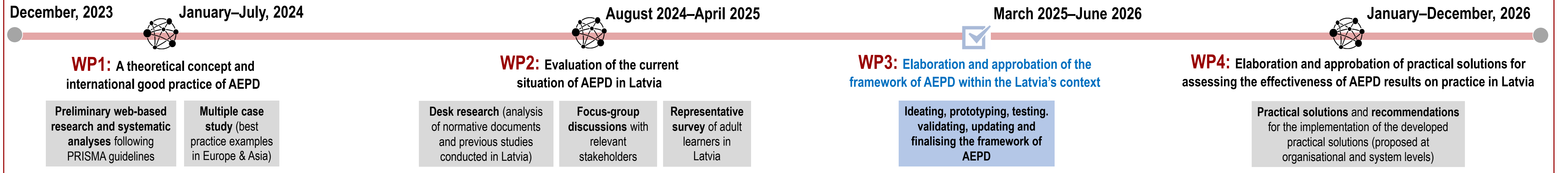


# Design Thinking for Effective Adult Professional Development: Ideating and Prototyping a Multilevel Framework in Latvia (108563)

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**Problem:** Adult participation in Latvia continues to face challenges in fostering lifelong learning and responding to systemic labor-market needs. Higher participation rates alone do not necessarily lead to meaningful gains in professional performance.  
**Context:** This study is part of the broader State Research Program "Education" project titled "Enhancement of Evidence-Based Solutions for Effective Professional Competence Development and Assessment of the Transfer of Its Results into Practice in Latvia" (Project No. VPP-IZM-Izglītība-2024/1-0001). The project aims to develop an evidence-based framework and practical tools to support effective adult professional development and to assess how acquired knowledge and skills are applied in practice. The primary objective of WP3 is to develop and test a framework of adult effective professional development (AEPD), including teachers, at the individual, organizational, and system levels, appropriate to the Latvian context.  
**Research questions:** The WP3 study addresses the central research question: (1) What indicators are most relevant for evaluating the effectiveness of adult professional competence development in the Latvian context, and (2) which individual, organizational, and system-level processes are necessary to ensure high-quality, impactful professional development?  
**This study presents the ideation and prototyping of a conceptual framework of AEPD at the individual, organizational, and system levels in Latvia using a design-thinking approach. Through an iterative design-thinking process, insights from earlier phases of the project were synthesized into an initial conceptual model.**

## Research project's timeline and methodology



## Research process

The implementation of the entire SRP project was structured as an **iterative design thinking process** (Figure 1) (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University, 2010; Easterday et al., 2018). Within this process, the findings from WP1 and WP2 provided the foundation for the ideation and prototyping of the theoretical framework developed in WP3. The results of WP1 and WP2 were reviewed, synthesized, and conceptually integrated during meetings of the University of Latvia (UL) research team. The primary objective at this stage was to translate concepts generated during the ideation phase into a coherent, visible, and analytically robust structure that could serve as the basis for further development of the AEPD framework. Insights from the earlier work packages informed the generation of initial framework concepts, which were subsequently refined through iterative cycles of modelling, discussion, and stakeholder validation. This process enabled continuous improvement of the framework based on emerging evidence and user feedback. Work on WP3 commenced on March 31, 2025. Between April 7 and May 18, 2025, ideation activities were conducted both individually and collaboratively during weekly UL team meetings. These activities culminated in the presentation and synthesis of the initial framework proposals at the project's general assembly on May 26, 2025. All framework visualizations were developed within the conceptual perspective of the learning organization, in which professional development is embedded within institutional practices, regulatory structures, and quality assurance mechanisms. This perspective emphasizes the interconnected nature of individual learning, organizational development, and system-level support for effective professional competence development.

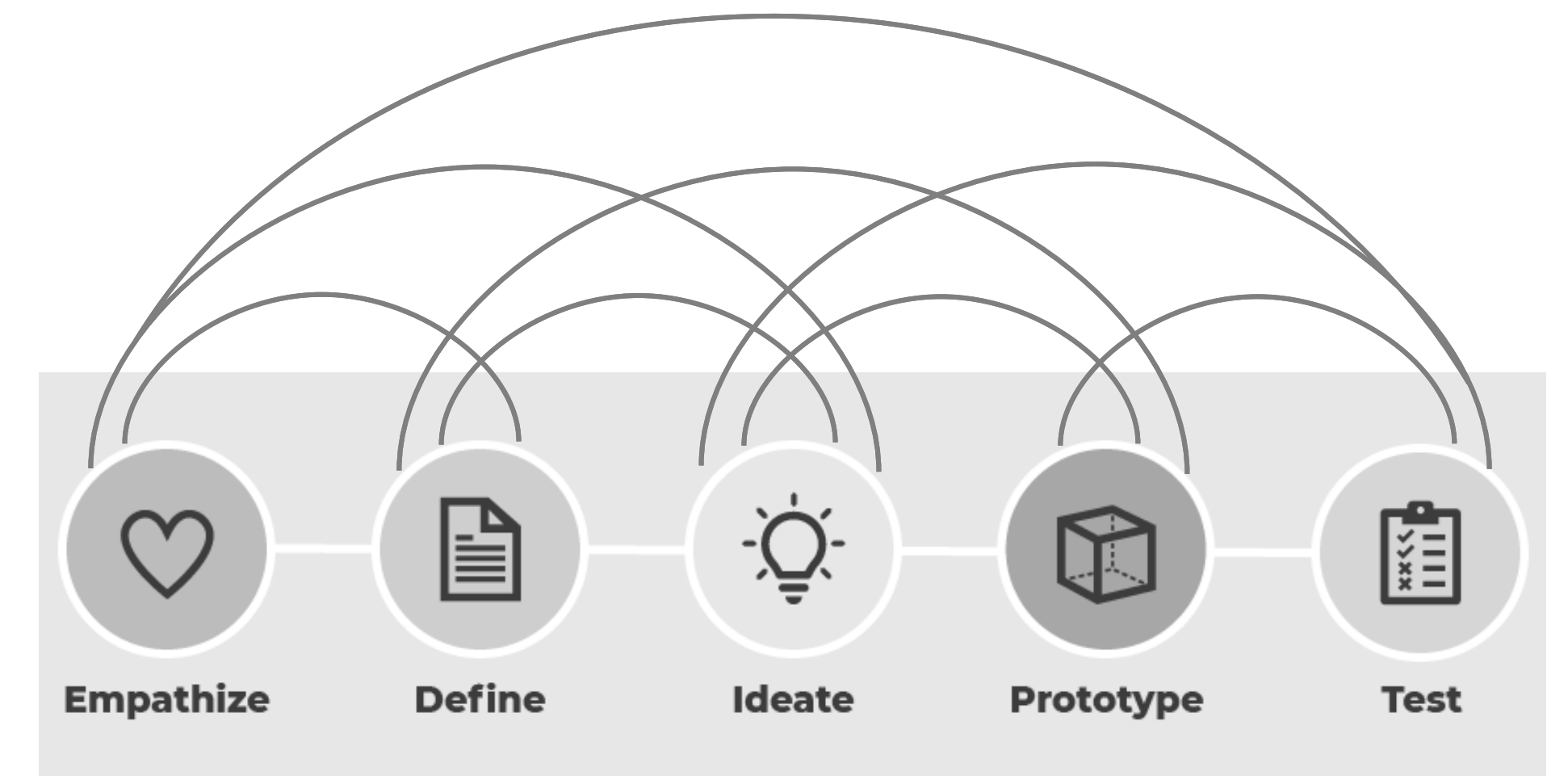


Figure 1. Design thinking process

## Results

The first visualization (Figure 2) emphasizes the relationships among stakeholders, processes, and outcomes as components of an integrated, dynamic system. Responsibility, collaboration, participation, and flexibility serve as its foundational principles, shaping stakeholder interactions, guiding process design, and supporting the achievement of intended outcomes. These values provide a normative framework that promotes effective, sustainable, inclusive, and context-responsive transfer of professional development. The visualization highlights the central role of collaboration in fostering balanced, relevant, resilient, and sustainable adult professional development at the national, organizational, and individual levels.

The second visualization (Figure 3) conceptualizes professional development transfer as a multi-level, systemic, and sustainable process that extends beyond the individual to encompass organizational, societal, and national contexts. The framework is organized across five interconnected levels (i.e. state, society, organization, client, and individual) highlighting transfer as a dynamic network of interactions within and across the system. The framework emphasizes a shift from participation in formal professional development to practice-based transfer, focusing on meaningful changes in professional practice rather than completed training hours. Sustainability and outcomes are viewed as long-term dimensions, reflecting enduring improvements in professional practice rather than short-term competence gains.

The third visualization (Figure 4) presents adult professional competence development in Latvia as a dynamic, multi-level system shaped by rapid social, technological, and labor market changes. Moving beyond linear approaches, the framework emphasizes the interconnected roles of individuals, organizations, and the state. At the individual level, learning through work, practice, and social interaction supports the transfer of knowledge into professional practice. At the organizational level, a learning-oriented culture, leadership support, and monitoring foster continuous development. At the state level, regulation, quality assurance, lifelong learning opportunities, and system-wide monitoring create conditions for sustainable professional competence development.

Integrated, Flexible, and Collaborative Professional Development Ecosystem

ACCOUNTABILITY • PARTICIPATION • COLLABORATION • FLEXIBILITY

LEVEL	STAKEHOLDERS	PROCESS	OUTCOME
State	Ministries; Agencies; Councils	Consolidation of state structures; identification of needs; more targeted support; ensuring accessibility; establishment of a unified information system; financial support instruments; improved legislation; appropriate instrument(s) for measuring effectiveness at the national level, etc.	National economic growth; social responsibility; improved governance
Organizations (public / private)	Employers	Prioritization of needs; support mechanisms (financial, administrative, and others) before, during, and after training; appropriate instrument(s) for measuring effectiveness at the organizational level	Social responsibility; labor productivity; implementation of innovations; improved collaboration
	Educators	Quality of program content; competence of teaching staff; ensuring accessibility through diverse learning formats; post-training support measures; instrument(s) for measuring transfer effectiveness.	Social responsibility; quality of learning
Individual	Employees	Identification of needs; planning one's own professional development; active and engaged participation; support from employers and colleagues; tools for reflection on professional development.	Responsibility; well-being; career growth; higher income; motivation; confidence

Figure 2. The first visualization

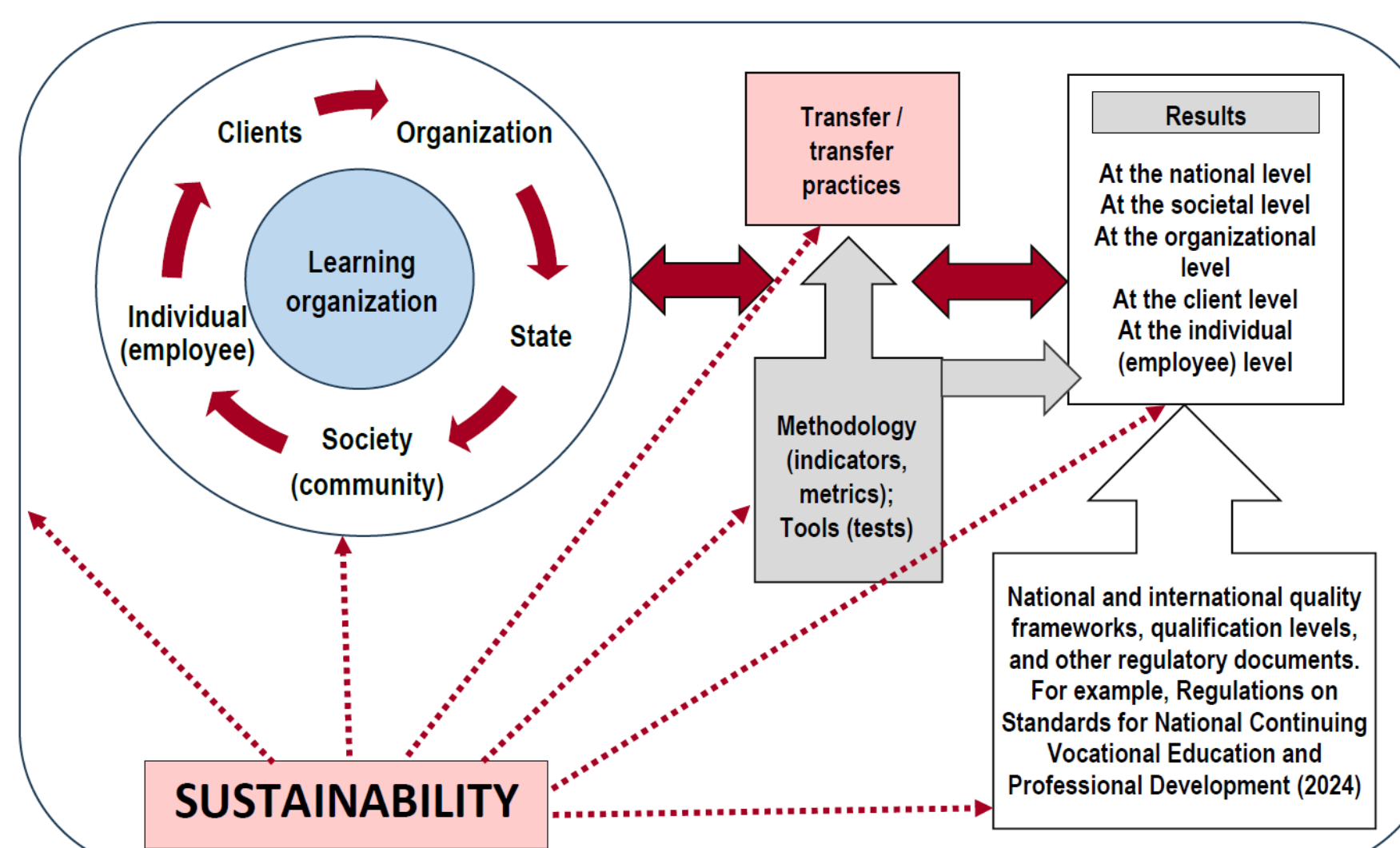


Figure 3. The second visualization

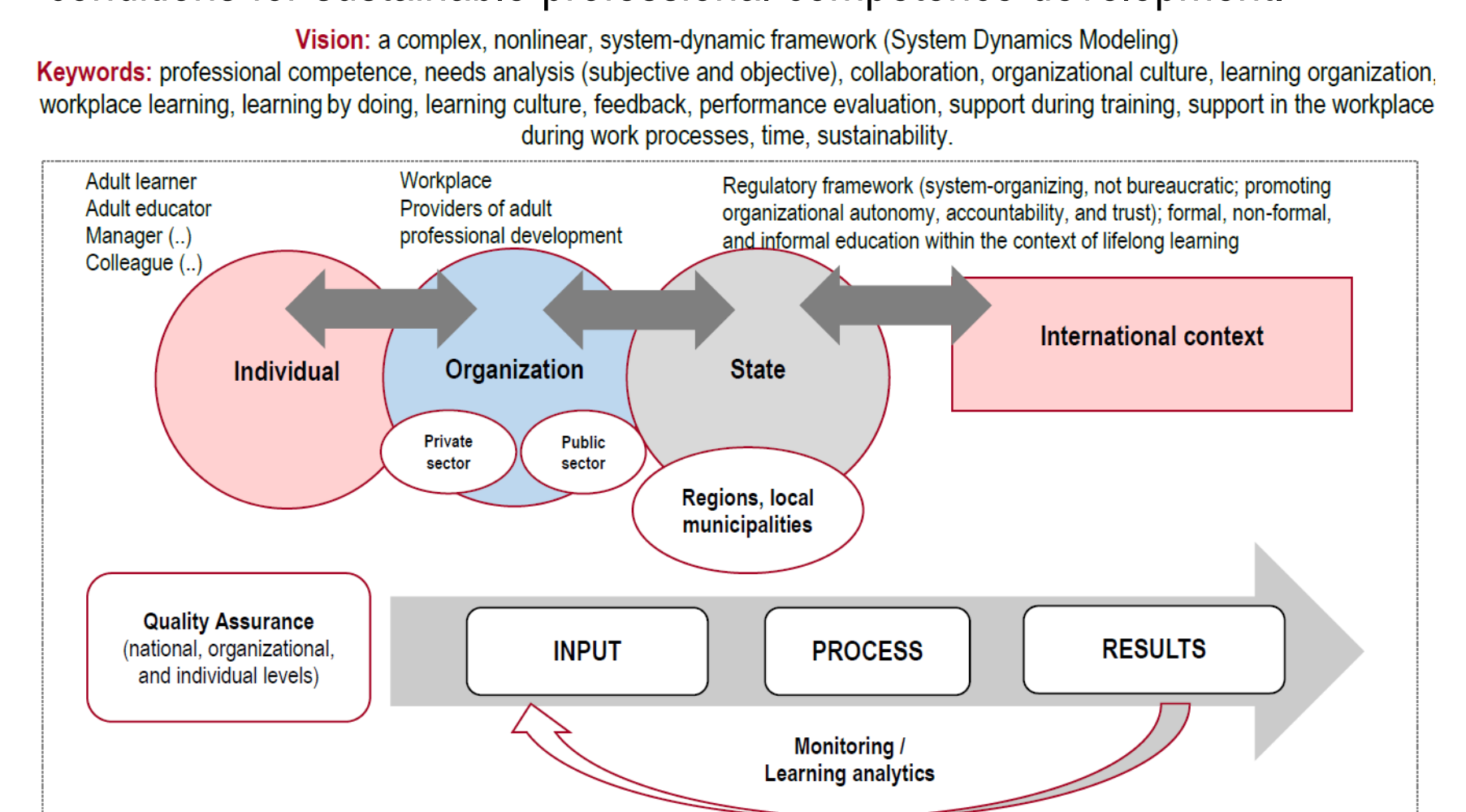


Figure 4. The third visualization

The fourth visualization (Figure 5a and 5b) was developed based on the OECD Education at a Glance 2019 indicator framework (Input–Activities–Output–Outcome–Impact). It organizes professional development into five interconnected dimensions: Input (planning), Activities (implementation), Output, Outcome, and Impact (evaluation and monitoring). The framework distinguishes three levels (individual, organizational, and national) and identifies key individual and contextual factors influencing professional development effectiveness. This and previous visualizations were presented to the project Steering Committee and discussed at a joint project meeting. Further refinements were informed by informal consultations with a representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, with subsequent recommendations reviewed and consolidated during a follow-up project meeting.

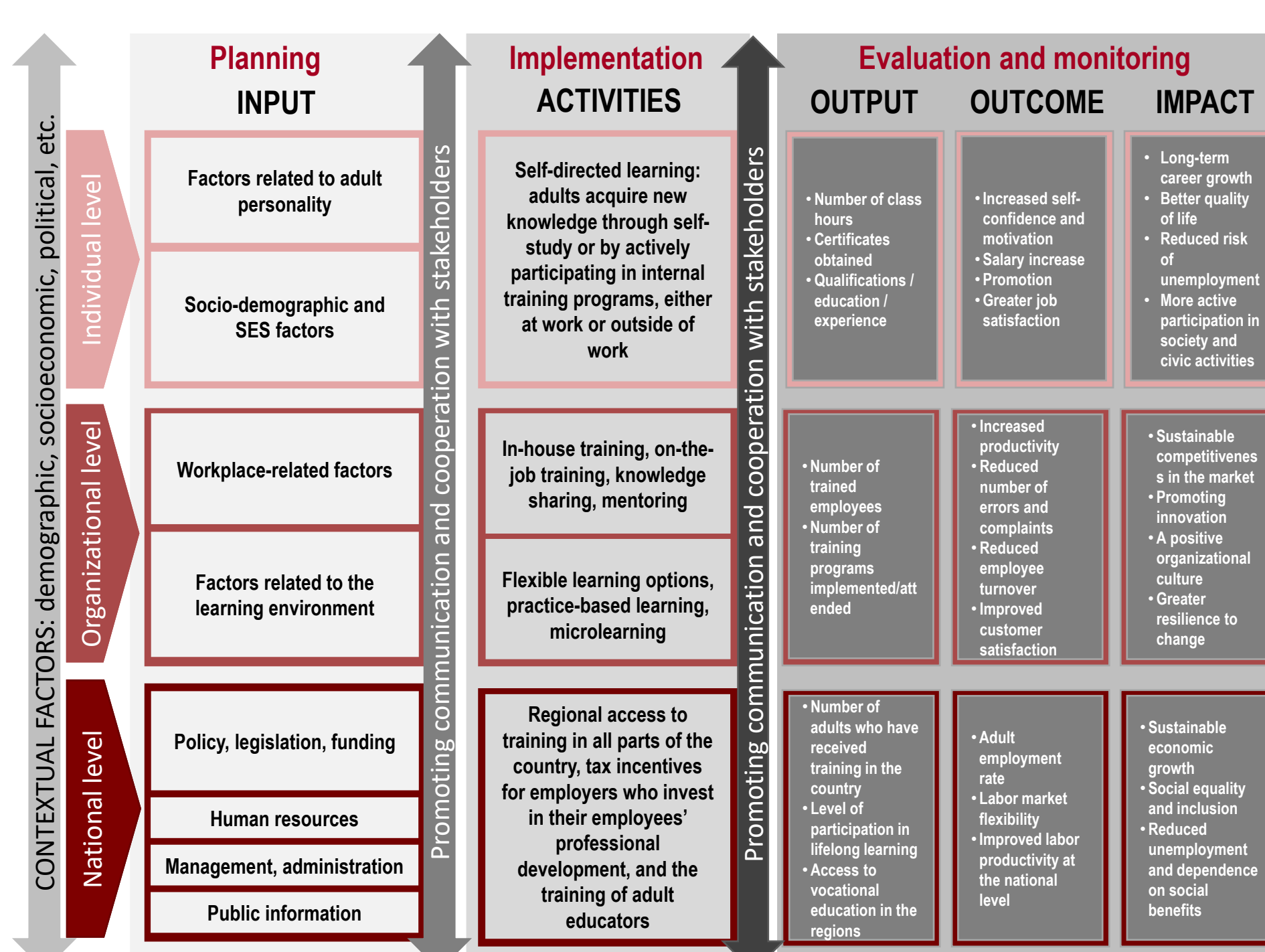


Figure 5a. The fourth visualization

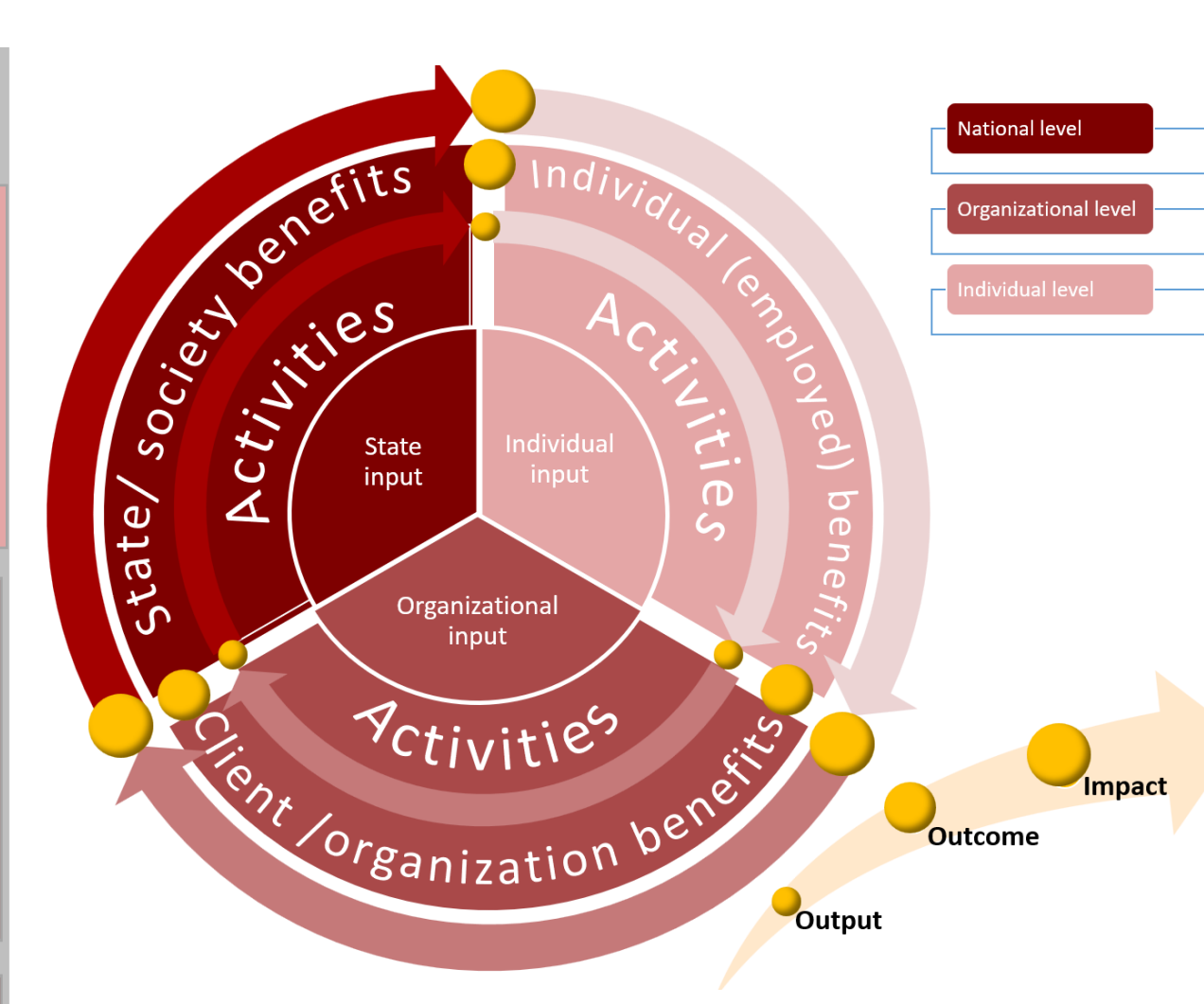


Figure 5b. The fourth visualization

## Summary

Using a design thinking approach, this study developed and refined a multilevel conceptual framework for AEPD in Latvia, integrating individual, organizational, and system-level perspectives. The ideation and prototyping process shifts the focus from participation in professional development activities toward the sustainable transfer of learning into practice, emphasizing collaboration, quality assurance, and evidence-based decision-making. These initial prototypes provide a foundation for further testing, validation, and the development of practical tools to support impactful lifelong learning and workforce development in Latvia. The iterative co-design process enabled continuous refinement of the initial prototypes through synthesis of empirical findings and stakeholder feedback, ensuring their relevance to the Latvian context. Future research has been focused on empirical validation of the framework and the operationalization of indicators to assess the effectiveness and long-term impact of adult professional competence development across three levels.

## References

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