The concept of lifelong learning has evolved in Spain:

- in the 70s it focused on offering training alternatives to the adult population
- in the 90s, the concept of lifelong learning started to have an approach that went beyond adult education:
  - it strengthened the importance of preparing students to learn by themselves and adapt to the changing demands of the knowledge society
  - it promoted distance education through the establishment, in 1992, of the Centre for the Innovation and Development of Distance Education (CIDEAD), in order to facilitate access to education for adults and school aged students who, due to personal, social, geographical or other circumstances cannot study mainstream education requiring attendance.
- the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications is established in 2002, with all the vocational qualifications acquired both through training processes -formal and non-formal- and work experience. For more information, see Validation of non-formal and informal learning
- in 2007, the sub-system of vocational training for employment is created. It comprises different initiatives for the training of the working population, both employed and unemployed people, with the aim of promoting training that responds to the needs of a knowledge-based economy. For more information, see Provision targeting the transition to the labour market and Other types of publicly funded subsidised provision for adult learners.

Strategic and training actions of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

In accordance with the European guidelines set by the Lisbon Strategy (2000), with the 2006 Education Act, the concept of lifelong learning takes a more global and comprehensive approach, which is continued in the 2013 Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education:

*Everyone must have the right to lifelong learning, within and outside the education system, in order to acquire, update, complete or expand their abilities, knowledge, skills and competences for their personal and professional development.* That is why the basic principle of the education system is to promote lifelong learning.

With the aim of promoting lifelong learning, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training offers different types of educational provision and training to improve the training of the Spanish society:

1. non-university education:
   - classroom-based initial education
   - secondary education for adults (classroom-based)
   - secondary education for adults (distance)
- examinations to directly obtain the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate
- classroom-based Bachillerato
- distance Bachillerato
- examination to obtain the Bachillerato certificate
- access to Bachelor's programmes
- university entrance examinations for people aged over 25
- university entrance examinations for people aged over 40
- university entrance examinations for people aged over 45.

2. vocational training:
   - basic vocational training (classroom-based)
   - Entrance examination to Intermediate training cycle \[5\]
   - intermediate vocational training (classroom-based)
   - intermediate vocational training (distance)
   - Examination to obtain the Technician \[6\] certificate
   - advanced vocational training entrance examination
   - advanced vocational training (classroom-based)
   - advanced vocational training (distance)
   - Examination to obtain the Advanced Technician \[6\] certificate
   - certificate of professional experience \[7\].

3. university education:
   - official Bachelor’s programmes (classroom-based)
   - official Bachelor’s programmes (distance)
   - official Master’s programmes (classroom-based)
   - official Master’s programmes (distance)
   - PhD
   - postgraduate studies and degrees offered by universities
   - distance postgraduate studies
   - university programmes for the elderly.

4. specialised education: \[8\]
   - plastic arts and design professional studies (intermediate vocational training)
   - plastic arts and design professional studies (advanced vocational training)
   - intermediate sports education
   - advanced sports education
   - music and dance professional studies
   - Advanced Artistic Education: music, dance, dramatic arts, preservation and restoration of cultural property, plastic arts and design
   - language education.

5. open education:
   - Aula Mentor
   - open learning programmes in adult education institutions (classroom-based)
   - open learning programmes in adult education institutions (distance)
   - popular universities
   - massive open online courses.

6. military education:
   - military education for the army and the navy
   - military education for non-commissioned officers
   - military education for officers.

In order to develop lifelong learning policies, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training boosted in 2014 the Strategic Lifelong Learning Plan. \[9\] The design of this Plan resulted from cooperation between the education authorities of the autonomous communities and the Ministry.
Its main objective is to promote the lifelong learning of Spanish citizens, as well as to contribute to the achievement of the goals established by the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), among which the one referring to the need for an average of at least 15% of adults to participate in lifelong learning by 2020 stands out. In order to achieve these goals, the following is necessary:

- modernise the education and training systems
- use a methodology that responds to adults’ capabilities, needs and interests
- allow greater flexibility and adapt formal and non-formal and classroom-based and distance provision, and establish links between both
- the accreditation of learning and the recognition of the skills acquired.

The Strategic Lifelong Learning Plan provides the common framework on which the education authorities will be based to develop their specific territorial plans, which can be annual or biennial and will be developed each October.

This plan is the national realisation of the 2007 Action Plan of the European Commission on Adult Learning It's Never Too Late to Learn. Its basic objective is to improve training opportunities and quality, without any time limit and without being age-specific. It is aimed at encouraging lifelong learning in line with a modern, democratic and changing society, by strengthening quality training and promoting the attainment of the highest levels of education and training amongst citizens.

The strategic lines of this Plan for the 2014-2020 period are the following:

- provide widespread access to information, guidance and counselling, so that all citizens can participate in lifelong learning
- improve the quality of lifelong learning
- promote innovation in lifelong learning
- adapt the training provision to citizens’ personal, social and labour needs
- allow greater flexibility and link up training systems and pathways
- increase the percentage of citizens who participate in lifelong learning activities, as well as their qualification levels
- stimulate the permanence of citizens in the different types of training provision.

Other strategic actions of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training to promote lifelong learning are:

- vocational training distance provision for the whole population, through the Portal Vocational Training Through the Internet [10]
- integrated system of vocational information and guidance, whose main actions are as follows:

1. **ACREDITA** [11] information and guidance platform for the accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience or non-formal training models. It includes general information on the procedure and the State open calls, a self-evaluation tool for citizens to identify the competences they can accredit and the options related to them, a tool for advisors, evaluators and candidates to manage the procedure

2. **Todo FP** [12] portal on vocational information and guidance aiming at improving the access to information and vocational training for all the citizens

3. Specialist Guidance Group, aimed at improving coordination between the State and regional authorities regarding education. It is made up of a representative designed by each autonomous community and representatives of the central authority
vocational guidance tools and resources for guidance teachers, students and citizens in general

lifelong learning aimed at guidance professionals

drawing up of a map of vocational guidance resources at State level.

- Aprende a lo largo de la vida [13] the web portal with information and guidance on lifelong learning. Its objectives include disseminating learning opportunities for adults which are available throughout the country and providing citizens with learning resources. Within the portal, Infórmate [13] guides users in choosing the training pathway which meets their profile and provides them with the training options which best suit their needs and context. Regarding the different types of provision, it shows their key aspects: admission requirements, duration, structure, professional opportunities and the institutions offering them.

In accordance with the Recommendation of the European Council on the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has prepared the Spanish Qualifications Framework. For more information, see National Qualifications Framework [14].

Just like the Spanish Qualifications Framework and with the same goal of informing society, favoring international mobility and recognising training in all the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education is established. For more information, see Higher Education [15].

Finally, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training countsd with the Subdirectoraté General for Guidance and Lifelong Learning, reporting to the Directorate General for Vocational Training. Among its functions, the following should be noted:

- the organisation of adult education and the establishment of the training provision applicable to the area of management of the Department in this field
- the elaboration of studies, reports and technical work, as well as the design and development of measures guiding lifelong learning, through both formal and non-formal education activities
- coordination relationships in the field of vocational training and lifelong learning and cooperation with the autonomous communities and local authorities, as well as the planning, management and monitoring of the programmes and agreements with the education authorities in both fields, all in coordination with the Directorate General for Evaluation and Territorial Cooperation
- participation and collaboration in international programmes for adult education, vocational training and lifelong learning.

Training actions of the education authorities and other public authorities

Lifelong learning feeds on the initiatives carried out by central and regional education authorities, education offices or municipal education institutes within municipal councils, employment authorities and non-profit-making entities of the civil society.

In order to guarantee universal and permanent access to learning, the different public authorities identify new skills and provide the training required in order to acquire them. They are also responsible for:

- promoting flexible learning opportunities for young people and adults who left the education system without any qualification to acquire basic skills and, where possible, achieve the
relevant qualifications

- facilitating and promoting the attainment of post-compulsory secondary education or equivalent for all people
- facilitating access to information and guidance on lifelong learning opportunities and their accessibility.

For more information, see Education provision of Popular Universities [16] and Other types of publicly subsidised provision for adult learners [17]

Thus, the different education authorities offer mainly the following types of provision:

- basic education: initial education and secondary education for adults, aimed at obtaining the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate
- post-compulsory education: Bachillerato and vocational training
- preparation for entrance examinations for intermediate and advanced vocational training
- preparation for entrance examinations to obtain the Lower Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate
- preparation for university entrance examinations
- basic vocational training
- training in the use of ICT
- foreign language learning
- 'That's English!', a distance education course recognised by the Official Language Schools in basic, intermediate and advanced levels
- Spanish as a foreign language, courses for personal development, social and participatory, such as health education and healthy habits, disease prevention and occupational hazards, road safety education courses, or other courses within the autonomy of schools
- operating workshops for job placement, cofinanced by the European Social Fund.

Classroom-based provision is offered by adult education institutions and some secondary schools, and distance provision or e-learning by the autonomous communities, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (cities of Ceuta and Melilla), the Centre for the Innovation and Development of Distance Education and Aula Mentor [18], which provides an alternative in the field of training for adults who do not have the opportunity to attend classroom-based sessions. The training provision comprises a set of courses organised into training areas, which have been specially designed and/or adapted for learners and which are constantly updated.

For more information, see Provision to raise achievement in basic skills [19] and Provision to achieve a recognised qualification during adulthood [20]