



# The EU and Adult Learning

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# European Commission Policy on Lifelong learning



The 2000 Lisbon European Council



*Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (EC 2000)*



*Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (EC 2001)*



*Communication Action Plan on Adult learning: It is always a good time to learn. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities (EC 2007)*



European Council (2011) “[Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning](#). 2011/C 372/01”



European Council (2016) [Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults](#) (2016/C 484/01)

# Challenges



## An ageing population

disabled, ethnic minority groups including Roma, women, people with care responsibilities, older adults in the third age beyond retirement and those in remote geographical locations



## Youth unemployment

Lack of Homogeneity

Multiple reasons for social and economic exclusion



## Low impact of publicly-funded programmes



## Poor links between economic, employment and social policies, and to key stakeholders

# EU Agenda on Adult Learning



The renewed **European Agenda on Adult Learning (EAAL)** - part of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).



Four priorities:

**Governance**

**Flexible and wider access**

**Increasing supply and take up**

**Quality Assurance**

# Governance

- Coherence with other policy areas
- Better coordination
- Effectiveness
- Relevance to needs of society and the economy
- More investment

# Flexible and wider access

- More workplace learning and use of ICT
- Skills assessments
- Second-chance opportunities
- All leading to a recognised qualification

# Increasing supply and take up

- of high-quality provision, especially in literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- More effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies

# Better **quality** assurance

- Policy monitoring
- Education of adult educators
- Better data on needs to target and design provision.



# European Commission

## Benchmarks and indicators

- **European Commission Education and Training 2020 policy → 8 benchmarks**
- 1. An average of at least 15 % of adults should participate in lifelong learning.
- 2. The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15 %.
- 3. The share of 30-34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40 %.
- 4. The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10 %.
- 5. At least 95 % of children between 4 years old and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education.
- 6. The share of employed graduates (20-34 year-olds) having left education and training 1-3 years before the reference year should be at least 82 %.
- 7. An EU average of at least 20 % of higher education graduates should have had a period of higher education-related study or training (including work placements) abroad, representing a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or lasting a minimum of three months.
- 8. An EU average of at least 6 % of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational education and training (IVET) qualification should have had an IVET-related study or training period (including work placements) abroad lasting a minimum of two weeks, or less if documented by Europass.



European  
Commission



# Achievements under the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning

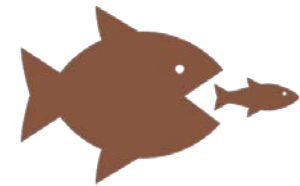
Report of the ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning (2018-2020)

Employment  
Social Affairs and  
Inclusion

# Outcomes



The rate of adult participation in learning, as measured by the Labour Force Survey has not increased sufficiently to reach the target set for 2020 of 15% and many Member States are still very far from attaining the 15% participation benchmark.



Despite many efforts!

# Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults

Focuses on increasing basic skills among adults (to avoid exclusion, poverty and risk of unemployment)

Encourages training institutions and public employment services across Europe to work with these adults in three phases:

- Doing a skills assessment
- Providing them with a learning offer to increase their skills
- Validating and recognising their new skills

More info can be found

here: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1224>

# Youth Guarantee Scheme

- For those up to the age of 25 (although some countries allows people in the YG until 30).
- Puts these young adults on a specific training intervention with the aim of getting them in employment or further training in 4 months.
- A typical NEET intervention for young adults.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>

# Digital Skills and Job Coalition

- to tackle the lack of digital skills across Europe

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-skills-jobs-coalition>

Enabling  
conditions: what  
structures and  
systems need  
improvement?

- Financing
- Coordination
- Engagement with employers
- Professionalisation of adult learning staff and institutions

# Financing

- Least well publicly funded sector of education, despite covering the largest group of learners
- Profound challenges in reaching and activating learners, especially those that need education and training the most.
- Rebalancing of expenditure across sectors
- More demand- side funding (e.g. Individual Learning Accounts)
- Reduce dependency on EU funding for initiatives with narrow and time-limited impact



# Co-ordination

- Adult learning policy and provision is in many countries fragmented
- Establish effective national coordination mechanisms
- Improve the coordination of approaches between policy fields

# Engagement with employers

- employers need to be made aware that the learning of their employees is of benefit to them
- discussions on how the costs of learning can be shared between the individual, the employer and the state
- A debate that has been going on since the 1990s

# Rhetoric

creation of

- 'a better educated and more adaptable workforce, improved morale, improved industrial relations bringing with it a better understanding of the business',
- 'enhancement of the company's image'
- 'the creation of a company wide learning environment'

Chadwick, G. (1993) Towards a vision of recurrent education.  
*Journal of Access Studies* 8(1): 8-26

# Reality

However:

- Some of the benefits of work-based learning and accreditation by academic institutions do not immediately manifest themselves in short-term business improvements.
- Smaller firms tend to want training and development to produce rapid results.
- The need for 'champions' with vision

Osborne M. J., Seagraves L., Dockrell R. and Neal P. (1995) *LISC Interim Report*. Stirling: University of Stirling.

# Professionalisation of adult learning staff and institutions

- Professional status of adult learning staff
  - National Competence Profiles
  - Standards
  - CPD opportunities at national and international level.