

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) awarded 2025 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for eLearning programme on International Literacy Day

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 IRELAND

Timeline

2025 **Completed**

ID number 50974

Background

On International Literacy Day, National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) was awarded 2025 UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy for eLearning programme 'Learn with NALA'

In Ireland, innovation and development in the delivery of distance and online learning opportunities has always been an important priority for all stakeholders in the Further Education and Training (FET) offering for learners who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy and digital skills.

From 2008-2019 the NALA website, 'Write On' delivered the first suite of distance and online literacy and numeracy options to learners with unmet needs. NALA's own research identified that the 'Write On' programme also was Ireland's first continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET) programme to offer Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

The learning platform was updated in 2020 with a new offering 'Learn with NALA' (LWN), which built on the original 'Write On' programme with a wide range of learning and certification options and uplift to the digital platform infrastructure with universal design and accessibility principles.

The LWN programme anticipated and delivers to the EU priorities, specifically digitisation of the VET offering and improving VET digital infrastructure, diversifying provision. It also delivers on national priorities, such as the Adult Literacy for Life Strategy.

The awarding of the 2025 UNESCO prize for literacy gives recognition to the ongoing best practice, innovation and agility of this provision to meet the needs of learners for literacy, numeracy, digital and transversal skills under a wider inclusion and skills agenda and provides an interesting case study for ReferNet partners.

Objectives

Learn with NALA (LWN)

The LWN programme's objectives are to provide a digital e-learning platform, designed in accordance with current best practice and accessibility principles and technologies to

enhance learner engagement and use, and deliver a range of certified micro credentials and uncertified digital learning opportunities to learners with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital skills needs.

Another objective of the programme is to address barriers to learning that can impact on a learner's ability to access face-to-face VET/IVET/CVET provision, such as lack of time, transport or childcare. A digital learning platform aims to provide a flexible and valid offering to suit the particular needs and preferences of individual learners.

In addition to direct delivery to individual learners, the LWN programme is also designed to complement face to face teaching and learning with registered VET centres to enhance the digital offering and to support face to face learning with additional digital resources.

UNESCO International Literacy Confucius Prize 2025

The theme for the 2025 UNESCO international literacy prize was promoting literacy in the digital era. The Confucius prize gives special consideration to functional literacy and leveraging technological environment in support of adults in rural areas and out-of-school youth.

UNESCO International Literacy Prizes are designed to reward excellence and innovation in the field of literacy. UNESCO seeks to support effective literacy practices and encourages the promotion of dynamic literate societies.

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialised agency for education, leads and coordinates the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to '*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*'.

Description

Learn with NALA (LWN)

The LWN programme is offered on a national scale and is free to learners. It offers learners the chance to learn at their own pace, with additional supports such as telephone learning with an individual tutor.

In addition to direct delivery to individual learners, the LWN programme is also designed to complement face to face teaching and learning with registered VET centres to enhance the digital offering and to support face to face learning with additional digital resources. There are currently 250 such registered centres across the country.

The programmes offers over 50 different courses, with options for certification, including micro qualifications at NQF Levels 1-3 (EQF Levels 1-2).

To date, 12 000 learner beneficiaries have achieved 42 000 micro-credentials. Nearly 40% of registered learners are employed and use the programme to improve workplace skills. There is an equal number of male and female learners.

UNESCO International Literacy Confucius Prize

An international jury, appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO meets annually to recommend potential prize-winning programmes for the Director-General's decision. The jury comprises prominent experts from all regions of the world. Candidatures for the prizes are submitted by Member States or by international non-governmental organisations in official partnership with UNESCO. From 1967 to date, 526 prizes have been awarded to governments, non-governmental organisations and individuals around the world.

2025 Completed

The awarding of the Confucius Prize was announced in 2025.

Bodies responsible

- National Adult Literacy Agency
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)
- Further Education and Training Authority (SOLAS)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation - UNESCO

Target group

Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Learners with migrant background, including refugees

Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Learners with disabilities

Adult learners

Older workers and employees (55 - 64 years old)

Unemployed and jobseekers

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers

Trainers

Adult educators

Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses

Using learning-outcome-based approaches and modularisation

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Developing and updating learning resources and materials

Acquiring key competences

Integrating digital skills and competences in VET curricula and programmes

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Supporting teachers and trainers for and through digital

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[NALA wins UNESCO International Literacy Prize for Learn with NALA](#)

[Learn with NALA; Learn for free -reading, writing, maths, computers and more](#)

[Leading the way in online learning. The story of NALA's eLearning website from 2008 to 2019](#)

[Ireland's Adult Literacy for Life Ten Year Strategy](#)

[Adult Literacy for Life webpage - news and resources](#)

[International Literacy Day](#)

[UNESCO International Literacy Prizes 2025: promoting literacy in the digital era](#)

[UNESCO Global celebration of International Literacy Day 2025 Promoting literacy in the digital era - panel discussion Enhancing lifelong learning ecosystems](#)

[Statutes of the UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy](#)

[International Confucius Culture Festival in Qufu, China on 27-28 September 2025](#)

[Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies \(PIAAC\) 2023 Irish adults remain at the OECD average for literacy and numeracy skills in 2023](#)

Related policy developments

2025 Implementation

Learner Support Framework in Further Education And Training (FET) and National Charter for Universal Design

The position paper of this policy is underpinned by a Universal Design (UD) approach and aligns with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

The Framework to implement the policy outlines the enhancement of the overall learner experience within FET by:

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Completed

Adult Literacy for Life (ALL): Innovation and Collaboration Fund

The 2023 Innovation and Collaboration Fund was EUR 1 million, with the maximum grant of EUR 50 000.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2021 Approved/Agreed

Transforming Learning 2020-24: Ireland's National Further Education and Training Strategy

The FET strategy 2020–24 was developed in consultation with the FET sector and other key stakeholders. Consultation was wide-ranging and included bilateral meetings, regional workshops and a public call for submissions.

 IRELAND

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/50974>

