



European  
Commission



# Promoting adult learning in the workplace

Final report of the ET 2020 Working Group 2016 – 2018  
on Adult Learning

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## Contents

Preface .....	4
Key messages .....	6
Why promote adult learning? .....	7
<b>1. Adult learning in the workplace .....</b>	<b>8</b>
What is adult learning in the workplace? .....	9
Who is involved in policy on adult learning in the workplace? .....	9
How do national policies currently address adult learning in the workplace? .....	10
<b>2. Why promote adult learning in the workplace? .....</b>	<b>12</b>
The need for continuous learning in the workplace .....	13
Demographic developments .....	14
Higher flexibility in the labour market .....	15
The Fourth Industrial Revolution .....	15
The need for higher adaptability of the labour force .....	15
The value of the workplace in stimulating adult learning .....	16
The value of adult learning in the workplace for individuals .....	16
The value of adult learning in the workplace for employers .....	18
The value of adult learning in the workplace for society .....	19
Overall adult participation in learning .....	20
Adult participation in learning at work .....	21
<b>3. How to promote adult learning in the workplace? The building blocks of effective policies .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1. Encourage employers to adopt a learning culture that supports career-long learning .....	26
2. Ensure that adult learning in the workplace puts learners on a lifelong learning pathway (and is supported by guidance systems and validation of prior learning) .....	27
3. Secure the long-term commitment of all stakeholders .....	28
4. Ensure effective coordination between all stakeholders and agree on roles and responsibilities .....	29
5. Communicate about adult learning in the workplace using the language of those who need to be encouraged .....	30
6. Ensure sustainable co-funding systems in which all see the benefit of investing in adult learning in the workplace .....	31
7. Ensure that workplace learning is tailored to adult learners' needs .....	32
8. Ensure that adult learning in the workplace responds to employers' needs .....	33
9. Assure the quality of adult learning in the workplace .....	34
10. Set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that adult learning in the workplace remains relevant and effective .....	35
<b>4. Conclusions .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Annexes .....</b>	<b>38</b>
Annex 1: Examples of policies related to adult learning in the workplace .....	39
Annex 2: How this report was created .....	51
The ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning .....	51
The process followed by the ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning .....	52
Working group meetings .....	52
Peer Learning Activities .....	53
Activities during European Vocational Skills Week 2017 .....	53
<b>References .....</b>	<b>54</b>

## Preface

Changing and increasing skills demands, coupled with economic, demographic and technological developments are making it more important than ever for Member States to have in place modern adult learning systems. All adults, regardless of their level of education or qualifications, need opportunities and incentives to continue learning throughout life, whether it be for maintaining their employability, for fuller participation in our digital society, or for personal fulfilment.

The European Agenda for Adult Learning (renewed in 2015) reaffirms that adult learning – formal, non-formal and informal, and for all purposes – “provides a means of upskilling or reskilling those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as making an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development”.

The European Pillar of Social Rights, as jointly proclaimed by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, sets as its first principle the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning.

Learning later in life very often takes place at the workplace. Therefore, there is increased interest in answering questions such as: How can we turn every workplace into a learning-friendly environment? How can we ensure that adults acquire the skills and competences they need to obtain rewarding jobs and progress in their professional careers? How can we make high-quality workplace learning available to everyone? How can workplace learning help the many adults who struggle with basic competences like literacy and numeracy?

Over the last two years, a working group of Member State experts, facilitated by the Commission, has been addressing these questions as part of the Strategic Framework for cooperation on education and training (ET 2020). This report presents the outcomes of its work. It identifies key messages for policy development along with case studies to inspire new thinking. I would like to thank all those who participated in and supported the Working Group in its work.

Whether you are from a governmental organisation, an enterprise, a trade union, a training provider, or civil society, I hope that this practical report will inspire you to play your part in making every workplace a place of learning.

**Marianne Thyssen**  
*European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility*





## Key messages

“As the types of skills needed in the labour market change rapidly, individual workers will have to engage in lifelong learning if they are to achieve fulfilling and rewarding careers”<sup>1</sup>. In today’s fast-changing world, every country needs to be sure that its workforce has the right skills for the labour market; every employer needs to be sure that its employees have the right skills set to remain competitive; and every adult needs to keep updating and extending his or her skills in order to remain employable and to play a full part in society.

Adult learning in the workplace that responds to individuals’, employers’ and societal demands needs to become a policy priority. This requires:



**A serious long-term commitment from all stakeholders**



**Effective coordination between stakeholders**



**Appropriate quality assurance mechanisms**



**Equitable co-funding systems that are sustainable in the long term**









**Effective systems to tailor provision to changing labour market needs and to the needs of adult learners**



**Clear governance arrangements including regular monitoring and evaluation**

Adult learning in the workplace can make a significant contribution because it:

-  Is an accessible and attractive way for adults to maintain and update the knowledge and skills they need for life, at work and at home
-  Is an efficient and effective way for employers to keep their employees’ skill sets up to date, motivate their workforce and improve staff retention, as well as to improve competitiveness
-  Is an economical and targeted way for Member States to increase their productivity, innovation and modernisation, maintain their competitiveness and employment rates and raise overall skills levels
-  Supports social and economic (re-)integration of vulnerable groups, inclusion, social cohesion and equality
-  Meets individuals’, employers’ and society’s needs for greater adaptability to better prepare for future skills needs, mitigating projected skills shortages
-  Improves adults’ lifelong employability

We hope that this report, based on good policy practice from around Europe, will inspire all stakeholders to play their part in supporting career-long learning in the workplace.

## Why promote adult learning?

Adult learning - any learning that takes place after leaving formal initial education and training - brings considerable benefits for learners themselves, for employers and for the wider community (see below)<sup>2</sup>.



### The benefits for learners are:

- Economic: increased wages, higher incomes and improved employability
- Wellbeing: improved general wellbeing and health
- Social: improved engagement in community and civic activity



### The benefits for employers are:

- Innovation performance increase for the company
- Higher motivation of the workforce
- Increased productivity and profitability



### The benefits for the community are:

- Economic: greater economic competitiveness and higher GDP
- Social: positive effects on health, the environment and reduced reoffending



## 1

## Adult learning in the workplace

This chapter outlines the current situation in Europe.



## What is adult learning in the workplace?

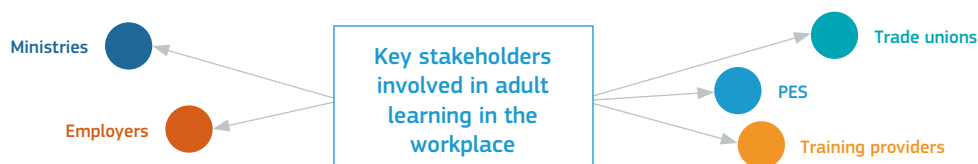
This report is about policies that promote or facilitate any adult learning that takes place at, or prepares people for, the workplace:

- Adult learning *for* the workplace is when adults obtain the skills and competences needed to successfully obtain and keep jobs and progress in their professional careers. So, it can refer to preparatory learning, for instance, taking place in VET institutions.
- Adult learning *at* the workplace is the learning that adults undertake while working, or while at the workplace. The skills and competences they acquire may not necessarily be those needed for work.
- The workplace in this sense can also function as the 'outreach strategy' by which specific groups of adults are approached with learning programmes.
- Adult learning in the workplace can be:
  - **Formal:** it occurs in an organised and structured environment and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources) and leads to a formal qualification (or part-qualification). This kind of learning might take place within a VET/apprenticeship-type programme (including at higher levels) or in short cycle higher education programmes.
  - **Non-formal:** it occurs in an organised and structured environment and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources), but does not lead to a formal qualification. This kind of learning might, for instance, be employer-based training or courses, self-study or job-shadowing.
  - **Informal:** it results from daily activities at the workplace which are not specially organised or structured; it and does not lead to a formal qualification. This kind of learning might include peer learning, exchanges with colleagues, or learning by doing<sup>3</sup>.

## Who is involved in policy on adult learning in the workplace?

The inventory produced by the Working Group provides a picture of how policies relating to adult learning in the workplace are coordinated within countries.

It also shows which authorities or other organisations are involved in some way. Stakeholders may include **ministries, employers, Public Employment Services (PES), trade unions, and training providers**. The extent to which they are involved varies significantly from country to country.



The involvement of stakeholders depends on many factors such as the policy field concerned, the levels of responsibility for adult learning (centralised or decentralised responsibilities), and the institutional frameworks related to adult learning and learning in the workplace<sup>4</sup>.

Although adult learning in the workplace is highly dependent on the participation of employers, employer organisations and employee organisations, in the design and development of policies, they seem to be less involved than ministries.

## How do national policies currently address adult learning in the workplace?

As a policy objective, adult learning in the workplace is not strictly linked with one particular policy field. It can have different objectives and purposes and can therefore be supported by – or mainstreamed as an element of support in – different policy frameworks (e.g. smart specialisation strategies, or economic growth or industrial strategies that embed an upskilling and reskilling element).

The Working Group has gathered comparable country-level information about policies on adult learning in the workplace. Although these policies could be grouped according to different criteria, and most countries have in place a mix of policies, the inventory<sup>5</sup> of country-specific policy approaches identified the following four broad clusters of policies dealing with adult learning in the workplace:



### Employment policies and programmes

These policies aim to improve the labour market access of unemployed people, or support their transition from job to job. In almost all countries this is covered and in around one third of countries there were policies *specifically* on adult learning in the workplace. The Public Employment Services (PES) – programmes and initiatives tended to be well demarcated and were targeted at specific groups. There were also specific programmes for immigrants.



### Policies and programmes on basic skills learning at the workplace

These policies aim to increase the basic skills level of those in employment. In more than half of the countries these policies and programmes were found. The target group supported by these policies were adults with low levels of basic skills, usually focused on literacy skills, but also on transversal work skills or digital skills.



### Policies and programmes related to non-formal VET (including employer-driven programmes)

These policies aim to increase competitiveness and innovation within specific sectors. Almost all countries covered this aspect, but less than a quarter of countries and information *specifically* on adult learning in the workplace, though much could take place outside the scope of government policies. The target group was all types of workers: low, medium and high skilled. In general, these policies, especially when related to innovation, focused more on medium and higher skilled workers.

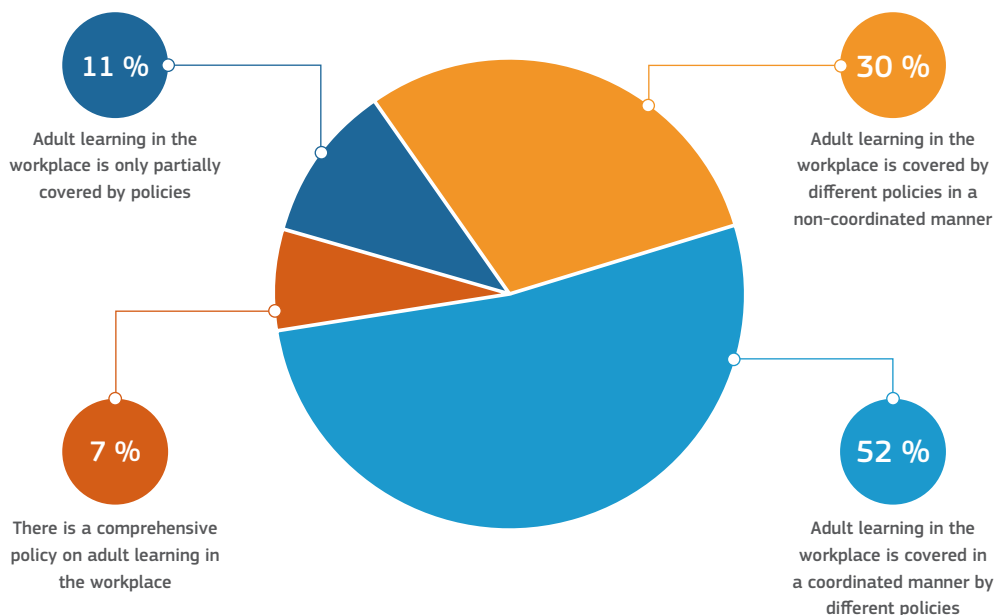


### Policies and programmes related to the formal VET system

These policies aim to increase the general skills level of young people and adults via continuing education and training (CVET) and initial education and training (IVET) providers (including Higher Education (HE) institutions). They may also be broader national skills development strategies. Most countries and policies specifically on adult learning in the workplace. The target group was diverse: from the low-skilled to high-skilled workers.

As adult learning in the workplace is covered by different policy fields, a certain **degree of coordination** is needed for effective implementation. Adult learning in the workplace is coordinated to different extents in different countries, as illustrated by the figure<sup>6</sup>. In just over half of the countries there is a comprehensive policy, or the policies are well coordinated.

### Adult learning in the workplace



## 2

## Why promote adult learning in the workplace?

This chapter discusses why adult learning in the workplace is needed and what the benefits are for individuals, employers and the community.

## The need for continuous learning in the workplace

When considering adult learning in the workplace in the context of the labour market and society in Europe, some (past and prospective) major trends need to be taken into account. These so-called 'mega-trends' affect society at large, future labour markets as well as the role that learning plays in the labour market and society. We focus on major trends related to demographic developments and major labour market changes, in the light of automation and accelerated technological developments.

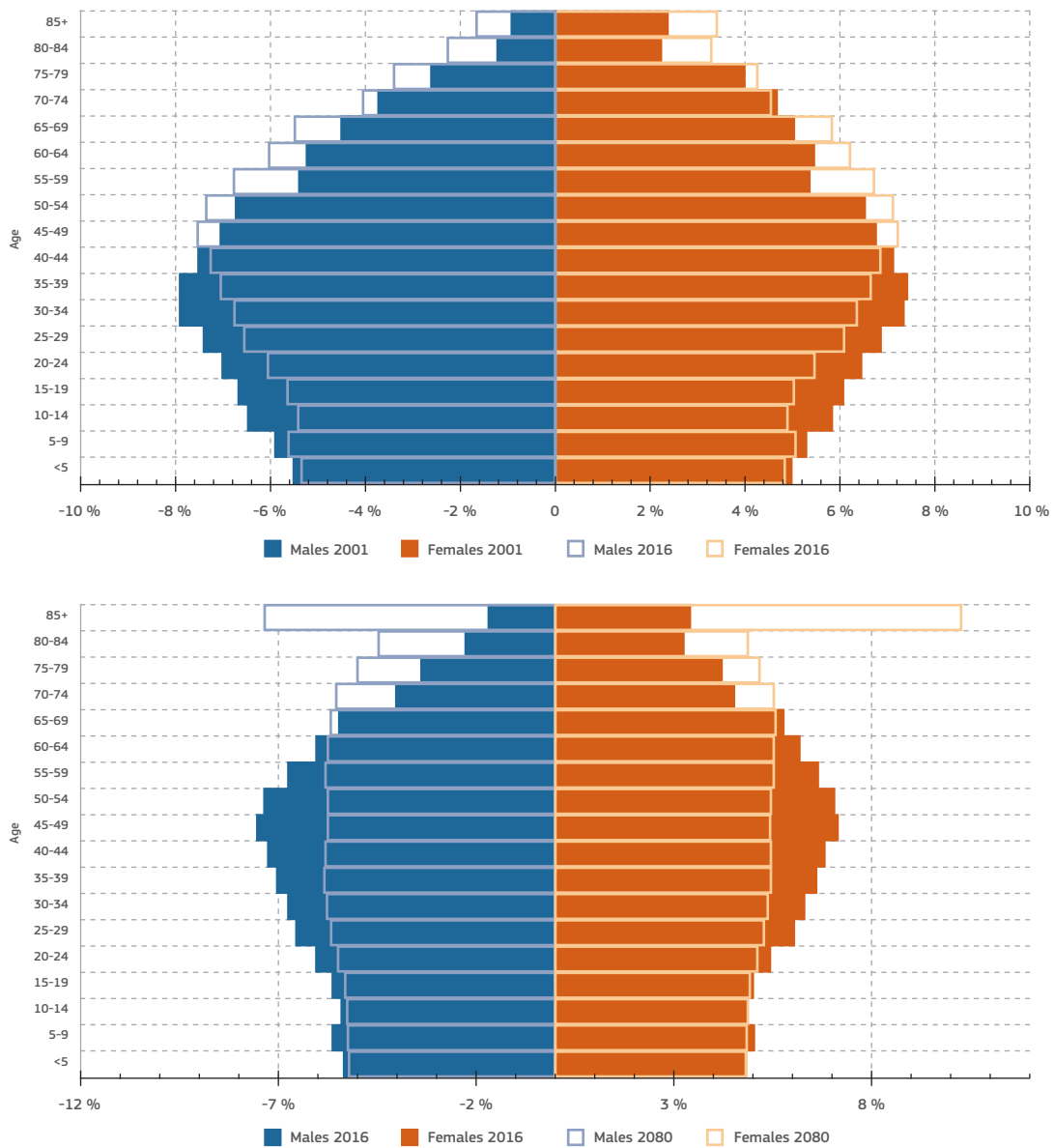


## Demographic developments

Because of the consistently low birth rates and increase in life expectancy, the shape of the EU's age pyramid has been transformed<sup>7</sup>. As a greater proportion of the post-war baby-boomers is reaching retirement, the share of older persons in the total population will increase even further. This means the proportion of people of working age in the EU-28 is shrinking, whereas the number of retirees is expanding, so the EU-28's age pyramid will transform even further.

### Change in population structure: Age pyramids for 2001, 2016 and prospect for 2080

(Source: Eurostat, Population structure and ageing (demo\_pjangroup; proj\_15npms))



The demographic developments lead to a prospect that by 2050, there will be fewer economically active persons per inactive person. The projected old-age dependency ratio of the EU-28 by 2050 is 50 %<sup>8</sup>, which means for every two active persons there will be one inactive person to support (2:1). In 2015, this was 29 %, which means for every seven active persons there were approximately two inactive persons to support (7:2). Economically inactive persons will need to acquire or develop the skills necessary to remain independent longer (health, digital skills etc.) while economically active persons will need to remain active and productive longer in order to support the economically inactive persons.

## Higher flexibility in the labour market

The nature of work has been changing in the context of a more flexible labour market, with a rise in short-term contracts, independent contracts and alternative work arrangements, for example<sup>9</sup>. 'Work' as a concept has become more of a collection of tasks performed under different legal, functional and geographical frameworks, with many 'jobs' being broken down into tasks or projects that can be outsourced to (independent) professionals and experts or are worked on in 'virtual' teams across countries (networks). While these developments bring opportunities to integrate more people into the labour market through increased flexibility of working arrangements, they may also bring greater risks, as there may be frequent periods with little or no income and self-employed persons receive less favourable conditions when accessing social security and 'coverage' for healthcare, accidents and pensions<sup>10</sup>. At the same time, the rise of the collaborative economy is changing work-life balance preferences, reinventing the essence of consumption, economic exchange and professional fulfilment.

## The Fourth Industrial Revolution

Europe is rapidly moving towards an economy where the focus will become services and occupations that are knowledge- and skill-intensive. On the one hand, technological innovations lead to the **creation of new jobs**: many of the most in-demand occupations or specialisms did not exist ten or even five years ago, and this trend is likely to continue. On the other hand, as new jobs are created, others run the risk of being **transformed** or **displaced** ('deleted') entirely<sup>12</sup>.

There are different predictions on whether low-skilled or medium-skilled workers will suffer the biggest impact of automation in terms of **job replacement**<sup>13</sup>. Studies<sup>14</sup> estimate that, on average, just 9 % of jobs are at a high risk of becoming fully automated. These are jobs for which at least 70 % of the tasks are automatable. There are also jobs that will not be substituted entirely, but that might see a significant change in tasks (between 50 % and 70 %).

OECD on digitalisation: "Digitalisation is seen as a key influence on the future of work over the next decades. Ever-increasing computing power, Big Data, the penetration of the Internet, Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things and online platforms are among developments radically changing prospects for the type of jobs that will be needed in the future and how, where and by whom they will be done. This has sparked a debate about the risk of greater job insecurity, growing inequality and even mass 'technological' unemployment."<sup>11</sup>

## The need for higher adaptability of the labour force

Between 2010 and 2020, these trends are expected to lead to a change in skill demand in the EU. When considering the expected changes in skill supply as well (i.e. 'constrained demand'<sup>15</sup>), the forecasts for 2020 show a large decline in demand for people with low-level qualifications (-14 million jobs), a small increase in demand for those with medium-level qualifications (+2.5 million jobs) and a large increase in demand for people with high-level qualifications (+20 million jobs). **People without the right skills are more vulnerable to labour market change**<sup>16</sup>, which calls for continued investments in education and training. What is needed is a labour force with higher adaptability and a higher level and variety of skills and competences. To ensure the best match of skills, people should **acquire a combination of transversal core skills alongside the specific skills needed for a job and then develop their skills further throughout life**. This also requires employers to better use the skills and talents of their staff and to stimulate people's development. This calls for a rebalancing of the various sectors of education and training in order to make sure that sufficient resources, both public and private, are allocated to the upskilling and reskilling taking place beyond initial education and training, to support the multiple transitions in the labour market that people will be facing.

## The value of the workplace in stimulating adult learning

In general, Europe needs to make sure its labour force can respond to the economy's rapidly changing needs by enabling people to raise and broaden their skills throughout their lives. This would allow them to actively contribute to an innovative economy, shaping the jobs of the future. To achieve this, everyone needs to be constantly involved in learning, as this plays a central role in enabling workers to manage transitions in the workplace (or between jobs)<sup>18</sup>. Across all sectors, the value of transversal and generic skills<sup>19</sup> (including digital competences) has increased steadily and the demand for individuals with these skills will continue to increase<sup>20</sup>.

Considering that economically 'active' adults spend a large share of their time in the workplace, it can also be an important learning environment. When asking workers which skills are most important or useful at work and where they learnt them, the answer will most often be 'at work' rather than 'in an educational institution'<sup>21</sup>. Where formal education lays the foundations for further learning with key competences, including basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and learning 'theory', the workplace is an environment that can bring the theory to life<sup>22</sup>. Through learners' involvement in actual production, resolving challenges and through their formal and informal interaction with colleagues and /or clients they are stimulated to develop not only job-related skills, but also basic and transversal competences that make people more resilient to changes in their career and life.

When considering the value of adult learning in the workplace, we can distinguish between three levels: the individual, organisations and society.

The workplace is also recognised as learning arena by many international organisations and Member States. For instance, the **Riga declaration of June 2015** mentions work-based learning as the first medium-term deliverable: "promote work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship<sup>17</sup>".

## The value of adult learning in the workplace for individuals

Adult skills learning in the workplace can generally enhance an individuals' personal development<sup>23</sup>, and potentially provide them with benefits across three dimensions: economic, wellbeing and social<sup>24</sup>.



**Economic:** The economic benefits are the potential increase in wages (and thus a higher income) and the individuals' improved employability. Enabling workers to better acquire knowledge by linking (old and new) learned concepts to practical applications<sup>25</sup> contributes to them addressing the deficiencies in their skills, knowledge and experiences that can be of economic value to organisations (i.e. 'human capital')<sup>26</sup>.



**Wellbeing:** Participation in learning is shown to improve people's perceptions of their own health, increase their life satisfaction as well as stimulate their self-confidence<sup>27</sup>. It provides opportunities to workers to serve as trainers and mentors, which contributes to feeling recognized as responsible, experienced employees<sup>28</sup>. Adult learning in the workplace breaks the monotony of work and improves how employees see their employer (i.e. 'good employer status')<sup>29</sup>. It can also reduce the likelihood of people smoking and consuming alcohol while increasing the likelihood of them exercising<sup>30</sup>. This in turn can improve both their mental and physical health.



**Social:** Adult learning (in general) can lead to an improved disposition to voluntary and community activities as well as improved civic attitudes and political participation. Because of this, participation in adult learning in the workplace can also lead to improved engagement with the community and in civic activity. Additionally, adult learning in the workplace allows trainees to develop basic work habits and an occupational identity.



We can however still distinguish the individual level further, by considering their level of skill or qualification: low-, medium- or high-skilled. In Europe in 2017, there were 61 million Europeans without an upper secondary education qualification (ISCED 1-2), 125 million with ISCED 3-4 and 85 million with an ISCED 5-8 diploma<sup>31</sup>, which shows that low-skilled adults constitute a considerable proportion of the European work force.

**Low-skilled** adults will likely benefit most from adult learning in the workplace, as they have often not been successful at school and may have negative prior experience with formal education and training, i.e. more traditional learning settings. Secondly, the lack of formal qualifications, typical for low-qualified **unemployed** individuals, is often associated with a lack of readiness to work and lack of appropriate conduct in the workplace (negative stereotyping)<sup>33</sup>. These individuals would benefit from additional training to re-engage with the labour market. These connections to employment opportunities in adult learning in the workplace programmes would allow them to show their abilities to potential employers, while also allowing them to develop their job-seeking skills<sup>34</sup>.

**Medium and high-skilled** individuals benefit from adult learning in the workplace because, for experienced workers, the competences they require will change over time due to changes in work practices and as the speed (and quality) of their work improves<sup>35</sup>. This means they will also need to develop continuously, essentially reskilling or even upskilling themselves.

Additionally, adult learning in the workplace can stimulate medium- and high-skilled workers to progress beyond competence into proficiency (i.e. from novice to expert) through acquiring 'tacit knowledge', which can appear in three forms: situational understanding, (increasingly) intuitive decision-making and routine procedures<sup>36</sup>.

**Cedefop, Return to work (2013):**

"WBL offers a way of learning which is more attractive, relevant and suitable than 'traditional' school-based forms for low-qualified adults, who are likely to have a history of failure and negative experience. [...] WBL programmes, including programmes for adult learning in the workplace, have several advantages over 'traditional' school-based learning in addressing the particular needs of this group. Its potential lies not only in the skills it can foster, but also the mode of delivery and a range of other factors, such as the opportunity to connect with potential employers and support for a gradual transition from training to work."<sup>32</sup>

## The value of adult learning in the workplace for employers

Employers profit from providing opportunities for adult learning in the workplace as well, with their main benefits across three dimensions: innovation, benefits to the workforce and economic.



**Innovation:** Skills shortages or gaps can delay the development of new products and/or services. Adult learning in the workplace can be an effective strategy to address the problem of inadequate skills<sup>37</sup>. Because of the increased skills and competences of the workforce, a firm's innovation performance can be increased<sup>38</sup>, which will in turn benefit their economic competitiveness<sup>39</sup> with other firms.



**Motivated workforce:** As mentioned above, adult learning in the workplace can break the monotony of work, while allowing workers to be trainers or mentors could stimulate their self-confidence and their commitment to the company. Workers feeling a sense of loyalty or commitment are more likely to stay with the same employer because they see better opportunities for personal and professional development. For the company, this means a higher rate of staff retention<sup>40</sup>. Additionally, participation in adult learning in the workplace can benefit labour market signalling in the recruitment process by serving as a signalling 'device' other than a formal qualification. For employers, it means that participants are indicating they are job-ready and their work-placement schemes can be seen as 'suitability testing' of potential employees, improving the skills matching overall.



**Economic:** Adult learning in the workplace helps employees adapt to new processes or machinery, reduces breakdown rates (of machinery<sup>41</sup>), reduce incidents at work, speeds up the induction of newly hired personnel, facilitates direct assessments of the training's impact on the functioning of the enterprise and allows for combining sustained production with the promotion of training and professional development of employees<sup>42</sup>. This increase in their capacities<sup>43</sup>, combined with a higher workforce motivation and an increased innovation performance, leads to an increase in productivity and thus an increase in economic benefit<sup>44</sup>. Additionally, staff retention (fewer workers leaving) will reduce expenses as there is less need for newly hiring and training employees. Collaboration between employers and work-based learning (WBL) delivery organisations to provide a steady supply of potential employees can also lower recruitment costs<sup>45</sup>.



## The value of adult learning in the workplace for society

For society as a whole, increased participation in adult learning in the workplace could lead to benefits in three dimensions: economic, social participation and equality.



**Economic:** Participation in adult learning (in general) stimulates the economic wellbeing of a country, as countries with higher levels of skills and competences are more likely to be more competitive. Additionally, the participation in adult learning of employed individuals has shown to lead to a higher GDP per resident, while the participation of unemployed individuals has shown to decrease the unemployment rate<sup>46</sup>. An economic argument can also be made for adult learning in the workplace; by transferring the costs of achieving learning outcomes from formal (publicly funded) educational institutions to enterprises, public expenditure will be reduced allowing for more effective use of funds to achieve wider participation in education and training<sup>47</sup>. This reduction in public expenditure is even stronger if we consider the amount and range of necessary equipment, readily available in enterprises, which would otherwise have to be purchased by the educational institutions. Additionally, adult learning in the workplace can contribute to increasing the adaptability of the workforce to better prepare for future skills requirements and the evolving employment landscape<sup>48</sup>. This will contribute to mitigating the projected skills shortage that would otherwise limit Europe's productivity, innovation and modernisation<sup>49</sup>.



**Civic and social participation:** Countries with higher skills levels in literacy and numeracy have shown increased participation in volunteering activities, a higher level of political interests with higher voting rates as well as higher levels of trust<sup>50</sup>. Even though these effects are not exclusive to adult learning in the workplace, they do contribute to a higher level of social cohesion in the community.



**Equality:** Adult learning in the workplace can lay down an important foundation for social (re-)integration and participation of all persons, particularly for vulnerable groups<sup>51</sup>. This in turn promotes (social) inclusion by offering people from all social groups an attractive entry route into training and employment. Additionally, by providing an opportunity to experience 'success' through applied learning to students that are disadvantaged, disengaged and/or failing, the drop-out rate can be reduced<sup>52</sup>.



## Overall adult participation in learning

The need for every adult to be engaged in continuous learning and updating skills is unfortunately not yet reflected in levels of adult participation in learning.

The rate of adult participation in education and training (during the previous four weeks) has remained at similar levels for the last five years (age 25-64; EU-28)<sup>53</sup>

10.7 %

2013/2015

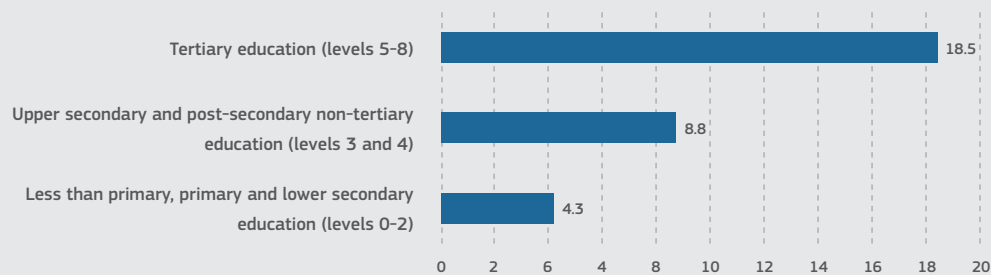
10.9 %

2017

It is unlikely that the participation rate will reach the Education and Training 2020 target of 15 % by 2020<sup>54</sup>.

In 2017, **11.6 %** of employed people took part, while for unemployed people the rate was **10.0 %**. Those who would benefit most from learning new skills are learning the least (see figure below<sup>55</sup>).<sup>56</sup>

Participation rate by education attainment level (age 25-64) 2017 (source: Labour Force Survey)



The Adult Education Survey (AES) shows that in 2016, **45.1 %** of the adult population took part in learning (measured over a 12-month period)<sup>57</sup>. **For most countries the participation rate increased between 2011 and 2016.**

The AES shows that participation is lower for specific disadvantaged groups:

Participation was lower for unemployed and inactive people

**28.3 % & 22.7 %**  
respectively

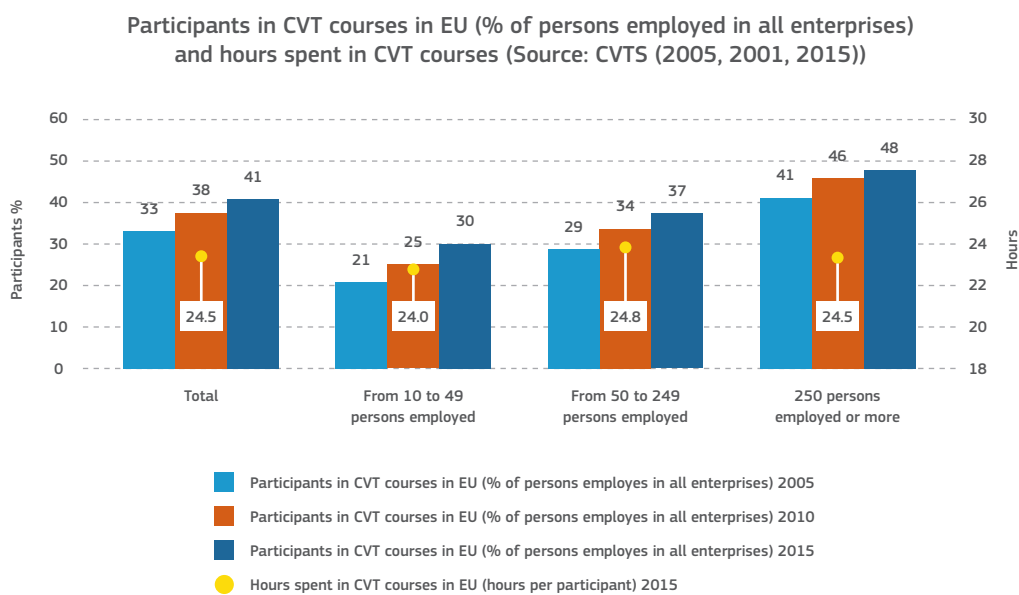
Participation of employed people was approximately

**53.1 %**

## Adult participation in learning at work

There is limited data covering all the adult learning that takes place in the workplace; in particular, informal learning and how this is stimulated are not well covered by statistical sources.

The Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) (2010; 2015) provides an indication of the extent to which companies support training and employees took part in continuous vocational training in the previous year. The following figure provides an overview of the change in the percentage of employees that took part in CVT training between 2005 and 2015 and presents the number of hours spent per participant on CVT courses,<sup>58</sup>



What can be seen from the CVTS is that, over the years, participation in CVT has increased. The percentage of enterprises that offer CVT possibilities has also increased. The number of hours spent on training, however, decreased from 27.1 in 2005 to 24.5 in 2015.

Although the survey shows a positive trend in participation, it reveals some challenges as well.

- **Participation increases with company size:** The larger the company, the higher the percentage of employees that take part in CVT. This is important, because 99 % of enterprises within the EU are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)<sup>59</sup>, and these employ around two thirds of the overall workforce<sup>60</sup>, but CVTS shows that they are the least likely to offer training, so, overall, the availability of continuing vocational training for most employees is unfavourable.
- **Participation differs according to employment status:** Nearly half of employees with indefinite contracts (45 %) participated in training, compared to 31 % of employees with a fixed-term contract. This was a similar proportion for self-employed people with workers (32 %) and self-employed workers, who were the least likely to access training (19 %)<sup>61</sup>.
- **Participation differs according to skills levels:** Fewer low-qualified employees take part in learning because employers offer them fewer opportunities. The major share of continuous vocational learning is taken by employees who are already well-qualified<sup>62</sup>.
- **Training is needed for employees to keep up to date, but is not supported by all employers:** The European Skills and Job Survey (ESJS; Cedefop) found that more than 30 % of European adult workers experienced changes (e.g. new technologies) in the workplace and were not supported by training activities paid for by the employer<sup>63</sup>.

## 3

## How to promote adult learning in the workplace?

The building blocks of effective policies

**For all adults, learning in the workplace could be an alternative route to obtaining either higher level, or more relevant, skills to better equip them to confront the emerging challenges associated with mega-trends. As adults spend a large share of their time in the workplace, the workplace is an important learning environment; it is the place to develop not only job-related skills but also basic and transversal competences that make people more resilient to changes in their career and life.**

**For all these reasons, the Working Group believes that promoting adult learning in the workplace needs to become a political priority and be translated into concrete actions.**

There is no one-size-fits-all prescription for promoting and developing adult learning in the workplace. It is covered by different types of policies with different objectives. Every national context is different: how responsibilities are distributed between education providers, employers and employees, or who funds adult learning in the workplace. Furthermore, countries have different needs. Is there a need for upskilling (non-formal) learning, or learning leading to a formal qualification? Are there specific target groups with specific skills needs? Or, is there a need for a generally accessible provision of learning at the workplace?

Given these differences, there are different routes to increasing skills through learning. Routes may go via the employers, via training providers, or via the employees (learners) directly or via indirect access points (e.g. social services, guidance services etc.). Each route requires a unique mix of policy instruments which may involve both 'sticks' (such as obligations deriving from legislation) and 'carrots' (such as subsidies). Other policy instruments can lie in soft measures such as communication strategies and marketing, or in more directive specific measures such as the quality assurance mechanisms of training providers. The policy mix is very much dependent on the national context, the way responsibilities are divided between the main stakeholders and the role of the government in relation to this policy area.

Based on the inventory of policies, the lessons learned from peer learning, and additional evidence from studies and reports, the Working Group has identified 'building blocks' that can be combined to construct effective policies for different contexts.

Note that although the 'building blocks' are phrased in such a way as to encourage action by national governments, they are not the sole 'agents of change'; in relation to many 'building blocks', joint efforts are required by several stakeholders.

## The building blocks

### The vision on adult learning in the workplace

#### **BB1:**

Encourage employers to adopt a learning culture that supports career-long learning

#### **BB2:**

Ensure that adult learning in the workplace puts learners on a lifelong learning pathway (and is supported by guidance systems and validation of prior learning)

### Commitment, governance and coordination

#### **BB3:**

Secure the long-term commitment of all stakeholders

#### **BB4:**

Ensure effective coordination between all stakeholders and agree on roles and responsibilities

#### **BB5:**

Communicate about adult learning in the workplace using the language of those who need to be encouraged

#### **BB6:**

Ensure sustainable co-funding systems in which all see the benefit of investing in adult learning in the workplace

#### **Note:**

Descriptions of the policy examples cited in this section can be found in the annex.



## Planning and ensuring relevance of adult learning in the workplace

**BB7:**

Ensure that workplace learning is tailored to adult learners' needs

**BB8:**

Ensure that adult learning in the workplace responds to employers' needs

**BB9:**

Assure the quality of adult learning in the workplace

## Monitoring and evaluation

**BB10:**

Set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that adult learning in the workplace remains relevant and effective

## 1

## Encourage employers to adopt a learning culture that supports career-long learning

Effective skills policies are not designed to provide only one-off training, but rather to **encourage employers to establish a sustainable workplace culture in which learning happens continually**.

Learning in the workplace is stimulated not only by providing learning opportunities, but also – at the same time – by making it easy to learn and providing incentives to learn through the overall design and organisation of work. The following dimensions are important for developing effective learning strategies in enterprises<sup>64</sup>:

- **Learning systems and incentives:** this dimension relates to generating, managing and facilitating a learning system that is conducive to producing and sustaining high commitment, security and motivation from the workforce with, for example, different types of rewards, wage levels and appraisal inducements;
- **Work design and the organisation of work:** this dimension addresses how enterprises organise work to create an all-encompassing foundation for the creation of learning and competence development;
- **Skills development:** the skills development dimension emphasises the importance of formal and non-formal learning initiatives in and around the workplace, as well as staffing and career development chances in the enterprise.

Social partners and Public Employment Services (PES) play an important role in linking learners' and employers' needs, and through this encourage continual learning in the workplace.

The **Irish** Skillnets policy has explicitly in mind that companies are stimulated to see learning as a strategic direction for growth.

In **Slovenia**, the 'Career platform for employees' (CPE) provides consultancy to businesses to identify long-term goals and identify the skills needs of company employees. It also supports HR staff to develop career-planning.

In the **Netherlands**, the 'language agreements' policy aims to convince employers that it is in the interest of the company to invest in the language skills of their employees.



### How to do it?

- Communicate to companies (especially SMEs) the benefits of adult learning in the workplace.
- Communicate a holistic approach to skills development, whereby the focus is not only on providing learning, but also organising the work (differentiated work tasks) and stimulating the learners' desire to learn.
- Establish cooperation between companies (especially SMEs) and organisations specialised in work-place development (guidance providers; education and training providers, PES etc.).
- Provide (financial) incentives for employers to invest in training and learning (informal, non-formal and formal).

## 2

## Ensure that adult learning in the workplace puts learners on a lifelong learning pathway (and is supported by guidance systems and validation of prior learning)

For adult learning at the workplace to be part of an alternative route to obtaining either higher level, or more relevant skills, it is not enough that the learning provided is a one-off event. To have lasting effects and change behaviours, the learning should lead naturally to further participation in learning, contributing to continuous upskilling and reskilling.

Hence, the learning approach should both be directly linked to the working context (e.g. language learning through learning health and safety instructions) and **set learners on a lifelong learning pathway**; for example, enrolling in a basic skills programme can be followed-up by enrolling in other programmes, potentially leading to a formal qualification. This may also result in other outcomes such as participants acquiring a new-found joy/ interest in learning.

To support learners on a lifelong learning pathway, it is important to provide regularly throughout life: information on forecast changes in the labour market and skills needs, learning opportunities and support services; advice on learning opportunities; and guidance during and after learning taking place. In addition, effective systems need to be in place for the validation of prior learning and providing easier access to programmes leading to a formal qualification.

The French policy on the personal training account (Compte personnel de formation) aims to encourage individuals to continue learning. This personal training account is an individual right to hours of training: 20 hours per year during 6 years then 10 hours each year) with a limit of 150 hours in more than 7 years. The account can be used by the individual to follow any training course registered in a national list managed by social partners.

To ease career transition, the career guidance service (Conseil en évolution professionnelle) aims to offer to the employed and unemployed a support for personal career transition and suitable training. This service is linked to the personnel training account.

See for further reading:

- Cedefop's research in the field of lifelong guidance<sup>65</sup>
- Public Employment Services (PES) Practitioners' Toolkit<sup>66</sup>
- Erasmus+ project 'TRIAS - Guidance in the workplace'<sup>67</sup>



### How to do it?

- Have in place mechanisms for skills needs anticipation and for feeding this information into career guidance and learning provision.
- Incentives for individuals to continue learning.
- Set up systems for continuous career advice and guidance and make them available to and accessible by all adults, for instance, by making regular guidance a statutory entitlement.
- Ensure effective systems for validation and recognition of prior learning and establish access routes into formal education programmes as appropriate.
- Ensure validation and recognition of informal and non-formal learning at the workplace (including workplace-related online learning).

## 3

## Secure the long-term commitment of all stakeholders

To raise levels of basic skills requires a long-term perspective and a long-term commitment from all stakeholders (including governments, employers, social partners, interest groups, specialised agencies, social services and learners).

For medium and high skills also, policies operate in the interplay between government, companies and learners themselves, which requires a long-term commitment from all stakeholders and the alignment of strategies across policy domains.

However, in many countries, the usual mode of dealing with these issues is to develop and implement narrowly time-bound projects, either financed through European Social Fund or by national funds in the form of a 'project' or 'action plan'; this is less effective as an approach than translating the commitment into stable legal frameworks as it is often not underpinned by a long-term commitment.

To sustainably provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, for low, medium and highly-qualified adults, policies require a **firm legal foundation or close link to national strategies on lifelong learning and skills development, connecting different policy domains**, and supported by all stakeholders.

In **Norway**, the Government, the social partners and other important skills stakeholders launched a National Skills Strategy (2017-2021) to revitalise and further develop a coordinated skills policy ensuring a well-qualified work force. Adult learning in the workplace and upskilling of adults who are out of work due to skills shortages are important parts of the Strategy.

In **England**, the fact that there is a statutory entitlement to learning provides the necessary stability so that providers always offer adult literacy and numeracy as part of their regular curriculum, despite any changes in governance arrangements that may occur.

In **France**, the social partners have an essential role in regulatory, political and financial aspects of Lifelong Learning Programmes. The interprofessional agreements they conclude are the basis for the introduction of reforms and are reflected in the law.

In **Ireland** the Skillnets initiative is closely linked to the national skills strategy.



### How to do it?

How to engage stakeholders in a skills governance system to improve the relevance of work-based learning provision?

- Build the case for long-term commitment by showing evidence of its benefits for all stakeholders involved.
- Use the right 'language' for each stakeholder (politicians, policy makers, employers, employees, etc.) to help gain long-term commitment.
- Show meaningful results of adult learning in the workplace (or at the start, have a feasible storyline about how the approach leads to results). Plan how the approach is of benefit for the stakeholders.
- Through engagement, establish a coherent and inclusive governance model.
- Focus on incorporating into legal frameworks 'simple' but far-reaching messages (e.g. personal entitlement for learning, individual learning account, employers' levy), the details of which can be developed in other texts.
- Through results, deepen the engagement with all main stakeholders:
  - ▶ Employees and employee organisations;
  - ▶ Employers and employer organisations, sectoral organisations;
  - ▶ Government (departments, local/regional governments, institutions and services).
- Agree on objectives, priorities and milestones in further developing and implementing a policy with a long-term perspective.
- Secure funding (through government funding, EU funding, or company contributions).
- Monitor impact to show results.

## 4

## Ensure effective coordination between all stakeholders and agree on roles and responsibilities

Adult learning in the workplace involves many different stakeholders and different policy areas.

A precondition for effective policy is that all stakeholders (ministries, employers, training providers, trade unions, sector organisations, Public Employment Services etc.) that can support the further development and implementation of the policy are engaged in its design, development and implementation. This requires that roles and responsibilities of each are made explicit and are agreed upon, and that there is an effective mechanism **to coordinate all their work**.

Each stakeholder has specific characteristics and abilities to stimulate adult learning in the workplace and these should be harnessed for the benefit of all to make adult learning in the workplace a success. For instance, trade unions are often well positioned to engage with both learners (i.e. employees) and employers; employer associations could encourage and support companies (especially SMEs) to focus on learning; and other intermediary bodies and agencies such as chambers of commerce, sector organisations and Public Employment Services (PES) can each play a specific role.

As regards specifically medium skills policies, it should be noted that developing medium skills in companies is less dependent on government-developed and implemented programmes and policies and relies more on intermediary bodies and organisations that are closer to companies and learners. A key issue here is that what is needed in terms of skills development is best known at the level it concerns: companies and learners. Hence, these policies include elements of decentralisation, whereby responsibilities are assigned to organisations at the most appropriate level.

The **Irish** Skillnets policy is an example of a model in which employers are given full responsibility to organise industry-relevant training. A crucial role is played by network managers in implementing the training within the network of companies.

**Norway** has a strong and well established system of cooperation between social partners and the Government, the so called tripartite cooperation.

The **Dutch** policy on 'language skills at work' clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the government, intermediaries (PES), employers and training providers.



### How to do it?

- Bring all stakeholders together to take joint responsibility in further developing adult learning in the workplace.
- Identify one's strengths and weaknesses in adult learning in the workplace: to what extent are stakeholders' profiles complementary and can they support each other?
- Link ownership, responsibilities and funding: those stakeholders taking ownership, also take responsibility and have a say in funding arrangements.
- Think about the most appropriate level at which action needs to be taken (national, regional, sectoral, local ...)

## 5

## Communicate about adult learning in the workplace using the language of those who need to be encouraged

A key element in securing stakeholder engagement is communication. Communication about basic skills and medium skills learning should be undertaken in the 'language' of the audience (employer or learner). For example, speaking about 'a lack of basic skills' might not be encouraging for many learners, or their employers. A more positive approach, linked to solving immediate work-related and life-related challenges (e.g. language or communications problems lead to lower productivity, occurrence of errors, neglecting safety instructions leading to accidents at work etc.) is a more convincing approach to encourage learners to embark on a learning pathway and to encourage employers to include basic skills learning in their human resources plan. Furthermore, it could be helpful to focus programmes, and the related communication strategy, on one specific basic skill; 'improving language skills' is more convincing than 'improving a variety of basic skills including language, numeracy and digital skills'.

The **Dutch** language at work programme used a 'marketing approach' to make employers aware of how they could benefit from investing in language learning.

In **Slovenia**, the ESF supported the cooperation between adult education and businesses; it provides a guidance service for employees within a specific company. In this, the project focused on adult learning providers communicating better with businesses on skills, careers and employee progression.



### How to do it?

- Apply a positive approach instead of speaking about a lack of skills: link learning to solving immediate work-related and life-related challenges.
- Focus programmes on one specific 'basic' skill instead of communicating a general approach.

## 6

## Ensure sustainable co-funding systems in which all see the benefit of investing in adult learning in the workplace

Funding and funding arrangements are instrumental to reaching policy objectives. There are two aspects here. Firstly, there should be a certain amount of dedicated funding from national budgets to ensure continuity in policy engagement. Secondly, and even more importantly, the funding arrangements should provide incentives for employers, training providers and learners to work in line with the policy objective<sup>68</sup>.

This means that thought needs to be given to **co-funding arrangements** in policies aimed at different actors: companies (e.g. what percentage of co-funding?); training providers (e.g. should there be results-based subsidies?); and learners (e.g. should there be financial incentives such as reimbursement upon completion of a course? facilitating childcare, providing transportation etc.).

Hence, **there needs to be a financial system and accompanying measures that support and incentivise learning** (training costs, hours, training development etc.) **targeting the responsible stakeholders**: companies (e.g. co-funding), learners (e.g. free of charge, low interest loans) and other governing bodies (e.g. additional grants for local authorities). Policies can include employer levy systems (whereby a percentage of the annual wage bill is collected, to be invested in further education and training); and co-funding models, whereby the government provides only part of the funding and companies or other bodies responsible for VET training provide the other part. Incentives for learners include: the training is free of charge; salary is paid while learning; there are low-interest loans or instead of a monetary incentive; and a time-bound incentive is provided (an individual training account that is measured in hours of training). It is essential that different funding schemes and instruments can fulfil different policy objectives; a one-size-fits-all approach might not work<sup>69</sup>.

The **Irish Skillnets** policy is based on an employers' levy and co-funding by the companies because it is based on enterprise-ownership.

The **Swedish** policy is based on a government grant to steer local authorities to do more on work-based learning for medium skilled persons.

The **French** policy is funded through the employer levy system whereby the collecting bodies provide the funding for the personal training accounts (hours of training). The learners keep their salary while being trained. Social partners also manage the different bodies that collect the levy.

The **Norwegian** policy on Skill Plus showcased the importance of secure funding arrangements to develop long-term policies. It also showed that if state funding is too easily available, this can lead to inefficiency, or at least lack of interest in measuring the impact of policies and investment.

The **Dutch** example on language at work showed how co-funding arrangements can ensure that companies take (joint) responsibility for the learning of their employees.

In the **Belgium (Flanders)** qualifying programmes for jobseekers, the Ministry of Education and Training finances the educational institutions. The Public Employment Services (PES), within the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy, finances the PES instructors and guidance counsellors and covers the costs on the learners' side.

The **Austrian** model of labour foundations is based on co-funding agreements by companies, public employment services and other financing authorities.

In **Germany**, in the framework of the national 'Decade for Literacy 2016-2026', EUR 180 million is allocated for the improvement of adult learners' basic skills and to improve their employability.

The **Spanish** company training programme is financed through a vocational training levy which companies and workers' pay through their Social Security contributions. Companies - depending on their size - must also co-finance the training. Based on the training they develop for their employees, companies can take off a certain proportion of their contributions to Social Security.



### How to do it?

- Base the funding model on a multi-stakeholder agreement.
- Provide evidence to different stakeholders (government at different levels, companies, PES, individuals) about the direct and indirect benefits of investing in adult learning in the workplace.
- Balance the benefits with the expected contribution from stakeholders to the implementation of the policies.
- Develop a funding model that stimulates stakeholders to take advantage of adult learning in the workplace and ensures that they contribute financially to the implementation of the policy.

## 7

## Ensure that workplace learning is tailored to adult learners' needs

Education or training provided to adults needs to consider their characteristics, background, needs, demands and prior experience. The learning should not solely solve a skills gap but should also empower the learner to remain engaged in further learning. In addition, it should enhance the learners' employability by helping them to get into employment, to change employment, to sustain their employment, to progress in employment, or to increase their salary through skills development.

Engaging learners in basic skills learning is not easy; employees need to be made aware of how it would benefit them. It is therefore of the highest importance to apply general adult learning principles to the outreach, content, approach, mode and organisation of learning. Training should be provided in a way that is flexible in terms of approach to delivery (including eLearning and blended learning), timing and duration, and aligns with the situation the adults are in. This means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, but that the content, focus, mode of learning etc. are tailored to the needs and demands of the learners (and in line with the needs of the employers). This also requires a decision about whether the learning should lead to obtaining transversal and/or basic skills; to a qualification or part qualification; to adapt to specific new job or is aimed at supporting career progression. Hence, **policies should ensure that skills training is delivered in a flexible and adult-learner friendly manner (balancing studies, adult life, working life, duration and mode of delivery of the programme).**

The **French** policy on individual learning accounts seeks to empower individuals to define their own learning needs. In addition, the modularisation of VET qualifications allows individuals to focus more on developing a specific skills-set and progressing step by step instead of obtaining a full qualification.

In **Ireland**, in the Skillnets there are mechanisms in place to ensure that the expressed employers' needs are based on the needs of their employees.

The **Danish** adult vocational training programmes are tailored to the needs of different target groups. They can include school-based job-related learning and workshops, and can also be delivered as work-based learning at the workplace. Some are also designed as blended learning and distance learning.



### How to do it?

- Identify target groups, analyse their characteristics and analyse the specific barriers they face in participating in adult learning in the workplace.
- Differentiate approaches in reaching out and delivering training to the characteristics of target groups. Involve stakeholders that are best positioned to reach out to specific target groups (e.g. companies, trade unions, civic organisations, municipalities).
- Align the language use in communication to the characteristics of the target groups.
- Involve learners' representatives such as works council or trade unions.
- Consider different learning formats such as personal training, eLearning and blended learning.



## 8

## Ensure that adult learning in the workplace responds to employers' needs

Adult learning in the workplace must take into account the needs of employers. The learning of their employees needs to be relevant for them. This does not necessarily mean that there should be a focus exclusively on practical or technical work-related skills; companies also value transversal skills<sup>70</sup> and basic skills are also essential in the work environment.

But engaging employers in basic skills training is not self-evident; they might see it as a responsibility of the government unless the benefits to them are clearly pointed out (reduction of accidents at work; higher productivity; improved welfare of workers, etc.). Employers' needs should encompass both immediate skills needs and more long-term needs: the learning should not be seen as a 'quick-fix', but as a way to continuously keep workforce skills up to date with ongoing developments.

Ensuring that learning is responsive to employers' needs and contributes to wider benefits (such as increased competitiveness and innovation) requires an effective skills monitoring and forecasting system that can inform the provision of skills, whoever is responsible for it (employers, Public Employment Services, trade unions, training providers, government programmes etc.).

In **Norway**, within the Skills Plus programme specific basic skills curricula have been developed for specific job profiles.

In **the Netherlands**, the tailoring within the language at work programme is ensured by allowing the content, approach and mode of delivery to be decided between the employer and the training provider.

In the **Swedish** policy, the local authority is responsible for involving companies and other stakeholders to assess skills needs in the municipality. The government grant is only provided to the local authorities when a thorough needs assessment has been conducted.

See for further reading Cedefop's work on skills anticipation and skills forecasting<sup>71</sup>. Cedefop has set up a skills governance framework<sup>72</sup> that identifies key elements and prerequisites to well-functioning systems<sup>73</sup>.

In **Poland**, a large-scale study on human capital is undertaken targeting employers, the general population, and training providers to understand supply and demand of skills.

The **Portuguese** System for the Anticipation of Qualification Needs (SANQ) aims to provide better matching of skills and qualifications at sectoral and regional level while anticipating for the future needs of employers.

In **Ireland**, the Skillnets approach is completely enterprise owned and led: this ensures that training meets the needs of the companies in the sector or the region.



### How to do it?

Setting up an effective skills monitoring and forecasting system that can inform the provision of skills:

- Involve stakeholders in a network-based strategy and work in communities: A skills anticipation system should involve different stakeholders at distinct levels, who need to be kept close to the system. A network-based strategy can facilitate this where different 'linking-pins' have the responsibility to support a part of the network.
- Plan how results are to be used and by whom: When designing a skills monitoring/intelligence system, the starting point should be how different stakeholders will use the results. This should inform what kind of information is gathered and how it is communicated to the different end users.
- Ensure that the results are directly usable by all stakeholders: The skills intelligence should provide results that are relevant for the different stakeholders. This means that the data should allow different analyses and aggregations.
- Include a forward-looking dimension in the system: An anticipatory system should include a forward-looking aspect so that policies (of governments, or employers) can respond to emerging trends and developments.

## 9

## Assure the quality of adult learning in the workplace

Assuring the quality of adult learning in the workplace can be managed in different ways. In formal learning programmes (leading to a qualification), in general quality assurance mechanisms are already in place; whereas in non-formal learning this is less the case. This does not mean, however, that the latter are of lower quality; 'high quality' means that the provision effectively responds to companies' and learners' needs.

The mechanisms used to assure quality need to be aligned with the mode and objective of the learning. The quality of adult learning in the workplace is influenced by: the quality of the learning/working environment; the quality of the learning facilitator (teacher, trainer, or even colleague); the quality of the organisation responsible for the learning; and the quality of the policies and accompanying measures to support the learning.

In **France** all registered training programmes eligible to be used by the personal training account need to meet specific quality criteria (by decree 30/06/2015).

In **Austria** trainers were trained specifically to deliver basic skills training in the workplace. The 'T ABA' course gave adult educators the necessary expertise to implement basic skills training directly in companies or in another work-related context.

In **Switzerland**, the GO-Model offers tools and continuing education to providers of workplace basic skills programmes to increase the quality of delivery.



### How to do it?

- In collaboration with key stakeholders, define what is considered to be quality adult learning in the workplace in the national context.
- Identify what are the quality standards related to the training and learning provided under the policy and what are consequences for the learners, companies, training providers, trainers and other bodies involved.
- Decide what quality assurance mechanism is needed to assure the quality given the context (inspectorate, self-evaluation, external evaluation, code of conduct etc.).
- Identify what data is needed to monitor and assure the quality of the adult learning in the workplace.
- Assign responsibilities to relevant stakeholders to assure the quality of the learning.

## 10

## Set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that adult learning in the workplace remains relevant and effective

To maintain the relevance and effectiveness of policies for adult learning in the workplace, there **should be a system in place to monitor the implementation of the policy and provision and identify opportunities for improving them.**

The fact that policies tend to be decentralised, implemented at lower levels than the ministerial level, and that policies involve a broad range of different stakeholders, requires an effective system to monitor implementation. This system needs to take into account the different perspectives of all stakeholders and focus on what is important for those stakeholders. This is not only for accountability reasons, but also, and even more importantly, for gathering evidence of what works and what does not work and showcasing how adult learning in the workplace can yield benefits for employers, learners and the broader society.

The monitoring of policies concerns - amongst many other aspects - overseeing the enrolment and take-up of the provision of skills training; information concerning the financial implementation rate; whether the provision responds to employers' and learners' needs; whether the policies reach out to those who need training; and to what extent the policies lead to the desired result and impact (at the level of the companies, learners and country). To reflect on national policies and their implementation, countries need to be encouraged to learn about other countries' policies and implementation challenges.

In **France**, the introduction of the personal training account is accompanied by the introduction of an overarching ICT monitoring system that tracks an individual's skills development and the extent to which the account is used for skills development. The French policy was only recently introduced and hence has not yet been evaluated.

In **Ireland**, Skillnets closely monitors the existing networks regarding what they envisaged to deliver on training (and training development) within the year. External evaluations are also carried out.

In **Norway**, the Skills Plus programme is based on continuous evaluation and adaptation of the programme.



### How to do it?

- When designing and developing policies, ensure that they are based on firm evidence about how they will act on different stakeholders and how their change in behaviour (e.g. companies offering training; adults participating in training) is measured.
- Based on this, set up a monitoring system to track the implementation and impact of the policy.
- Agree on a timeframe e.g. 3 or 5 years for evaluating the implementation of the policy.
- Use results of the evaluation to adapt as needed the relevant policies and measures<sup>74</sup>.



4

# Conclusions

**In the light of the rapid pace of technological developments, globalisation and demographic trends, continuing upskilling and reskilling have become very important for individuals, employers, societies, countries and the EU as a whole. Adult learning in the workplace can make a significant contribution to national and regional skills strategies, helping to ensure that employees have the right skill set to remain competitive and that all adults keep updating and extending their knowledge and skills in order to remain employable and to play a full part in society.**

Adult learning in the workplace is an accessible and attractive way for **adults** to maintain and update the knowledge and skills they need for life, and an efficient and effective way for **employers** to keep their employees' skill sets up to date, motivate their workforce and improve staff retention. It is an economical and targeted way for **Member States** to increase their productivity, innovation and modernisation, maintain their competitiveness and employment rates and raise overall skills levels. It also promotes social and economic (re-)integration, inclusion, social cohesion and equality.

Putting in place effective policies that promote adult learning in the workplace requires a long-term commitment from all stakeholders coupled with sustainable equitable co-funding systems; it requires effective coordination between stakeholders and systems to tailor provision to the changing needs of the labour market needs and of adult learners. Appropriate quality assurance mechanisms and clear governance arrangements, including regular monitoring and evaluation, are also needed.





# Annexes

## Annex 1: Examples of policies related to adult learning in the workplace

### Austria: Labour foundations (Arbeitsstiftungen)

The aim of labour foundations is to support job-seeking workers to upskill and re-integrate into the labour market. It consists of demand-driven, company tailored upskilling for unemployed people to help them reintegrate into the labour market after training (or in some types during training). The primary target group are unemployed people entitled to receive unemployment benefits. These can be adults with low basic skills; adults with medium skills as well as migrants or other target groups, depending on the type of foundation. The second target group consists of companies that intend to employ new staff recruited jointly with the Public Employment Services (PES) and train the new staff according to their needs and complying with legal requirements<sup>75</sup>.

There are several types of labour foundations:

- Type 1 - "outplacement" foundations: when a large company is in economic difficulties and has to lay off employees, those dismissed employees receive an upskilling or completely new training in a field with proven demand (according to labour market forecast and an individual training plan);
- Type 2 - "inplacement" foundations: when there is a great need for a specific type of skill in a company or in a region, unemployed workers receive an upskilling in that area;
- Type 3 - target group foundations: these are implemented for upskilling in specific target groups such as persons 45+ or women or refugees.

Type 1 is designed for large companies, whereas Type 2 and 3 are used by small or medium enterprises to train new employees.

The concrete basis for qualification measures is always an individual initial assessment and training plan, outlining individual needs and training goals. This plan must be signed by all parties (participant, foundation management, and where applicable future employer) and be approved by the PES. Completing agreed measures (as set out in the plan) is mandatory for the participant. The mode of training depends on the type of labour foundation and on the agreed training plan.

Some training in outplacement foundations is mainly classroom based, often enriched by internships. In many in placement or target group foundations, a large amount of the training is workplace learning in the company (with additional courses outside the company).

The certificates acquired within a labour foundation programme are the same as outside the programme.

Labour foundations are developed through the initiative of the social partners at a company or regional level, mainly through the participation of company-based representatives (such as the works council) and regional representatives from the unions and the Chamber of Commerce. Later, different adult learning providers or VET institutions are involved in the concrete individual trainings within the labour foundation. The funding is provided by the PES (Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich), the provincial government and the company (or companies) involved. The actual financing structure of a labour foundation is always the result of the negotiation process between the company management, the social partners, the PES and other financing authorities (e.g. the provincial government). During participation in the labour foundation, workers receive unemployment benefits. Additional allowances for course-related costs (e.g. travel expenses and/or childcare) can be granted.

According to evaluation evidence, 75 % of the participants become employed within a year of completing the foundation programme (=75 % re-employment rate according to EEPO report 2015). Other measures do not achieve this high reintegration rate. On the other hand, labour foundations are a cost-intensive instrument in comparison to other active labour market policies (ALMPs). They make it possible to hold companies accountable for labour market policy and relieve public budgets. They are based on the principle of partnership, as the establishment of a labour foundation follows an agreement between the social partners.

**Austria: Trainers trained to deliver basic skills training in the workplace  
(T ABA: Trainer/innen-Ausbildung für Basisbildung am Arbeitsplatz)**

Between April 2016 and February 2017, trainers were trained in Austria specifically to deliver basic skills training in the workplace. The 'T ABA' course<sup>76</sup> gave adult educators the necessary expertise to implement basic skills training directly in companies or in another work-related context.

The tasks of basic skills trainers working in and in conjunction with companies include identifying companies' requirements, analysing employees' existing skills, agreeing common learning objectives and implementing learning opportunities together with employees. Austrian training opportunities take account of the principles for basic skills training laid down in the corresponding programme planning document for the 'Adult Education Initiative' (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung*) support programme. In practice, this means a strong focus on participants, promoting learners' autonomy and encouraging reflection, and also applying a critical approach to existing knowledge during training. These are all things that are not necessarily part of training in companies.

A unique feature of the T ABA course was the make-up of its participants. It was attended by trainers from vocational training and also by experienced basic skills trainers. Following a joint introductory module, the course was split as follows: the vocational trainers gained expertise on basic skills training while the basic skills trainers familiarised themselves with content related to vocational training. Tools for analysing requirements, analysing skills and planning learning objectives formed part of the content for both groups. In a practical phase, participants identified occupation-specific job profiles, drew up corresponding lists of skills and job-shadowed trainers. The mutual exchange of experiences between the two groups proved particularly productive.

The T ABA was piloted using a curriculum that had been specially developed and was held for the first time in Linz and Innsbruck between April 2016 and February 2017. The T ABA training was supported by the BFI (vocational training institute) for Upper Austria in cooperation with the BFI for Carinthia, the BFI for the Tyrol and the Research Institute for Vocational Training and Adult Education at the Johannes Kepler University Linz. The pilot course was free of charge, comprised 160 teaching units and was held as work-based training attended by 16 participants<sup>77</sup>.

**Belgium-Flanders: Qualifying programmes for jobseekers (OKOT: onderwijkskwalificerend traject)**

The aim is to reduce unemployment and tackle consistent bottleneck jobs. The focus is on functional learning. Learning in the workplace which currently features in 75 % of the OKOT programmes, is one of the objectives of the programme. The target groups include unqualified jobseekers without a secondary diploma and jobseekers that require re-skilling to find a job.

Depending on the screening results, basic skills modules are taught in the programme, which can involve classroom learning, distance learning and learning in a workplace context. The programmes are governed by educational institutes, PES, professional sector organisations and employers. The Ministry of Education and Training finances the educational institutions in these programmes. The Public Employment Services (PES), within the Ministry of Employment and Social Economy, finances the PES instructors and guidance counsellors, as well as covering the costs on the learners' side.

Based on an analysis of the outcomes of OKOT programmes from 2013-2014, the Flemish Committee decided to incorporate learning in the workplace further into these programmes<sup>78</sup>.



### **Denmark: Adult vocational training programmes (AVTP)**

The aims of these programmes are to update and re-skill low-skilled and skilled workers in the labour market in accordance with the needs of the labour market in a short and long-term perspective. The adult vocational training programmes ensure that employees acquire new and updated skills and competences to keep their job or get a new one, and that employers have staff with updated and relevant skills and competences to support growth in their organisations. The target group is adults with low and medium skills, but those with high-level skills can also access the programme. However, the programmes are designed specifically for low-skilled and skilled adults in employment as well as migrants.

The programmes are provided as school-based job-related learning or workshops and can also be delivered as work-based learning in the workplace. Some are designed as blended learning and distance learning programmes. The programmes are also used in job rotation schemes. For low-skilled workers and migrants lacking basic skills, these programmes can be delivered by combining vocational training with basic skills in literacy and numeracy. All programmes lead to nationally recognised certificates. The programmes are provided by approximately 100 public accredited providers including training centres, vocational colleges and private providers. 13 regional adult training centres were established in 2010 to bring all AVTP and basic skills programmes providers under one umbrella, thus providing one entrance for adults and companies to the programmes. The programmes are paid by the state, but employers/employees pay fees to participate. Participants can receive an allowance financed by the employers' reimbursement fund, which all companies have to pay into.

Approximately 350 000 adults participated in these programmes in 2014. Surveys show that participants are more likely to be employed, and to hold a job in the same company for longer than those who have not participated in adult vocational training courses.

### **France: Personal training account, VET reforms and a decree on quality**

The French policy on personal training accounts starts from the idea that the individual needs to be empowered to define his or her own learning needs. Through the personal training account, individuals have the right to 150 hours of training over seven years (24 hours per year for the first five years, then 12 hours per year). The account can be used by individuals to follow any training course registered on a national list determined mainly by social partners and employers, and is funded via the VET levy (1 % of the wage bill for large companies and 0.55 % for small companies). The learners keep their salary while being trained.

In a working population of 25 million, almost 4 million accounts are active and 500 000 are financed. Since January 2015, 216 million training hours have been awarded. The introduction of the personal training account is accompanied by the introduction of an overarching ICT monitoring system that tracks an individual's skills development and the extent to which the account is used for skills development.

In addition, the modularisation of VET qualifications allows individuals to focus more on developing a specific skill set instead of obtaining a full qualification (which they might not need in their situation). There are many initiatives to attune the offer to the needs of adult learners. Firstly, the individual can make his or her own decisions on what training to follow within the personal training account; secondly, VET programmes are becoming more modularised (units/ blocs de compétences); thirdly, there is a functioning system for validation of experience.

The French policy also invested in the establishment of quality requirements for VET qualifications and units. These have been put in place for the public and private training providers that deliver VET qualifications. All registered training programmes eligible to be used by the personal training account need to meet specific quality criteria (decree 30/06/2015).

### Germany: Decade for Literacy 2016–2026

In Germany, the Federal Government has declared a national ‘Decade for Literacy 2016–2026’<sup>79</sup> and will spend EUR 180 million on the improvement of adult learners’ basic skills over these 10 years; the main targets of which are to improve the employability of adult learners with a lack of basic skills and to significantly reduce the overall number of illiterate people in Germany within this decade. A coordination office has been established in Bonn, whose tasks include facilitating communication and cooperation between all stakeholders involved and providing academic support for the basic skills and literacy projects funded by various public sources. The office also identifies future research fields, helps improve professionalism in teaching and makes suggestions for education policies.

### Ireland: Skillnets

Skillnets is a private company fully funded through the Ministry of Education by the employers’ levy. The initiative is closely linked to the national skills strategy. Its policy objectives are to:

- Promote and facilitate workforce learning, as a key element in sustaining Ireland’s national competitiveness.
- Enhance productivity and innovation at enterprise level by upskilling those in employment and creating a vigorous talent base.
- Increase participation in enterprise training by companies to improve competitiveness and improve access for workers to skills development.
- Upskill adult learners by facilitating groups of companies<sup>80</sup> across multiple sectors and regions to actively engage in addressing their current and future skills needs.

The key element of the approach is that Skillnets facilitates the establishment of regional or sectoral networks of companies that identify training needs and organise training for companies in the network. The companies within a sector or region take responsibility to work together with a network manager from a designated organisation to organise industry-relevant training. The companies co-fund the training (usually at a rate of 50 %). The basic idea is that the initiative is employer-led and -owned and that companies take control of their own learning.

The Skillnets initiative empowers companies to take responsibility in seeing the strategic value of learning for their employees and facilitates the establishment of networks through which they deliver training (through funding and advice). Within the networks, learning is not only provided in course-like settings, but also through informal learning events, such as meetings, workshops or company visits. Many of the courses developed within Skillnets are accredited and referenced to NQF/EQF levels. Network managers assist companies and SMEs in particular to identify and address their skills development requirements.

In 2016, there were 63 Skillnets networks; 14 000 firms were involved and 50 000 trainees participated. External evaluation is very favourable in terms of impact reached (company sales, innovativeness and turnover). The companies’ needs are usually based on the demands and requirements of employees, in addition to the requirements of businesses.

There are mechanisms in place to ensure that the employers’ needs are based on inventories among employees. 40 % of training participants responded to an external evaluation that the training was based on their training needs. The networks emphasise the importance of the combination of technical and transversal skills, acknowledging the strategic value of learning. Direct implementable skills can impact upon competitiveness and innovation in the short term; investing in transversal skills might have longer term effects on competitiveness and innovation.

The quality is assured through close contact between the Skillnets organisation and the network managers and through close follow up on training activities. In addition, the networks need to apply every year for funding, and quality of provision is a core criterion within the funding assessment process.

Skillnets closely monitors the existing networks regarding what they envisaged to deliver within the year on training (and training development). An external evaluation concluded that the results of the policy are promising, but that more needs to be done to capture learners’ requirements.

### **Netherlands: Language at work (Taal op de werkvloer)**

The aim of this initiative is to increase language skills among employees with low and medium language skills. It consists of two measures:

- Language agreements: employers can enter a so-called language agreement, where they must acknowledge the importance of language skills and commit to making efforts to improve the skills of their employees.
- Subsidy arrangements for employers to provide language courses at or outside the workplace.

The pilot scheme found that it took a while to find employers who would use the subsidy arrangements, but once the arrangements became more widely known they were used extensively.

The government sets the frameworks but leaves the mode and approach to basic skills learning to be defined jointly between the employer and the training providers. The offer are based on employers' needs and demands: they themselves decide what kind of problems need to be solved by language training. The agreement ensures a commitment by the companies to focus on language skills. The government provides funding to support companies who invest in language at the workplace. The 'learning working desks' function as intermediary bodies, being in close contact with the companies and supporting them in engaging in language training.

The initiative is devised in a manner similar to a marketing strategy, whereby language training is aimed at solving problems the companies face (such as employees not understanding safety instructions, being less efficient at work, and being less able to follow vocational training to encourage innovation at the workplace). Language training (not using the term 'basic skills') has a 'return on investment' for the companies. To convince employers and employees, 'argument-cards' have been produced containing evidenced benefits of improved language skills.

### **Norway: The National Skills Policy Strategy (2017-2021)**

The National Skills Policy Strategy was presented in February 2017 and will be in force until 2021.

The strategy stakeholders are the social partners, presented by all eight main employer and the employee organisations, the Sami Parliament, Norwegian associations for private/civil providers of adult learning, and the government represented by Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, Ministry of Integration and Family Affairs, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Education and Research.

The overall aim of the strategy is to ensure future business competitiveness, economic growth, and social- and labour market inclusion. Ensuring coherence of policies and measures of all stakeholders is also an important target.

The strategy points out the direction for Norway's future skills policy to make good use of human capital. It gives common goals and priority to three main areas. The National Skills Policy Strategy partners agree to:

- contribute to making informed choices for the individual and society;
- promote better learning opportunities and effective use of skills in working life; and
- strengthen skills among adults with low skills and weak labour market attachment.

They also agree to preserve the labour market model (a high degree of unionisation, coordinated wage bargaining, culture for full-time work) and stress the importance of the so-called tripartite cooperation. The strategy does not modify the divided responsibility between the stakeholders.

Strengthening the career services is also an important target. The strategy partners agree to put in place a more comprehensive and coordinated system and to further develop regional career centres. They believe it is urgent to raise the quality and competences of career counsellors, and are particularly focused on integration, immigration, Sami and seniors.

Furthermore the National Skills Policy Strategy includes a number of structural/organisational changes. The most important ones include the establishment of the Future Skills Needs Committee and the Skills Policy Council.

The Future Skills Needs Committee (a 3 year project) is a forum where researchers and skills forecast experts, ministries and major social partners organisations) meet to analyse, discuss and disseminate available statistics, research and information on future skills needs. The aim is to link the various research and analysis of skills needs to gather more knowledge of future skills needs, improve future skills forecasts and reach a common understanding of labour market developments and skills needs.

The implementation of the strategy will be followed up and monitored through the Skills Policy Council, consisting of all the strategy partners. The council will meet regularly during the strategy period.

The council will discuss any questions and all skills policy relevant issues, e.g. the results and deliveries from the Future Skills Needs Committee.

The strategy will be revised after two years, when the partners will then consider a renewal.

### **Norway: Skills Plus**

The main objective of the Skills Plus programme<sup>81</sup> is to ensure that every adult can attain the level of basic competence that enables him/her to meet the increased demands of today's work and everyday life. Hence, an important objective is to increase the quality of teaching and ensure that individuals get an education adapted to their needs. There are two main target groups:

- Adults in working life<sup>82</sup>, normally with a low formal education level, who need to improve their basic skills. This can include immigrants, and from 2015 one of the subjects of teaching is improving basic Norwegian skills for foreigners/immigrants;
- Adults recruited through NGOs with no requirement of employment (since 2015, a smaller part of the programme has been earmarked for this target group).

The programme concentrates on basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy, digital skills and oral communication, and commencing in 2016, Norwegian for speakers of other languages. Within the Skills Plus programme, specific basic skills curricula have been developed for specific job profiles.

The teaching operates within the Competence Goals for Basic Skills for Adults, which lay down national standards for reading and writing, mathematics, digital competence and oral communication. Secondly, teaching should be meaningfully related to/embedded in situations at work. Beyond this, the programme is open to a wide variety of approaches. Activities are adapted to the needs of the companies and to the needs of the individual learners. A variety of learning aids have been developed to help teachers adapt instruction to individual situations. There is no formal certification for the courses.

Guidelines for the programme are provided by the Ministry of Education. Skills Norway has administrative responsibility for the programme and has developed framework/curricula and different tools to support the providers. Skills Norway offers training for Skills Plus teachers and meetings with the providers to ensure that the guidelines and framework are fully understood. To ensure good quality, a certification system has also been developed for experienced providers of Skills Plus.

Skills Plus is financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Education in the yearly national budget. The funding has increased every year (around EUR 22.3 million since it started in 2016). Any private or public enterprise in Norway, in collaboration with a provider (or vice versa), can apply for funding through the programme. Expenses like meals, meeting facilities, travel expenses for participants etc. are considered deductible expenses for the enterprises.

The applicant can choose between different lengths of courses, depending on the needs of participants. The funding is set according to the amount of lessons.

More than 60 000 participants have received job-related training in basic skills through the programme. Skills Norway has summarised the effects based on evaluations of the programme. 50-65 % of the participants reported that the course had improved their reading and writing skills. In the last evaluation, the share of respondents who described their reading and writing skills as “good” also increased. The best outcomes are in digital skills, where up to 70 % of the participants reported increased digital skills. The evaluation of the programme documents that the training led to an improved working life, and increased self-esteem in the participants. Many of them acquired the basic skills needed, and also acquired the confidence to take further vocational exams and achieve a certificate of apprenticeship after taking part in the programme. The participants were also more likely to accept new tasks at work. Feedback from the enterprises showed that the participants were more motivated and had increased their skills at work, they made fewer mistakes, and were better at reporting etc.

The success of this programme was attributed to the following:

- Most importantly, it is provided by the participants’ employer;
- The enterprises involved had previous experience with skill enhancing activities/had a focus on competence;
- The enterprises (not the providers) applied for the funding;
- The course was held (or partly held) during working hours.

Success rates were higher where:

- There was dialogue between the participant and the teacher in advance of the course;
- Participation was voluntary, but encouraged by the enterprise;
- Training was adapted to the needs of the participant.

### **Norway: The Tripartite Cooperation**

Norway has a strong regulated system of cooperation between the social partners and the government, the so-called tripartite system.

Norwegian social partners (employers and employee unions) are responsible for contributing to workplace learning and the efficient use of skills in the workplace. Norway has a long tradition of close cooperation, both formal and informal at all levels, between education and training authorities and social partners. The unions have a long standing tradition of promoting a positive learning culture, both in civic society and in work life.

The national collective labour agreements (Hovedavtalene) and wage agreements (tariffavtalene) between employer and employee organisations - which state the value of education and training for the individual, business development and for society - include sections on objectives, rights, obligations and procedures regarding cooperation on training of staff in member enterprises.

Norwegian social partners are involved in tripartite cooperation according to the ILO Convention 142 regarding policies and provision of vocational education and training. The social partners are represented in different boards/councils at national, regional and local level and lobby policymakers on a broad basis at all education and training levels.

Norway has a high level of adult learning. About 61 % of adults in Norway participated in education or training in 2012 (AES 2012). The majority of the learning and training activities are work related and a large part took place during paid working hours. The workplace is an important arena for adults' learning, and learning in working life is essential for developing skills that the enterprises need. Enterprises are actively involved in the training of their staff, and enterprise-initiated learning for employees is widespread.

In general, larger enterprises offer more training to employees than smaller enterprises. Most in business training is non-formal and not conducted through the formal education and training system. There are differences between sectors and enterprises and groups. There are more learning activities in skill intensive sectors. People with higher education qualifications tend to participate more often in education and training, young people tend to participate more than older people, and women are more likely to participate than men. Differences in participation are especially noticeable in formal education.

#### **Poland: Study on Human Capital in Poland (BKL: Bilanz Kapitalu Ludzkiego)**

A large scale study on human capital was conducted in Poland, the first edition of which ran from 2010 to 2014. The second edition is being implemented between 2017 and 2022. The budgets are EUR 5 million and EUR 3.5 million respectively and are funded through the ESF. As skills are the drivers of a knowledge-based economy (they create jobs and attract investments), it was felt there was a need to improve the support provided for skills development and hence to have an updated account of skills needs in terms of demand and supply.

The survey was based on three basic questions:

- What are Polish employers' skills needs? (Demand)
- What are the skills of the Polish workforce? (Supply of skills on the labour market)
- How to overcome skills mismatches?

The surveys targeted employers, the general population, training and providers; sectoral research was also conducted. The surveys are conducted every 2 years, with smaller mid-term surveys in between to track development over time. The results of the surveys were intended to be used by key stakeholders: policy makers; practitioners (employers' organisations and HR, employees and trade unions, (foreign) investors, HEIs shaping curricula;) and scientists.

#### **Portugal: System for the Anticipation of Qualification Needs (SANQ) and Qualifica programme**

The Portuguese System for the Anticipation of Qualification Needs (SANQ) aims to provide a better matching of qualifications at sectoral and regional levels, taking into account the past match and anticipated future balance between supply and demand.

It consists of three components:

- Diagnosis (evolution of the labour market linked to professions and qualifications, and importance of the qualification in the regional labour market);
- Planning (forecasting the volume of employment in relation to a given qualification);
- Regional in-depth analysis (it is the municipalities' task to identify developments and identify priority areas for skills development).

There is a broad stakeholder base at national, regional and local level. The anticipation takes place at qualification level. This initiative is embedded in a range of skills development frameworks such as the National Qualifications System; the National Catalogue of Qualifications; the Qualifica centres (new opportunity centres) focusing on recognition of prior learning; and the establishment of 16 sector councils for qualifications. The development of SANQ is supported by the ESF.

### **Portugal: The Qualifica programme** (a political priority of the government)

In order to tackle the deficit of qualifications, in March 2016 the government launched the Qualifica programme (an integrated strategy to foster the training and qualification of adults).

#### Main objectives

- Raise the qualification level of adults and their employability;
- Increase digital and functional literacy;
- Better align the training provision with labour market needs;
- Facilitate tailored training pathways that lead to raising the qualification level of adults; combining the National System of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC) with adult education and training.

#### Target groups

- Less qualified adults;
- Unemployed people;
- NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

#### Goals until 2020

- 50 % of the active population with upper secondary education;
- 15 % of adults in LLL activities;
- Contribute to achieving 40 % of 30- to 34-year-olds with higher education qualifications.

#### Key tools in place

- Qualifica centres and ET providers;
- Qualifica Passport;
- National Credit System for VET.

*Qualifica* has a network of 303 centres throughout the country, promoted by public and private institutions, including schools, municipalities, private companies, local/regional associations, employers' associations.

The centres:

- are structures that contribute to increasing qualification levels in Portugal through the RVCC, combined with training activities
- provide information, guidance and referral of adults (18 or over) and NEET to RVCC processes (academic and/or professional, levels 1 to 4 of the NQF) and education and training pathways;
- allow adults to certify prior learning that was acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. Portugal has had a Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) system since 2000;
- play a key role in motivating adults for lifelong learning and in the local networks for qualification (employers, ET providers and municipalities).

### **Slovenia: Career Platform for Employees**

The Career Platform for Employees (CPE) is a model enabling skills needs to be forecast (in sectors, companies and the labour market), skills gaps to be identified and filled by the existing VET available and 'tailor made' programmes to be developed to meet skills needs. It provides consultancy to businesses to identify long-term goals and identify the skills needs of company's employees. It also supports HR staff to develop career planning. This project is supported by the ESF.

The model was tested in the electronic and electrical engineering sector and their value chain (10 businesses, 39 employees). Its methodologies and tools are transferable in other industries/sectors as well. The methodology of this project is already more broadly applied in the Competence Centres for HR Development.

### **Spain: Company training**

The aim of the company training is to improve companies' competitiveness and workers' skills and competences to enable them to keep jobs and develop in their professional career. The target group comprises all employees in a private company. The company decides who receives the training. Until 2012, certain groups of workers were given priority: workers from SMEs, workers with low qualifications, women, workers over 45, victims of terrorism and gender violence, and workers with disabilities. Training is delivered in any format and this is decided by the company. It can be face-to-face (approximately 60 % of the training) and can also involve e-learning or distance learning. Some of it is delivered on the job, and it also includes training courses and individual training for workers (these are not normally in the workplace and they always lead to an official certification). In most cases, there is no official certification or recognition.

The company training is governed by the Public Employment Service with the support of the Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo. However, the companies organise and plan training and choose the training provider. It is financed through a vocational training levy which companies and workers pay through social security contributions. Companies (depending on their size) must also co-finance the training. Based on the training they develop for their employees, companies can take off a certain proportion of their contributions to social security.

In 2015, more than 2 500 000 workers received training (although not all would necessarily fit into the category of 'work-based learning' because the training can also be provided in school-based settings or through distance learning). 439 188 companies (27.4 %) delivered training to their employees; 332 841 of these companies were SMEs<sup>83</sup>.

### **Sweden: Work-based learning for medium skilled adults and specific target groups (migrants)**

In Sweden, local authorities are responsible for providing upper secondary education to young people and adults. This includes VET provision. While grants are available for less qualified people (without upper secondary education), due to the crisis and recent influx of migrants, more and more pressure is being put on the system. The government provided an additional grant of EUR 145 million annually for local authorities to organise VET training including work-based learning elements for medium skilled adults. The local authorities receive the grant to organise the training (and find the workplaces); the workplace and in-company trainers receive funding to deliver the training. The grant is provided on the condition that the local authority cooperates with all main stakeholders (companies, Public Employment Services and associations in industry) and that the need for training is demonstrated for companies and individuals.

### **Switzerland: GO-Model – Upskilling at the workplace (Upskilling am Arbeitsplatz)**

The objective of this programme<sup>84</sup> is to use the workplace as an access point to provide basic skills training for employees with low basic skills. GO intends to increase participation in basic skills learning through using the workplace as a new place of learning and as an alternative to traditional classroom courses.



The specific objectives are:

- To develop and test an integrated and comprehensive model for promoting workplace basic skills that creates benefits for both employees and employers;
- To develop a toolkit for providers and practitioners (both trainers and advisors);
- To promote professionalisation of practitioners working with the model and the toolkit.

The GO project targets adults with low basic skills as well as migrants with low basic skills. GO focuses on situated learning to improve basic skills in the workplace, based on the requirements of work situations. Basic skills in the context of the workplace include oral and written communication, numeracy, ICT as well as collaboration and working methods.

The programme is based on the idea that basic skills programmes are successful if the learning offer is highly contextualised, short (30 lessons) and customised to the needs of the companies and the employees. Implementing a successful programme has implications for providers: trainers need to be flexible and ready to 'leave their classrooms', advisors/trainers need to be able to assess the needs of the SMEs and the needs of the employees, and there is learning cycle and a consulting cycle.

The GO Model has five steps:

- a) Identification of the requirements of the workplace (work situations);
- b) Assessment of basic skills needs of the employee at the workplace;
- c) Development of a training programme covering workplace requirements and needs of employees;
- d) Ensuring a successful transfer of learning back to the workplace;
- e) Evaluation of the GO cycle in the company.

Learning in the workplace may be facilitated by the following arrangements: adapting working hours and learning time (before or after work/shift), learning time is during working hours (either fully or partly); and the company may provide rooms for the courses. Job shadowing or job rotation as well as the use of online media may be used if appropriate to improve the learning environment. One of the most important aspects is the facilitation of the transfer of learning back to the workplace. A successful transfer requires the involvement of supervisors, managers and colleagues in the learning process. The programme does not provide certification on completion of the training. Recognition of informal learning as well as basic skills competences are subjects of discussion in some cantons.

The national law of adult education came into force on 1 January 2017. It provides a national framework for adult education and the promotion of basic skills will receive financial support at national level for the first time. The cantons are going to negotiate with SERI cantonal programmes regarding the promotion of basic skills for the next 4 years. The cantons decide whether to introduce the promotion of basic skills in the workplace into their respective programmes. Adult education providers are going to implement the workplace basic skills training through the GO project.

In the context of workplace basic skills training (GO), the cantons may provide a financial framework to support training in companies. Funds of branches may also be involved in the financing of workplace basic skills. The elaboration of cantonal as well as branch solutions for workplace basic skills training is currently supported through the GO Next project.

There are 10 successful GO pilots in Switzerland, 4 in Niedersachsen (Germany) and several more in Hungary which provide a stable base of experience and know-how for the GO Model. To be able to provide workplace basic skills for as many employees in need as possible cantonal and branch solutions are currently under development in the GO Next project.

With regards to lessons learnt, cantons as well as professional organisations/branches express a clear interest in developing solutions to improve basic skills at the workplace (GO Next). The Swiss situation requires a specific effort for each canton in collaboration with SERI<sup>85</sup>.

#### **United Kingdom (England): Enabling environment and statutory entitlement**

The approach in the English policy is to increase attention to basic skills in schools as well as to provide specific policies for adults by establishing an enabling environment for providers and other stakeholders (such as trade unions) to engage with basic skills for adults.

One element of establishing an enabling environment involves a statutory entitlement for adults to access learning, and there is dedicated funding for providers to offer targeted programmes. This statutory entitlement is targeting English and Maths provision for people without these basic skills. The entitlement for digital skills learning is pending.

## Annex 2: How this report was created

### The ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning

The ET 2020 strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training is the main instrument facilitating exchanges of information and experience on common issues in education and training systems of the Member States (TFEU, art. 165 and 166).

Cooperation takes the form, inter alia, of working groups<sup>86</sup>: these fora consist of experts nominated by Member States and stakeholder organisations and employ techniques of ‘peer learning’ on key education and training topics. They analyse pertinent examples of policies, in the context of the latest evidence from research, in order to identify common factors for policy success that can be transferable between Member States.

The ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning 2016–2018<sup>87</sup> was mandated to develop policy guidance on adult learning policies to promote higher and more relevant skills for all, focusing on two strands:

- Adults with low basic skills – this may include workers who are highly skilled in their occupation, but lack a solid foundation in literacy, numeracy and digital skills, which limits their opportunities to take part in learning offered in the workplace and elsewhere;
- Adults with medium skills – this covers adults who are in need of upskilling to meet the demands of changing job profiles in modern working life, and may include those with low digital or organisational skills, that prevent their chances of progressing in employment and achieving a higher income.

In both cases the purpose was to explore the possibilities of learning taking place in or in relation to the workplace, preparing today’s workers for the continual transformation of society and the workplace. In addition to facilitating occupational transition, upskilling has a positive impact on learners’ life prospects such as better health, longer life expectancy and more active participation in societal life.

## The process followed by the ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning

The Working Group has undertaken a number of activities between January 2016 and June 2018, which are described below.



### Working Group meetings

In total seven Working Group meetings have taken place and included: presentations on national policies and practices; presentations from experts in specific topics of interest (identified by the Working Group members). The first meetings focused on establishing a common understanding of the mandate and theme of the Working Group and identifying the topics of interest. The following meetings prepared for, and then assessed the results of, Peer Learning Activities (PLAs). The final meetings focused on drafting final outputs.

### National policies on adult learning in the workplace

There is a wealth of international comparable information on adult learning in general (participation, policies, reforms etc.); there is also information on work-based learning (WBL) (e.g. Cedefop reports on apprenticeships and WBL in VET); however, international comparable information on policies relating specifically to adult learning in the workplace is scarce. To remedy this, the members of the Working Group each contributed information about policies in their country to create an inventory that gathers together comparable country level information on adult learning in the workplace, to help facilitate a grounded discussion within the Working Group. The inventory also identifies interesting country-specific policy approaches. It describes the policy context in terms of: availability of information; policy frameworks; institutional frameworks and descriptions of policies and programmes.



## Peer Learning Activities

The purpose of these PLAs was to compare and contrast policies from a number of countries in order to learn from each other and to identify the essential conditions for the success of policies related to adult learning at the workplace. The PLAs lasted 2½ days and focused on presenting, discussing and analysing three (or more) interesting national policies.

- The Manchester PLA (22-24 February 2017) focused on policies related to the acquisition of **basic skills** (literacy, numeracy, digital skills) in the workplace.
- The Reims PLA (31 May-2 June 2017) focused on policies related to the acquisition of **medium skills** by adults in the workplace.
- The Warsaw PLA (13-15 October 2017) focused on policies for ensuring that workplace learning provides the **skills needed** by employers and employees<sup>88</sup>.

## Activities during European Vocational Skills Week 2017

In addition to its own activities, the WG was able to take advantage of activities organised by the European Commission during the 2017 European Vocational Skills Week (EVSW). During the EVSW two events were organised that touched upon adult learning in the workplace:

- **Parallel session: Career-long professional learning – support systems (22 November 2017)**. In this parallel session the focus was on the question: what kind of solutions are there to support employees and employers in their pursuit of continuous upskilling and reskilling? The session was attended by more than 100 participants.
- **Hearing: Career-long professional learning in 2030 (23 November 2017)**. This brought together more than 150 participants, representing governments, employers, trade unions, education providers, researchers, and company representatives to discuss what actions need to be taken to make career-long professional learning a reality for all workers in 2030.



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The role of the Education and Training Working Group on Adult Learning 2016-2018 was to identify **policies that promote and support workplace learning of adults**, covering:

- adults struggling with reading, writing, making simple calculations and using digital tools;
- adults with medium skills in need of up-skilling.

This report presents the outcomes of its work. It identifies key messages for policy development along with case studies to inspire new thinking.

For all adults, learning in the workplace could be an alternative route to obtaining higher level, or more relevant, skills to equip them better to confront the emerging challenges associated with mega-trends such as automation, digitalisation and globalisation. As adults spend a large share of their time in the workplace, the workplace is an important learning environment; it is the place to develop not only job-related skills but also basic and transversal competences that make people more resilient to changes in their career and life.

**For all these reasons, the Working Group believes that promoting adult learning in the workplace needs to become a political priority and be translated into concrete actions.**

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