77c7a97-en>

- OECD. (2024). *Do Adults Have the Skills They Need to Thrive in a Changing World?: Survey of Adult Skills 2023*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b263dc5d-en>
- Pérez Jiménez, J. María., & García Ballesteros, P. E. (2022). *La inspección de educación: Teoría crítica y práctica comprometida*. Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, Subdirección General de Atención al Ciudadano, Documentación y Publicaciones.
- UNESCO. (2016). *Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Reconocimiento, validación y creditación de la educación básica de jóvenes y adultos como fundamento del aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260065>
- Urteaga, E. (2011). La Formación Profesional en Francia. *Lan Harremanak - Revista De Relaciones Laborales*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.1387/lan-harremanak.1398>