

Policies towards adult education in the EU

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Adult education in the EU

- A rapidly changing technology landscape creates a need for an effective system of adult education for all workers
- The **European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)** affirmed the right to:
 - Quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning to maintain and acquire skills to participate fully in society and successfully manage transitions in the labour market.
- However, opportunities to develop skills are out of reach for many adults:
 - The low-qualified (*low-qualified adults tend to participate less in education and training than those with higher levels of educational attainment*)
 - Those in “atypical” forms of work
 - Employees in SMEs
 - Unemployed
 - Inactive

The New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030

- The New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021-2030 (NEAAL 2030) was adopted in 2021 (following the original EEAL a decade earlier) to address the above issues
- NEEAL 2030 promotes liaison between the relevant ministries, stakeholders
 - social partners, businesses, non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations
- Effective national, regional and local coordination is needed to link policy and practice.
- All this should support adult learning using lifelong career guidance, linked to:
 - Outreach activities
 - Validation of non-formal and informal learning
 - Awareness raising

EU priority areas in the New European Agenda for Adult Learning 2030 for adult learning



1. Governance

- Government can support adult learning by building **partnerships** at all levels; between governments, regional and local authorities, education and training providers, companies, social partners, public employment and social services, NGOs and civil society
- Roles of partnerships:
 - Analysing education and training needs
 - Developing learning opportunities for adults
 - Supporting the involvement of and cooperation between all stakeholders
 - Awareness raising and outreach
 - Providing guidance and counselling to providers and companies
 - Effective funding of adult learning initiatives
- Most European countries have one or more intersectoral bodies that are responsible for the coordination of adult learning policies and measures
- Such an approach should result in adult learning strategies and national skills strategies which are based on research, evidence and data.

2. The supply and take-up of adult education (funding)

- In the EU, about one third of adults who want to participate in education and training experience financial issues as an obstacle to participation
 - Adults with lower levels of educational attainment were more affected by funding as an obstacle to participation than those with higher educational attainment levels
- In many European countries, publicly subsidised programmes leading to recognised qualifications are offered for free
 - In most European countries, low-qualified adults do not pay fees when they participate in publicly subsidised education and training programmes at levels up to (and including) ISCED level 3 or EQF level 4 (i.e. upper secondary education or equivalent).
- Financial incentives that may reduce learners' financial burden (demand-side funding) are in place across most of Europe
 - Support learners through financial incentives such as loans, grants and tax reliefs
 - Some schemes subsidise immediate expenses
 - Other schemes subsidise income loss from participation in adult education
- Funding should be sensitive to different adult target groups:
 - Adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, persons with disabilities, other factors causing exclusion

3. Accessibility and flexibility

- Adults often need to balance multiple commitments, so adult learning should be flexible with regard to time, place, resources, forms of organisation and implementation.
 - It can take place through formal, non-formal and informal modalities
 - It should fit in with family, life and work responsibilities
- Educational and training programmes should build on the prior knowledge, skills and competences, experience, and preferences of individual learners, based on
 - Individual needs, self-assessment results, giving priority to vulnerable groups
- The use of micro-credentials can widen learning opportunities and provide more flexible and modular learning opportunities
 - Modularisation is well developed in most EU countries
 - Credit-based programmes are less widely used
- Distance learning is developed through a range of initiatives at different scales in EU countries
 - As well as system-wide distance learning, local providers and initiatives often promote this mode of delivery

4a. Equity and inclusion in adult education

- Adult learning is important for fostering gender equality and solidarity between different age groups
 - The Council Recommendation on *Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults* (2016) underlined the specific needs of low-qualified, unemployed and vulnerable adults, who need support to improve their basic skills
- Incentives should be used to eliminate the barriers to participation in adult learning due to
 - A lack of time for studying
 - Low basic skills, low professional skills
 - Inaccessibility
 - Low levels of motivation
 - Negative attitudes to learning
- Education and training should be learner-centred and provide short learning experiences to acquire or update targeted competences

4b. Professionalisation, quality assurance and monitoring

- The professionalisation of adult educators and trainers, including practitioners (mentors, tutors) is an important element in raising quality
- The validation and recognition of prior learning can also support quality and make adult learning an attractive option
 - Validation opportunities and the extent to which they are subject to national monitoring differ greatly across countries
- National and regional systems of quality assurance of adult education and training providers can support the quality of adult learning
 - Monitoring the results of adult learning provision can improve quality assurance
- EU targets for adult education are:
 - By 2025, at least 47 % of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning activities during the previous 12 months, and 60% by 2030
 - Only half of all EU countries have set quantitative targets relating to the education and training of adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications

Educational guidance services for adults

- Adult career guidance services should be supported through partnerships at all levels
 - Only one quarter of adults across the EU have received information or advice on learning opportunities, with the lowest use among adults with low levels of educational attainment, economically inactive people, and older adults
 - Public or publicly subsidised guidance services are widespread across Europe; however, they are rarely targeted at adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications
- Adult career guidance systems can be supported by outreach activities
 - Half of European countries have publicly subsidised outreach activities targeting adults with low levels of basic skills or qualifications, to encourage them to take up learning opportunities
- Skills forecasting systems should be available to support lifelong guidance and adult career guidance

Thank you for your attention