

# 1 Introduction

The “Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learners” Project (GOAL) was a collaboration between six partner countries: Belgium (Flanders), the Czech Republic, Iceland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Slovenia<sup>1</sup>. Project GOAL sought to develop existing models of guidance and orientation for adults in the six countries in order that these services could reach **low-educated adults** and address their needs. GOAL was a three-year project, running from February 2015 to January 2018, and was coordinated by the Flemish Government’s Department of Education and Training. Project GOAL was evaluated by the UCL Institute of Education (IOE), London, in partnership with national evaluation teams in each of the GOAL countries.

This final report presents cross country findings from the GOAL evaluation. These findings cover the full evaluation period, which consisted of two waves. A Wave 1-only (i.e. interim) report is available on the GOAL project website: <http://www.projectgoal.eu/index.php/publications>. The evaluation draws on quantitative data on GOAL service users collected between the launch of the programme in February 2015 and April 2017; qualitative data collected from programme stakeholders and service users in Spring 2016 and 2017, and contextual data gathered during needs and strengths analyses undertaken in 2015 in all six countries.

## 1.1 The GOAL project

Funded under ERASMUS+, Project GOAL addressed the European Commission’s priority theme of reducing the number of low-educated adults through increasing participation rates in adult education. As well as contributing to the European Agenda for Lifelong Learning ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/adult-learning/adult\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/adult-learning/adult_en.htm)), GOAL contributed to three priority areas of the 2008 “Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies”, that is, to facilitate access by all citizens to guidance services, to develop the quality assurance or guidance processes, and to encourage coordination and cooperation among the various national, regional and local stakeholders.

Project GOAL was targeted at low-educated adults, that is, at adults without upper secondary education (ISCED level 3<sup>2</sup>). The context for GOAL is that adult education provision in the six countries is fragmented and there is a lack of coordination between the different providers and stakeholders that are involved with low-educated adults. Moreover, although the partner countries have some forms of guidance for adult learners, or have specific policy strategies that focus on educational guidance and orientation, the existing services, or the structures on which these services rely, do not reach the adults most in need of education as well as they could or in sufficient numbers.

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<sup>1</sup> Two members of the Turkish Directorate of Lifelong Learning participated in GOAL as observers, with the aim of learning from the project and identifying opportunities to promote its lessons in Turkish guidance policies.

<sup>2</sup> For more on UNESCO’s International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) see: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf>

The hypothesis underpinning GOAL was that an independent one-stop guidance service that puts the specific needs of low-educated adults at its centre could help to increase the participation of this target group in adult education. To this end, each of the six countries piloted new guidance models, in (at least) two locations within each country, to specific target groups within the low-educated adult population. **Five intervention strategies** were implemented by the GOAL partners, although not all strategies were implemented in all countries:

1. **Networks and partnerships** with relevant organisations were established or improved.
2. **Tools** were developed to facilitate the delivery of guidance specifically to low-educated adults.
3. The **competences** which counsellors require to enable them to address the specific needs of low-educated adults were defined.
4. **Outreach activities** designed to bring guidance services to specific target groups within the low-educated population were developed.
5. Each country sought to provide **high-quality guidance services** with the aim of optimising individuals' learning and/or employment outcomes.

The aims of the GOAL project were that, through developing, piloting and evaluating these interventions:

1. The **processes** to implement effective guidance services and supporting networks that improve service user outcomes would be mapped.
2. The **criteria, success factors and conditions** on implementation (processes) that contribute to outcomes of guidance users would be identified
3. Potential generalisable **case studies** would be made available to be analysed by policymakers to understand and analyse challenges and success factors in establishing “joined-up” programmes in complex policy fields.
4. The **policy processes** that play a role in influencing programmes success would be identified and described.

## 1.2 The GOAL evaluation

The GOAL **evaluation had three primary aims**. The first aim was **developmental**: to support programme development across the six countries by providing ongoing evidence of programme processes and outcomes. The second was **summative**: to assess, as rigorously as possible, the effects of GOAL on service users and other programme stakeholders. The third aim focused on **knowledge cumulation**: to provide evidence that will enrich and enhance the field of adult education guidance, and evaluation science in this field.

The evaluation focused on **processes and outcomes**, thereby enabling the identification of success factors across different programme contexts. This evidence can potentially be used to develop a structural support basis amongst decision makers and relevant stakeholders for scaling up the pilot learning guidance and orientation models in partner or other countries.

**Five research questions** underpinned the GOAL evaluation:

6. To what degree did programmes achieve their implementation aims across the five intervention strategies, and what factors at programme and policy level appeared to influence the achievement of implementation aims?
7. What service user outcomes were achieved, for what groups, and to what degree?
8. What programme-level factors were associated with the achievement of positive service user outcomes?
9. What policy-level factors were associated with the achievement of positive service user outcomes?
10. What was the Return on Expectations? That is, to what degree were programme expectations met?

The evaluation unfolded in a series of **stages**:

1. Pre-implementation stage (February 2015 – October 2015): activities centred on needs and strengths analyses in each of the six countries; on reporting the results of these analyses, and generating data collection tools.
2. Ongoing (cross-wave) data collection (November 2015 – April 2017)
  - a. Client satisfaction survey
  - b. Monitoring data
3. Wave 1 data collection (with national reporting completed in October 2016)
4. Wave 2 data collection (with national reporting completed in October 2017), including a longitudinal follow-up survey in each country
5. Data analysis and final reporting.

Chapter 3 of this report outlines the evaluation methodology in greater detail.

IOE carried out this evaluation with the assistance of local evaluators who gathered, analysed and reported on national-level data. GOAL's national programme coordinators were responsible for hiring these local evaluation teams and oversaw their day-to-day work. IOE was responsible for developing the evaluation methodology, the evaluation instruments, and the data and reporting templates, as well as all cross-country analysis and reporting.

### **1.3 Project GOAL in the six countries**

#### **Contexts**

The six GOAL programmes had a range of starting points. At one end of the scale, in the **Czech Republic** there was no career guidance for low-educated adults and the pilot projects there were, in effect, **starting from scratch**, by establishing two regional centres where the GOAL service could be offered. By contrast, in **the Netherlands**, although there is no existing guidance for adults with low basic skills, the GOAL pilots involved taking a **tried and tested basic skills screening tool** to new locations and target groups.

In **Flanders**, bespoke counselling services are available for unemployed young people and those in employment: these services focus on jobs and careers, and not explicitly on educational guidance. Previous initiatives have demonstrated that there was a need in Flanders for **a specialised service focusing on educational guidance** to direct adults towards an educational programme that fits their interests and needs. The GOAL project in Flanders built on the model developed by these earlier initiatives.

In **Iceland**, although educational and vocational guidance for adults is generally well-developed and professionally staffed, a lack of knowledge about low-educated adults means that current services are not adequately **meeting the needs of more vulnerable adults**, particularly with regard to addressing the barriers they face when engaging and participating in adult education. In **Lithuania**, **adult educational guidance services are fragmented**: services are not equally distributed throughout Lithuania; adults are not always aware of the availability of such services in their neighbourhood; services are not always targeted to low-educated adults, and guidance staff may lack knowledge of and tools for this group.

In **Slovenia**, adults can access counselling services either at one of 14 regional guidance centres, which provide services for adults enrolled in adult education, or at school centres, where counselling services are available to adults both before and during the learning course. The main weakness in the current system is that **counselling activities in the regional guidance centres and the school centres are not linked**.

The Wave 1 evaluation report from the Netherlands identified **three broad challenges** governments face in providing educational and/or career guidance services to adults with low levels of education. While the target groups differ across the six GOAL countries, these challenges are relevant to all:

1. **Increasing the number of people reached**; in particular, the challenge of helping this target group to recognise that guidance tailored to their situation can be beneficial to them. Given that the demand for guidance services from the target group is generally low, meeting this challenge may involve a shift from a demand-driven to a need-driven service.
2. **Increasing the number of organisations involved** in delivering guidance services.
3. Making guidance services for adults with low education or low skills **effective at each stage of the journey from advice to action to impact**.

### Needs and Strengths Analysis

In the project's pre-evaluation stage, a GOAL Needs Analysis Report (available at: <http://www.projectgoal.eu/index.php/publications>) was produced by the UCL Institute of Education (IOE). The aim of this Needs Analysis was to learn about the adult guidance background and current (2015) situation in each of the six countries. This knowledge was used in the evaluation to investigate how existing conditions/resources in the pre-programme environments influenced the relationships among programme operations and outcomes, and to study change and impact over the life of GOAL. From the six nations' perspectives, the Needs Analysis served as a starting point for programme development.

The Needs Analysis consisted of three components: first, IOE conducted an English-language **review of international literature** on the policy, practice and research contexts for GOAL, with emerging findings used to generate two templates for local evaluators working in each of the six partner countries; this literature is summarised in Chapter 2 of this cross-country report. Second, local evaluators populated one template with findings from **reviews of national-language evidence**; third, the second template was used by local evaluators to capture findings from **local SWOT analyses** of guidance and orientation provision for adult in the intervention locations.

This key purpose of the Needs Analysis Report was to serve as a reference document for the GOAL partners through which they could see the pre-intervention situation in the other countries and reflect on the situation in their own. Although each country used the same broad intervention strategies with the same broad target group (low-educated adults), the specific target groups varied, each intervention was unique, and each country had a different starting point. The Needs Analysis Report provided partners with the opportunity to view these complexities through the lens of common themes.

Work on the international and national literature reviews and the SWOT analyses took place between March and September 2015. All findings were synthesised by IOE prior to the rollout of the pilot experimentations in October 2015.

### GOAL programme

The six GOAL programmes had a common aim: to increase the participation of low-educated adults in education and training, by offering educational and/or vocational guidance to this target group. It is hoped that lessons learned from the design, set-up and implementation of the GOAL projects will inform, at both the programme and policy levels, a wider roll-out of similar initiatives.

Within this broad aim, each country had its own specific objectives, summarised in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1.** GOAL *Intervention objectives by country*

<b>Czech Republic</b>	To promote the <b>availability</b> of and increase the <b>demand</b> for further education and to develop schools as centres of lifelong learning.
<b>Flanders</b>	To provide policymakers with <b>evidence of the potential value</b> of educational guidance and its complementarity with more established services. The GOAL project in Flanders implemented different aspects of educational guidance services in different contexts (urban and rural), with different types of target groups and within different collaboration structures.
<b>Iceland</b>	To bring together organisations that are involved with the target group, and through improved cooperation and information-sharing, <b>increase knowledge of low-educated adults</b> and how their situation can be addressed through guidance.
<b>Lithuania</b>	To improve the <b>participation rates</b> of low-qualified people in adult education; to identify ways of <b>reaching</b> low-qualified or low-educated people and <b>motivate</b> them to get involved in the guidance process; to find the most suitable ways and tools to provide counselling to this group; and to establish and/or strengthen the partnerships between the different stakeholders and service providers in this area.
<b>Netherlands</b>	The project aims stemmed from the belief that more people with low literacy could be reached and consequently engage in adult learning when there is more attention given to identifying low literacy in organisations whose primary objective is non-literacy related. GOAL in the Netherlands therefore aimed to <b>get more organisations trained at and successfully using a Literacy Screener tool</b> , and to develop a regional road map directing adults with low basic skills to education and career-service providers.
<b>Slovenia</b>	The programme teams worked in two local environments, in the hope that by studying the outreach activity of adult guidance centres they could test which <b>approach was suitable for schools</b> . Establishing new regional cooperation and networks was another key objective of the Slovenian workplan.

### *Activities*

Activities in the GOAL project addressed five major themes – these are the five intervention strategies outlined in Section 1.1 above. Not all countries carried out activities for each of the five intervention strategies. Table 1.2. below shows which countries focused on which intervention strategies.

**Table 1.2.** *Intervention Strategy, by country*

<b>Intervention strategy</b>	<b>CZ</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>IS</b>	<b>LT</b>	<b>NL</b>	<b>SI</b>
<b>1 Partnerships</b>	x	√	√	√	√	√
<b>2 Tools</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√
<b>3 Competences</b>	√	√	√	x	x	√
<b>4 Outreach</b>	√	√	√	x	√	√
<b>5 Quality</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√

In the **Czech Republic**, GOAL activities centred on establishing careers guidance centres. In **Flanders**, activities related to all five interventions strategies were built into two established educational guidance projects. In **Iceland**, activities on the five intervention strategies focused on what could be learned and achieved through partnership and cooperation with other interested organisations. The focus in **Lithuania** was on adding GOAL services to those offered by existing centres of adult education and VET institutions. Activities in **Slovenia** were also focused on existing educational institutions (both adult and school) and on strengthening cooperation between the two.

The pilot in the Netherlands can be characterised as the implementation of a quick screening tool (known as the Taalmeter or “Literacy Screener”) aimed at assessing the client’s literacy skills, followed (in cases where the screening tool indicates that the client may have low literacy) by referral to an appropriate adult literacy course. **GOAL in the Netherlands was thus markedly different from the other five countries.** In the Netherlands, the programme focused not on holistic educational guidance provided by experienced counsellors but on the deployment of a single tool (the **Literacy Screener**) across a range of partner organisations, so that those organisations could identify, from amongst their their own clients, individuals who may have literacy difficulties. These organisations would then provide counselling focused on the client’s potential literacy needs. GOAL in the Netherlands was thus focused on a particular issue and a particular set of objectives – identification of poor literacy and enrolment in a literacy course. GOAL in the Netherlands was also more “light touch”: instead of emphasising in-depth counselling that focused on the “whole client”, the focus was on quickly but sensitively identifying literacy problems, so that these problems could then be addressed. And rather than have clients come into a dedicated counselling service, GOAL in the Netherlands involved getting the Literacy Screener out into the field, i.e. into (and used by) partner organisations serving potentially disadvantaged adults. A key principle underpinning the Netherlands approach is that literacy difficulties can have negative impacts on other aspects of life (e.g. employability) and thus hamper the success of a broad range of interventions. If other service organisations can identify their clients’ literacy problems, they can help those clients find courses to address those problems. This in turn improves the potential impacts of other services the client receives. (For more details on the Literacy Screener, see Section 9.3 of this report and/or the Netherlands’ national report.)

### Sites

In the majority of the six GOAL countries, programmes were implemented in **two geographic locations**: this was the case in the Czech Republic, Flanders, Iceland and Slovenia (see Table 1.3.). In Lithuania, there were two intervention sites, but both were located in the capital, Vilnius. In the Netherlands, the original proposal was to work with eight different organisations clustered in two regional locations, Drenthe and Twente. To offset recruitment problems encountered in the project set-up stage, this reach was widened to include three additional regions, Friesland, Flevoland and Gelderland: in the end, the Dutch team worked with four intervention sites.

**Table 1.3.** GOAL *Intervention Sites, Wave 1*

Country	Sites	
<b>Czech Republic</b>	Center for Lifelong Learning and Recognition, Olomouc	Higher College of Business Studies, Social Work and Healthcare, Business Academy, Secondary Pedagogical School and Secondary Healthcare School, Most
<b>Flanders</b>	De Stap, Word Wijs!, City of Ghent	De Leerwinkel, West-Flanders
<b>Iceland</b>	Mímir Lifelong Learning Centre	MSS Lifelong Learning Centre
<b>Lithuania</b>	Vilnius Adult Education Centre (VAEC)	Public Institution Vilnius Jeruzalem Labour Market Training Centre (VJLMTC)
<b>Netherlands</b>	Penitentiary Institution (PI) Lelystad (Flevoland)	Municipality of Emmen (Drenthe)
	Penitentiary Institution (PI) Achterhoek (Gelderland)	Aksept, an organisation specialising in services relating to labour market participation and health care (Twente)
<b>Slovenia</b>	ISIO Guidance Centre and Biotechnical School Centre, Ljubljana	ISIO Guidance Centre and School Centre, Velenje

The two **Flemish** sites were chosen for the contrasts they offer between urban (Ghent) and rural (West Flanders) services. In **Iceland**, Mímir and MSS are similar lifelong guidance centres in the network of the Education and Training Services Centre; Mímir is located in Reykjavik, MSS in a more rural area in the Southern peninsula where the challenges in relation to unemployment and social welfare are greater. The two sites in Vilnius, **Lithuania** are both adult educational institutions, but differ in the learners they attract: there is some overlap, but broadly speaking, VAEC focuses on second chance education and VJLMTC on vocational training. The four organisations in the **Netherlands'** sample included two prisons, a private company and a municipal authority. In the **Czech Republic**, there were contrasts in the economic and social profiles of the two sites. In **Slovenia**, one site was located in the capital city, Ljubljana, the other in the east of the country, in the town of Velenje.

## *Target groups*

The six national GOAL programmes had a common target group: low-educated adults, that is, adults without upper secondary education. Within this broad target group, some countries focused on specific sub-groups, which were identified as particularly in need of guidance in their respective countries.

In **Lithuania** there was a different focus in each of the two sites because of the different client groups each site serves: early school leavers and low skilled/qualified adults. This was also the case in **Slovenia**, where the sites in one location worked with low-educated adults whereas the other location sought to recruit migrants and people aged over 50. In **Flanders**, services in the City of Ghent are specifically targeted at unqualified school leavers between 18 and 25 years old, and the second site has a far broader intake of clients, although in practice the latter site has attracted mainly migrants and unemployed job seekers. A specific goal of the Flemish project was to map how the approaches for the target group of 18-25-year-old guidance seekers did or did not differ from approaches aimed a broad target group of adults of all ages. GOAL in the **Netherlands** focused explicitly on adults with low basic skills. In the **Czech Republic** the emphasis was on adults with labour market problems. In **Iceland** the focus was on particularly vulnerable adults, who tend to face multiple barriers to progress in education and employment.

## **1.4 About this report**

This is the final cross-country evaluation report for the GOAL project. **This is the full report; a summary report can be found on the GOAL project website: <http://www.projectgoal.eu/>.** That website contains a range of evaluation reports, including an interim cross-country report, published in 2016, and national evaluation reports.

The current report is comprised of 12 chapters including this Introduction. This report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of research and policy literature covering key concepts in the field of adult education and guidance.
- Chapter 3 describes the methodological design of this evaluation.

Chapters 4-5 provide an overview of the GOAL programme:

- Chapter 4 provides an overview of the GOAL programme participants and stakeholders.
- Chapter 5 describes the GOAL services in the six partner countries.

Chapters 6-10 focus on the implementation, development and improvement of programme processes, covering the programme intervention strategies:

- Chapter 6 discusses GOAL partnerships and networks.
- Chapter 7 looks at outreach strategies.

- Chapter 8 discusses counsellor competences.
- Chapter 9 focuses on guidance tools used in the provision of GOAL services.
- Chapter 10 discusses the quality of the GOAL service.

Chapter 11 then provides an overview of programme outcomes. Chapter 12 concludes this report. This chapter answers the five overarching evaluation questions, and addresses the potential implications of this project for future programmes and policy development.

As noted above, each participating GOAL country produced a stand-alone national evaluation report; these are available on the GOAL website. In this cross-country evaluation report, we focus primarily on key cross-country findings and messages. However, as national contexts, resources, target groups and approaches differed within the GOAL pilot, we also highlight a number of country-specific findings and messages, in the hope that these will be useful for future policy and programme developers. For more national-level detail, however, please see the national reports.

It should be noted that the unique nature of the GOAL intervention in the Netherlands presented challenges for the cross-country evaluation, and for the reporting of this evaluation. In five of the six countries the GOAL programme model followed the same general template: context-and client-centred guidance was provided to clients by professional counsellors. In the Netherlands, the programme model was markedly different, as will be discussed in the following chapters. In the current report, there are a number of instances in which messages from or about the other five countries are not relevant to the Netherlands, and vice versa. As much as possible, this is made clear in our reporting.