



# Improving the quality of the AL sector

**Experiences from several European wide  
studies**

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# First “quality” as complex and multi-facet concept

- Dates back to philosophical concept of ‘qualia’ -> accident or attribute. Opposed to ‘essentia’
- Quality is not essential to a thing, but is attributed to a thing and is related to perception and judgement
- Now: ‘fit for purpose’ (e.g. ISO).
- Hence, quality is the appropriateness of an ability (e.g. of a system, organisation, person, situation etc.), to a given context, to conduct a specific task/or to contribute to a specific aim.
- Quality assurance and quality development



# The Commission study on quality in AL

## Specific aim:

- to map and to analyse the scope, content and implementation of quality approaches, standards and other relevant recent developments in the adult learning sector.

## The study should lead towards:

- A set of conclusions and recommendations based on the methodological best practice identified;
- Building blocks for a quality reference framework for formal and non-formal adult learning and recommendations on how to develop/implement such a framework



# Standing on shoulders of studies

- The study on **Local Learning Centers and Learning Partnerships**
- **ALPINE-study** (Adult Learning Professions in Europe)
- The study **Key competences for adult learning professionals**
- The study on **enabling low skilled to take their qualifications "one step up"**
- The study **Assessment of the impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on adult learning**, laid down methods to measure the impact of reforms.
- The follow up study **Ongoing Reforms II**, subsequently reviewed reforms from the perspective of what are effective ways to mobilise adults to participate in learning.
- The **Study on European Terminology in Adult Learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector**
- Studies on **quality, financing, and HE and AL** (LOT 1,2,3)



# Standing on the shoulders of meetings and the LLP

- The four **regional meetings** organised by the Commission in October-November 2009.
- The **Peer Learning Activities (PLA)** organised across Europe (e.g. monitoring the sector, basic skills and 'one step up')
- In 2010 a **workshop on improving the quality on adult learning** was organised by the European Commission.
- **The final conference on the Adult Learning Action Plan** (7-9 March 2011)
- the **CONFINTEA VI regional report** and the *Belém Framework for Action*, the final document of the **international conference of CONFINTEA VI**
- **European Social Funds (ESF) and the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)**, as presented in the **QALL project**
- **European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN)**

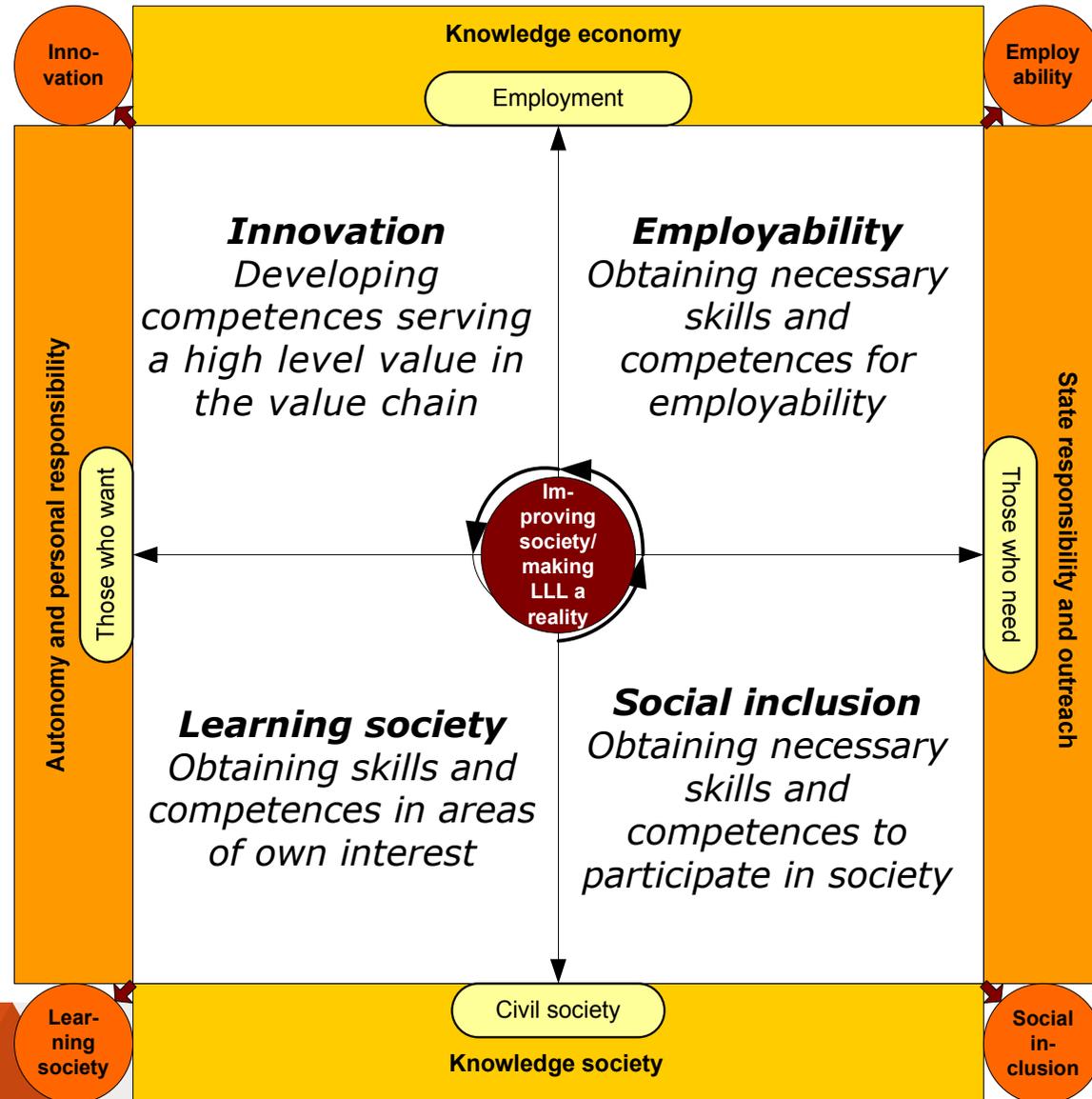


# Standing on the shoulders of other educational sectors

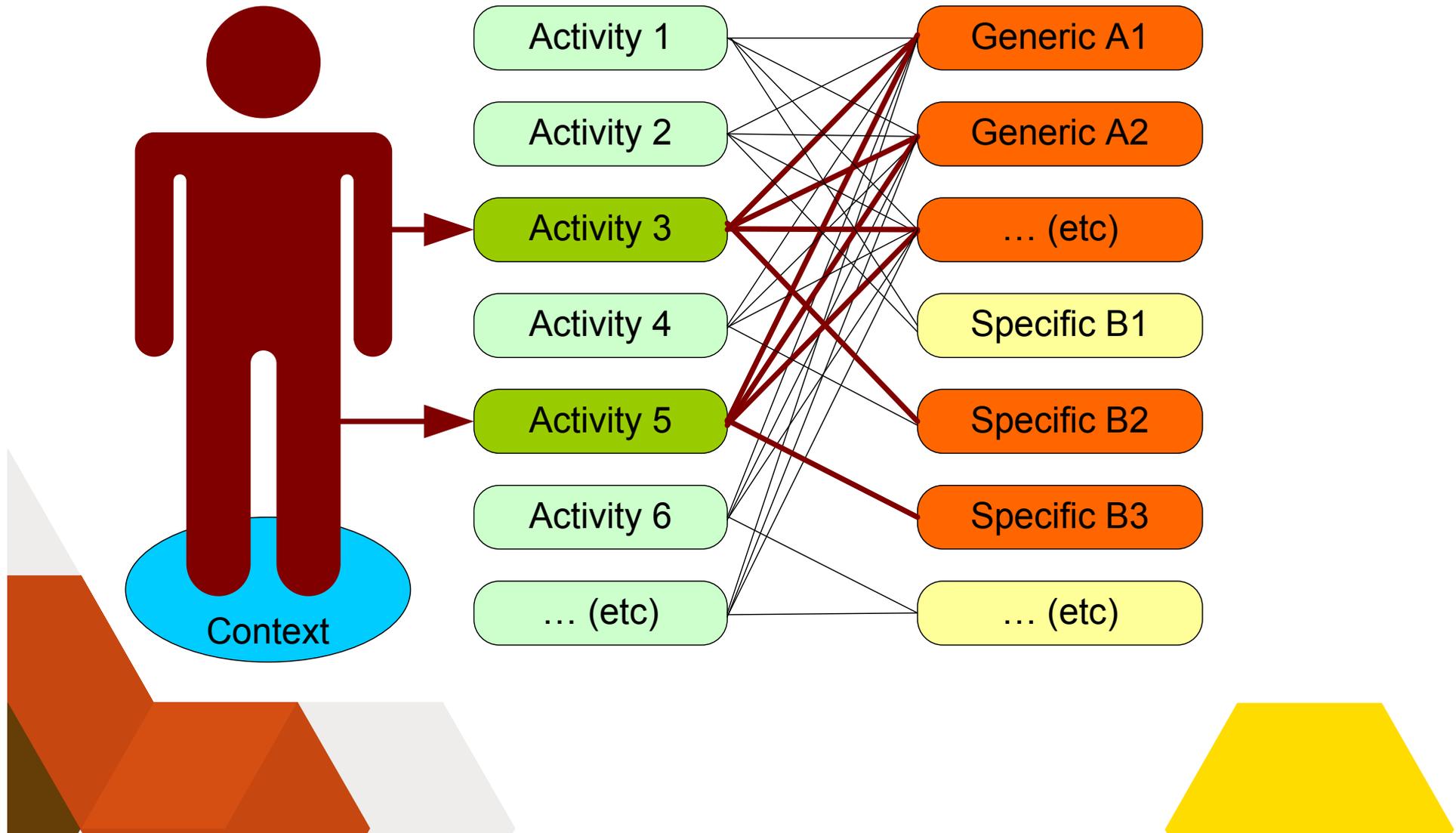
- European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
- Indicators for measuring quality of school education
- the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and subsequent National Qualifications Framework in the Member States



# A plea for an overarching framework for LLL?



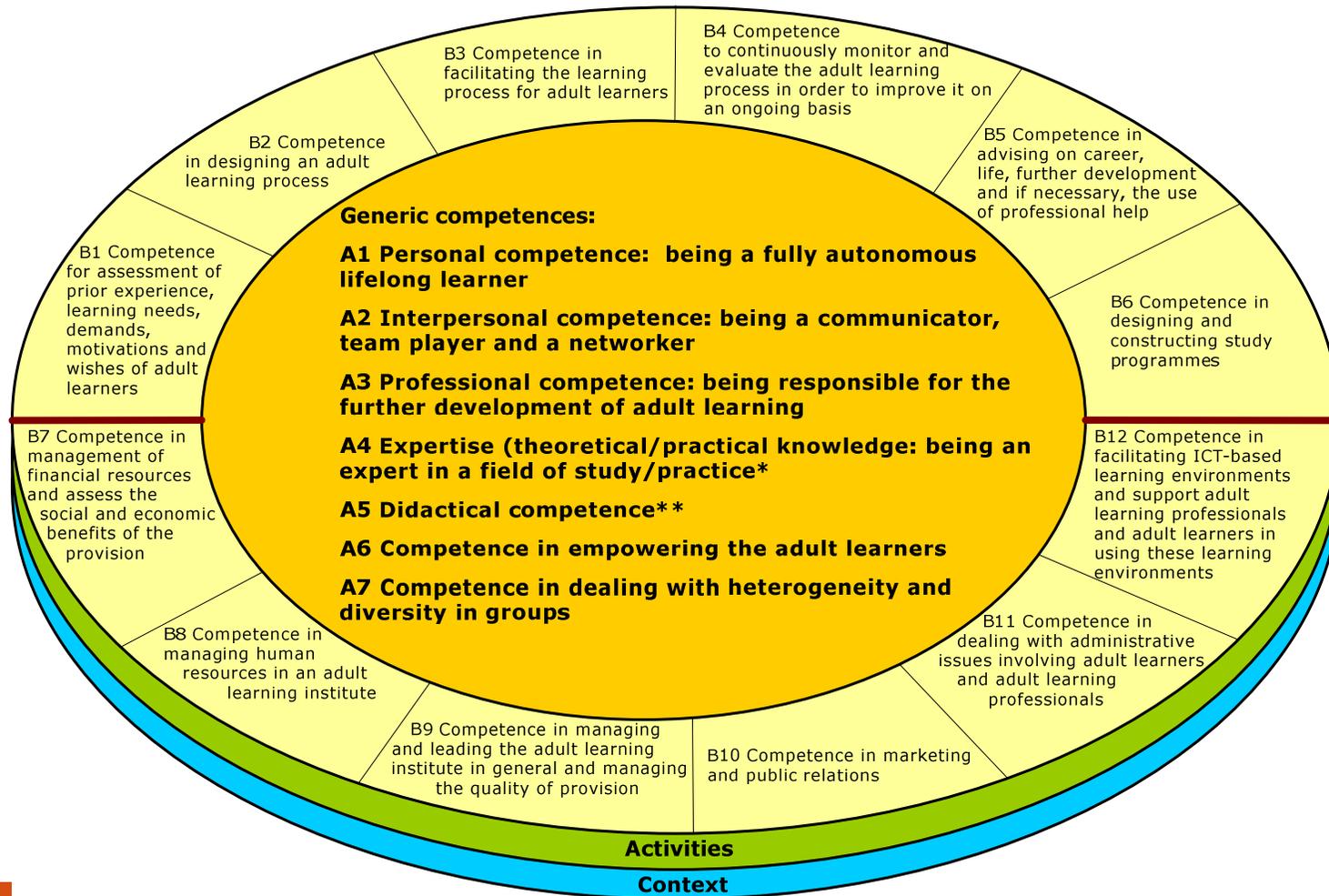
# There is no one type of AL professional



# A dynamic working field

- the **target groups are changing** through **demographic development**
- the **contents and topics have changed** as well
- **teaching methods are also changing considerably**
- Educators **create learning situations** which fit in with learners who are **very heterogeneous and self-directed**.
- More **learner-oriented methods, new forms of methodological change**, and the **combination of different learning locations and learning methods**
- Moreover, **e-learning**, is coming to play a significant role
- **Management** staff have to be aware of the great variety of organisational forms and of the different approaches that can be applied.
- They have to deal with **changing contexts**, like the **decline in government spending**

# Requires a wide range of competences



# Some challenges working on quality in the AL sector

- **huge diversity** in settings in which adult learning is provided
- **fragmentation of quality approaches**
- **Lack of comprehensive quality assurance system**
- Quality assurance is **regulated** when public money is involved and when the learning results in a formal qualification
- In a number of countries there is **specific legislation** on quality of adult learning
- balance **between imposed regulation and the degree of freedom**
- Shift to more steering on the realisation of **objectives**.
- **Opinion of users** (learners as well as societal organisations) becomes more important assessing the learning outcomes and making provision more transparent to the learner.



# Some challenges working on quality in the AL sector

- **quality of staff** is a key issue
- greater focus on the **accountability of providers** and the **returns on public investment**
- quality procedures in place in HE and VET are not specifically taking into account **AL specific elements**
- **Stakeholders role differ per country**, goals and types of learning and whether it is in the public or private interest
- **importance of validating prior learning**
- the **needs of an individual learner** should be the leading quality criterion
- AL provision should constantly adopt **changing (international) environment**



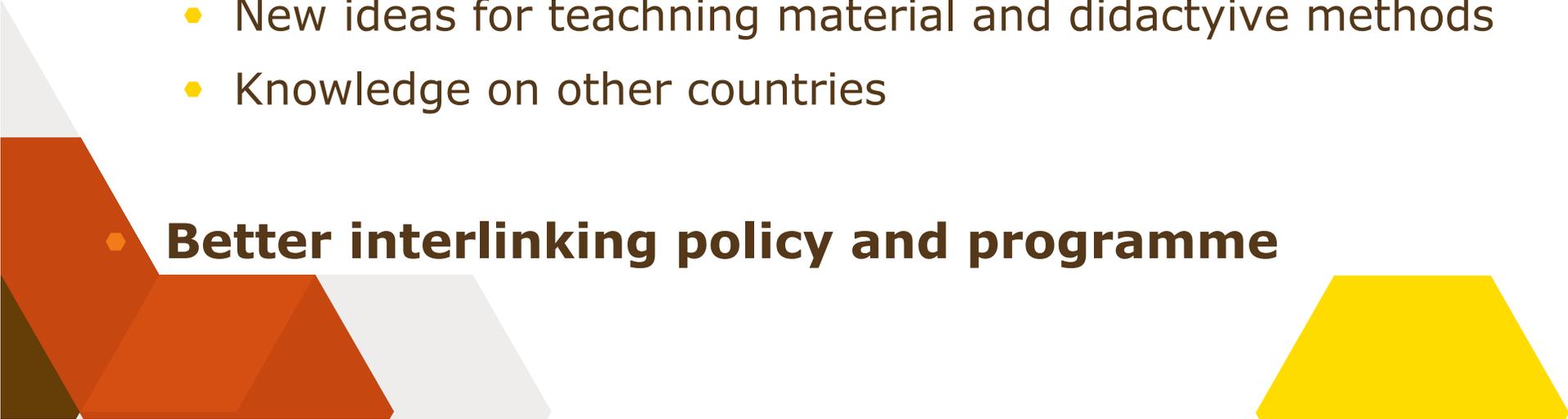
# Some challenges working on quality in the AL sector

- increasing **autonomy of providers**
- debated whether the QA procedures has an **effects on training providers and staff**
- QA procedures could lead to high level of **bureaucracy and administrative costs**
- QA as a **marketing instrument** without true quality awareness (“depedagogisation” of AL)
- important support to work on the issue of quality came in the last decade from **European policies and programs**. The main challenge now is to translate the outcome of projects (project development) into a regular culture of quality in the field of AL.



# Role of Grundtvig/LLP

- **Clear European Added value**
- **Clear benefits, mainly on individual level**
  - Overall in different studies positive self reporting
  - Increased interest in own teaching subjects
  - Improved language skills
  - Awareness and reflection on own teaching practice
  - Improved professionalism
  - New ideas for teaching material and didactic methods
  - Knowledge on other countries



• **Better interlinking policy and programme**