European Commission

Education and Training 2020

Improving Policy and Provision for Adult Learning in Europe

Education and Training

Acknowledgements

The ET2020 Working group on adult learning was established in 2013 as one of six thematic working groups that support Member States in furthering policy development. Its mandate was to support mutual policy learning and develop policy recommendations on:

- addressing adult basic skills,
- promoting the use of new technologies and Open Educational Resources (OER) in adult learning, and
- enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of adult learning policies.

33 Member States, other participating countries, social partners and stakeholder groups nominated an adult learning expert to the Group, which started its work in March 2014 and has met in Brussels nine times.

Continuous collaboration has been carried out via a web-based communication platform and a number of webinars have been organised between meetings. In addition to this ongoing peer learning, two in-depth country workshops and a seminar have been organised, hosted by Germany, Norway and Belgium.

The Group has worked closely with the contractor for the Commission's study on "Adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" (see Box 16), guiding and commenting on the study, the analytical framework and the prototype web tool that will help countries to self-assess the effectiveness of their adult learning policies. The Group has also followed and contributed to the study on "Adult learners in digital learning environments" (see Box 9.)

This report presents the Group's findings and recommendations. The members of the group, nominated by their national authorities, are listed in annex 1.

The European Commission acknowledges the contribution of all Working Group members, as well as their external consultants: JD Carpentieri (University College, School of Education, London), Günter Hefler (3s, Vienna) and Jan Hylen (Educationanalytics, Stockholm).

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Report of the Education and Training 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning 2014 - 2015

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

2015

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Table of Contents

Key messages

Adult learning can improve lives and economies

Adult learning benefits individuals, companies and society. Adults that continue to learn earn more, are more employable, enjoy better health and are more active citizens. Adult learning improves companies' innovation performance, productivity, profitability and workforce motivation. It helps to improve a country's economic competitiveness and growth.

The high number of adults with poor basic skills is a major challenge for society. Too few adults have access to adult learning. The EU is far from attaining its benchmark of 15% adult participation in learning by 2020.

A major boost is needed to raise adults' basic skills

Adult basic skills include reading, writing, spoken language, numeracy and digital skills. Improvements in these skills can enhance individuals' personal development and employment opportunities, and nations' economic competitiveness. Education in basic skills can reduce social inequality, increase inclusion, cohesion and active citizenship; and improve mental and physical health.

All EU Member States need to help many more adults to improve their competences in the basic skills they need in order to thrive in today's society.

Member States need proactive policies to improve opportunities and incentives for their citizens to take part, and to facilitate the integration of adult migrants and refugees.

Better outreach and collaboration are needed to promote adults' participation in learning, leading to their inclusion

More effective, targeted outreach strategies at national, regional and adult learning providers' level can raise awareness of the basic skills gap and increase individuals' motivation to improve their skills.

Member States should provide high quality, well-targeted learning opportunities, and generate demand for formal, non-formal and informal basic skills training. This provision should also be part of the service given to unemployed adults; training and upskilling are most effective when participation is voluntary.

Many adults are motivated to learn for employment, and workplace basic skills programmes produce benefits for employees and employers alike. Member States need to work closely with employers and unions to increase the number and scope of workplace basic skills programmes.

To improve national adult skills levels, high quality programmes are essential

Adult basic skills education requires adult-specific teaching methods and high quality curricula that include authentic materials from all areas of everyday life.

Member States should develop initial, formative and summative assessment and self-assessment strategies that motivate adults and support their learning.

Teaching adult basic skills is a challenging job and requires specialised training. Member States need to provide adult basic skills educators with attractive career pathways and appropriate employment conditions, as well as high quality initial training and ongoing professional development that focus on adult-specific teaching strategies as well as subject matter.

Adult learners who need to improve their basic skills often need extra support to complete their learning journey, such as specialised guidance services, clear progression routes, and opportunities for the accreditation and certification of their prior learning. Effective support increases the likelihood that adults will take the next step up.

To encourage participation and persistence, programmes need to be offered as close as possible to where people live. Practical support on matters such as course fees, travel costs, childcare and time off work should also be provided. Programmes should offer the possibility to resume after a period away from learning.

All adults now need digital skills

Adult learners do not just need better literacy, they also need better *digital* literacy. There is a growing 'digital skills divide' in Europe. Digital skills are basic skills. However, many adults lack the skills they need to live and work in an increasingly digital society and labour market. They are unable to benefit fully from the opportunities offered by digital media and risk being further excluded as ever more information and services are offered 'on-line'.

Digital resources need to be more extensively used in adult education

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can and should play a more important role in the acquisition of literacy. Mobile devices, open educational resources (OER) and social media have a great potential for widening access to adult learning. These can support adults' informal learning and improve formal and non-formal education opportunities. However, the potential of ICTs in adult learning is currently not fully realised. Learners should have the right to acquire for free digital basic skills. Outreach activities are needed to involve hard-to-reach groups. Programmes should be devised to incorporate ICTs in the development of adult literacy and numeracy.

The 'OER revolution' promises to make available high quality educational resources to anyone, anytime, anywhere and at a relatively low cost. However, a recent European Commission study[1] shows that this revolution has not hit home in the adult learning sector in many EU Member States. If Member States rely only on incremental and market-driven progress to address this challenge, much of the ICT learning potential will remain unexplored, so large scale policy initiatives are needed to overcome the poor ICT infrastructure in the adult learning sector.

Policies should ensure a good balance between four elements:

- a clear vision for promoting adult digital skills and harnessing digital potential;
- ensuring the availability of high quality learning resources;
- comprehensive programmes to support adult educators in updating their skills and using ICT effectively; and
- innovative approaches to ensure adequate investment in infrastructure and hardware.

Adult learning policy needs to be coherent and coordinated

A strategic, long-term focus on sustainable adult learning provision, with strong governance and a systemic approach to improving national basic skills, will benefit a broad range of policy areas. It will also provide significant return on investment in the form of decreased social spending and a richer, more dynamic economy. Short-term, low quality adult learning programmes are wasteful and ineffective.

1 European Commission (2015) Adult Learners in Digital Learning Environments

Adult learning is a complex policy field. It makes important contributions to many other policies (e.g. economy, health, family …). The responsibility for adult learning policy is often divided across several ministries and agencies (e.g. education, training, migration, justice …) and several levels of policy making (municipal, regional, national). This shared responsibility often results in a situation where adult learning policy is fragmented and its efficiency suffers from insufficient coordination.

The provision of adult education is delivered by a wide range of government, private sector and third sector organisations. The effectiveness of adult learning policy and provision as a whole is often undermined by the lack of coordination between these many parties, leading to fragmented and incoherent provision.

Improved basic skills will bring important benefits in many policy areas. Effective policies require strong collaboration between, among others, Education, Employment, Welfare, Business, and Health ministries, social partners and civil society. Cooperation across policy areas needs to be improved in all Member States. It is particularly vital for implementing effective outreach strategies to difficult-to-engage groups of adults.

Member States need to ensure that adult learning policies are coherent over time i.e. that they are based upon a long-term strategic vision, yet flexible enough to respond to new challenges, such as the refugee crisis, and to adjust in the light of feedback from users and monitoring.

Adult learning policies need to be informed by evidence and proper monitoring

The choice of adult learning policy reforms must be based upon solid evidence highlighting the most effective practices and interventions. By investing in research on what works, and by monitoring the impact of their policies, countries can make provision more effective and save money in the long-term. The ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning has helped to develop a framework that can guide policymakers in their decisions on adult learning policies.

1 Introduction

What is adult learning?

Adult learning constitutes a key phase in the continuum of lifelong learning. It covers any learning activity (whether informal, non-formal or formal) after the learner has left initial education. Adult learning builds on and interacts with early childhood education, compulsory education at primary, lower and upper secondary levels, initial vocational education and higher education.

Adult learning can be delivered by public, private or voluntary sector providers, by employers or organised by people for themselves through face to face groups, online communities or personal projects. Adult learners may be younger or older, employed or unemployed, in good or bad health; they may be prisoners or parents or migrants or in any number of other life situations. They engage in learning that can go on for just a few hours, or months, even years.

Adult learning is the most diverse of the sectors of lifelong learning; national adult learning systems are complex and heterogeneous and vary significantly from one country to another.

The policy context: ET2020 goals in adult learning

In 2011, the European Council adopted the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning[2]. This recalls the targets for adult learning set by the European Union's ET2020 strategy for cooperation in education and training. It emphasises the transversal nature of adult learning policy, highlights the paramount importance of adult basic skills and related educational provision, and includes a priority for the promotion of learning enhanced by information and communication technologies (ICT), in the field of adult learning.

The Agenda calls upon Member States to make their adult learning policies more effective, more efficient (in particular as regards funding and cost-sharing mechanisms) and more coherent across policy fields.

Box 1
The European Agenda for Adult Learning

The European Agenda for adult learning: objectives.

In 2011, the Education Ministers of the Member States committed themselves to work towards a long term vision for adult learning, including:

- better possibilities for all adults to access high-quality learning opportunities at any time in their lives, for any purpose
- focus on learner autonomy
- greater awareness of need for learning throughout life
- effective lifelong guidance and validation systems
- flexible arrangements including in-company and workplace-based learning
- involvement roles of social partners and civil society; central, regional and local authorities.

2 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2011.372.01.0001.01.ENG

What are the benefits of adult learning?

A recent study[3] summarised the research evidence about the benefits of adult learning: for learners themselves, for employers and for the wider community. It shows that there is a statistical relationship between adult learning and a number of outcomes:

For **learners**, positive outcomes from participation in learning or from completing courses and achieving qualifications are:

- **Economic**: improved employability comes from individuals' participation in learning and higher wages and incomes and come from improved basic skills gained from learning and the acquired qualifications;
- **Wellbeing**: Improved general wellbeing (including improvements in self-confidence) as well as improved health (physical and mental) can be brought about as a result of participation in learning; and
- **Social**: Improved disposition to voluntary and community activity and improved civic attitudes can be brought about as a result of participation in learning.

For **employers**, the positive outcomes that arise from learning are:

- A firm's **innovation** performance can be increased as a result of the increased skills and competences brought about by workforce participation in learning;
- A firm can benefit from a more **motivated workforce** as a result of their participation in learning; and
- **Economic benefits** arise to the business as a result of the benefits brought by innovation and a more motivated workforce. Thus, increased productivity and profitability result from increased workforce participation in learning and the business' investment in this;

For the **community**, positive benefits, both economic and social, arise from increased adult participation in learning:

- **Economic**: Countries where there are high rates of adult participation in learning are more economically competitive and feature higher levels of GDP; and
- **Social**: Participating in adult learning and increasing skills have positive effects on behaviours in relation to health, the environment and reducing reoffending.

Why is adult learning more important than ever?

The importance of adult learning stems from a wide range of factors including:

- changes in the structure of occupations, often requiring higher levels of skill;
- changing ways of work (due to new technologies, for example) that call for constant updating of skills;
- the need to reduce levels of unemployment;
- ageing societies in which individuals need to update their skills in order to stay in employment for longer;

3 European Commission (2015). An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe - Final Report. Brussels: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7851&type=2&furtherPubs=yes

- increasingly diverse and complex societies with stronger needs for intercultural understanding and democratic values;
- increased levels of migration requiring support for individual learning (languages, basic knowledge and values of the host societies) and societal learning (strengthening intercultural understanding and mutual respect); and
- the need to ensure shared understanding of new and complex issues such as protecting the environment.

The next two chapters look at how to achieve policy coherence, effectiveness and efficiency in two important fields of adult learning: basic skills education and the use of ICT in adult education.

In the last chapter, the importance of working towards coherence in adult learning policy is further explored.

All three sections are supported by good practice examples from participating countries.

The report concludes with key messages and policy recommendations.

2 Overcoming gaps in adults' basic skills

Why adult basic skills matter

More than ever, good basic skills are a necessity, whether for employment, inclusion, citizenship or social cohesion. Men and women with poor basic skills are increasingly shut out of the labour market and are less likely to be socially or politically engaged, and more likely to suffer health problems. At the national level, low skills lead to greater social spending and poorer, less dynamic economies. These are particular problems given Europe's current challenges: slow or negligible economic growth, high unemployment (particularly among young adults), and the need for a more productive workforce to support an ageing population[4,5,6,7] A recent Cedefop study on the economic and social costs of low skilled adults in the EU indicates that the cost of inaction could be high.[8] Alongside costs for individuals in terms of foregone earnings and heavier fiscal burden due to public expenditure on health, unemployment benefits, public order and safety, the Cedefop study also gives estimates of the macroeconomic impact of low skills for society as a whole in terms of GDP growth.

This section provides a brief overview of these issues – issues that require a concerted national and European effort to improve basic skills.

Basic skills matter for employment and opportunity

For low-skilled people in Europe, employment of any sort is increasingly difficult to find. In the modern European economy, good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are an increasingly necessary prerequisite for employment and social inclusion; those without such skills are falling ever further behind.

Results from the OECD's PIAAC survey of adult skills show that, across the 17 Member States participating in the study, one in five European adults has low literacy skills, and, one in four has low numeracy skills[9,10]. Basic skills are strongly associated with employment: as Figure 1 shows, employment rates for the lowest skilled adults are more than 20 percentage points worse than those for adults with level 4-5 skills, and at least 10 percentage points worse than those for adults with level 2 skills. As PIAAC illustrates, these basic skills deficits are not driven primarily by migration; across Europe as a whole, the majority of adults with poor basic skills are native-born, and speak the official national language at home.[11,12,13]

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4 EU High Level Group of Experts On Literacy (2012) Act now! Final report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

5 European Commission (2013) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. DG-EAC.

6 EU High Level Group of Experts On Literacy (2012) Act now! Final report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

7 European Commission (2013) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. DG-EAC.

8 Cedefop (2016 forthcoming): Skills pay: the economic and social costs of low skilled adults in the EU.

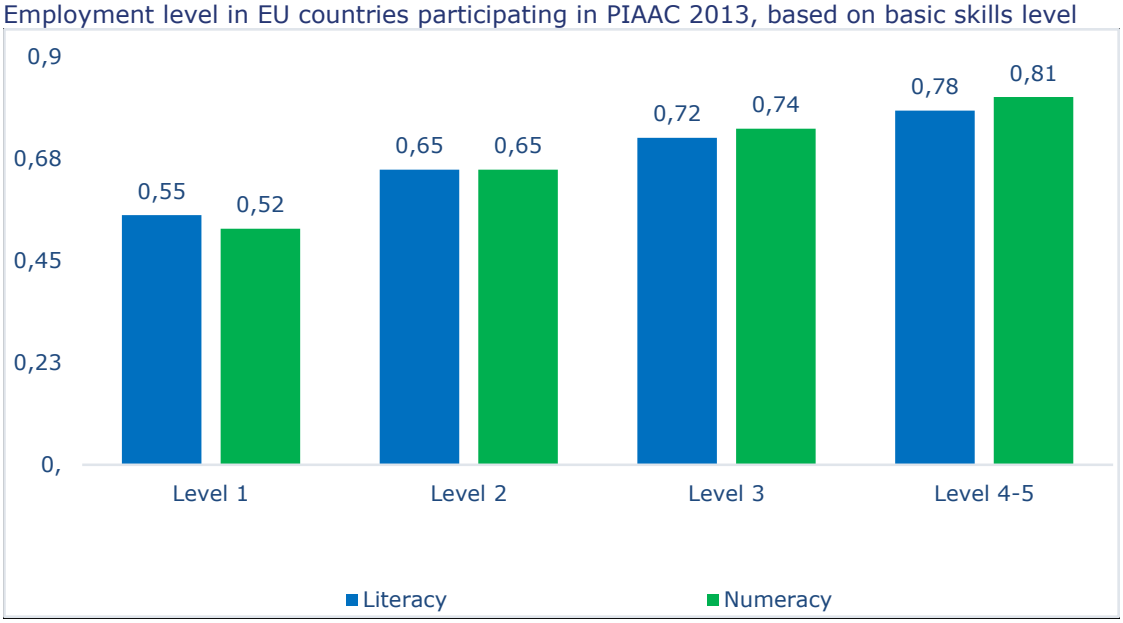
9 ibid.

10 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

11 National Agency to Fight Illiteracy (ANCLI) (2008) Illiteracy: the statistics. Analysis by the National Agency to fight illiteracy of the IVQ Survey conducted in 2004-2005 by INSEE. National Agency to Fight Illiteracy.

12 EU High Level Group of Experts On Literacy (2012) *Act now! Final report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Figure 1:
Employment level in EU countries participating in PIAAC 2013, based on basic skills level



Source: OECD PIAAC

The shift in the labour market towards more knowledge-centred occupations can make the position of individuals with poor basic skills more precarious.[14] In modern workplaces, good basic skills imply strong digital literacy, and poor literacy and numeracy can act as a barrier to developing digital skills, putting individuals on the wrong side of the digital divide.[15]

Most adults develop their digital skills on the job – but if poor literacy reduces employment opportunities, it therefore also reduces the opportunities to develop the digital skills required by employers, creating a "low skills trap".[16] PIAAC data indicate that, across the EU, only about one-third of the workforce appear to have sufficient digital skills for using ICTs as a means of solving tasks at the workplace and outside it.[17,18,19,20] The findings of Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey indicate that being in employment is per se not enough, but highlight that the quality of the job also matters: jobs that provide opportunities to use, maintain and acquire skills continuously[21].

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13 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

14 Bynner, John (2001) 'Literacy, Numeracy and Employability'. Online Discussion Paper. Available Online: www.staff.vu.ed.au/alnarc/onlineforum/AL_pap_bynner.htm.

15 Bynner, J., Reder, S., Parsons, S., & Strawn, C. (2008). The digital divide: Computer use, basic skills and employment: A Comparative Study in Portland, USA and London, England: Research Summary.

16 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

17 European Commission (2013) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. DG-EAC.

18 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

19 European Commission (2013) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. DG-EAC.

20 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

21 Cedefop (2015): Skills, qualifications and jobs in the EU: the making of a perfect match? Evidence from Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3072

Basic skills matter for active citizenship, engagement, families and health

Good basic skills are also central to inclusion, engagement and cohesion. Facebook and other forms of social media require good reading, writing and ICT skills. A decade ago, using computers at work was normal for many adults, but those same adults still did their bank transactions face-to-face, or over the telephone. Shopping meant going to a store. Now, online banking and shopping are the norm for many Europeans. Both in the private and government sphere, services are increasingly provided online rather than face-to-face, making them easier to access for those with good basic skills, and much harder to access for those without. As the Internet spreads, it does not just complement other services, it replaces them. Europeans lacking the skills to take advantage of services such as Internet banking and e-government will be less and less able to turn to the face-to-face or telephone-based alternatives they are familiar with, as these are phased out. This makes the presence of good basic skills essential for active citizenship and participation in society.

Basic skills are also important in family life. When parents lack the literacy, language or numeracy skills to help young children with homework, those children suffer educational disadvantages that can impede their progress and place additional burdens on schools. Parents who improve their basic skills, whether through family learning programmes or adult education, can better support their children, reducing the intergenerational transmission of educational disadvantage.

Basic skills also impact on health. Making healthy choices and managing health conditions require the ability to seek out, select and understand health information. Adults who struggle with literacy and numeracy are also likely to struggle to manage conditions such as diabetes, which require understanding and adhering to prescription regimes.

Basic skills matter for inclusion, equity and social cohesion

The number of third country migrants living in Europe is currently estimated at more than 60 million, accounting for 9% of the population.[22] Both inward migration and internal mobility are expected to increase significantly in the next decades.[23] Social cohesion is a major and growing political issue, particularly in times of economic crisis, when resources and employment become scarce. The EU needs both migration and social cohesion, and basic skills programmes can play a central role in improving both. Many adult migrants need to improve their basic skills, both for employment and integration, and to help their children thrive. Language courses are vital for these migrants, both in terms of employment and integration (see **Box 2** for an example).

Box 2
Basic skills provision in a multilingual context (Luxembourg)

Formal and non-formal adult education is very important in Luxembourg, where nearly 45% of the population has foreign origins and there are three official languages (Luxembourgish, French and German). In such a context, education, training and the acquisition of basic skills are essential for active citizenship, employment and social inclusion.

Providing the means and facilities for adults to acquire basic skills in reading, writing and maths is one of the legal missions of the Department for Adult Education. Basic skills provision is provided free of charge in German and French. Since most adults participating in basic skills courses are not native speakers of these languages, programmes include a language learning

22 European Commission (2008) Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems. Green paper. COM(2008) 423. 3 July 2008.

23 European Commission (2011) Demography report 2010: Older, more numerous and diverse Europeans. Commission Staff Working Document.

element. In order to address the diversity of learning needs in Luxembourg, two broad types of programmes are offered: 1) courses led by a single trainer, targeted at groups that are relatively homogeneous in terms of their literacy levels and language skills; 2) workshop-style courses, in which a team of trainers lead more heterogeneous groups of learners.

A national reference framework helps to establish a coherent, transparent foundation for basic skills education, and to provide practitioners with a source of information and guidance. The reference framework helps learners identify their educational needs and objectives, and helps teaching staff develop individually tailored learning programmes. During training, the reference framework facilitates the monitoring of learner progress and certification of newly achieved skills levels.[24]

However, across Europe as a whole, the majority of adults with poor basic skills are not migrants; they are individuals who were born and raised in their current country, and who speak the official language at home.[25,26,27]

For various reasons, these individuals – close to 70 million people – need to improve their basic skills, and need the support of government policies and programmes to do so. However, adult education systems are not sufficiently meeting the needs of those with basic skills problems. While the more highly skilled have high levels of participation in adult learning, the low-skilled do not. As PIAAC shows, Europeans with high basic skills are five times more likely than those with low skills to take part in adult learning.[28,29] This contributes to the "low skills trap": those in most need of additional learning are the least likely to receive it, so fall further and further behind their peers.

This section of the report has highlighted some key policy issues that basic skills programmes can help to address. The next section summarises the relevant research evidence.

What works

Proactive policies can improve lives and economies

PIAAC data illustrate the central role that basic skills play in shaping economic outcomes. In the EU17, an increase of skills by around 40 points (slightly less than one skills level) is linked with an increase in wages ranging from approximately 5% in Denmark, Finland and Italy to more than 10% in the UK.[30, 31] At national and European level, it has been

24 For more information, see http://www.men.public.lu/fr/formation-adultes/instruction-base-adultes/index.html and http://www.abcd.lu .

25 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

26 EU High Level Group of Experts On Literacy (2012) Act now! Final report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

27 National Agency to Fight Illiteracy (ANCLI) (2008) Illiteracy: the statistics. Analysis by the National Agency to fight illiteracy of the IVQ Survey conducted in 2004-2005 by INSEE. National Agency to Fight Illiteracy.

28 European Commission (2013) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. DG-EAC.

29 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

30 European Commission (2013) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. DG-EAC.

31 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

estimated that if Europe achieved its current literacy benchmark, this could lead to an aggregate GDP gain of €21 trillion over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010.[32]

PIAAC data also highlight the importance of good basic skills for inclusion, engagement and health.[33,34] Adults with low literacy (PIAAC level 1 or below) are nearly twice as likely as adults with high literacy skills (scoring at level 4 or 5) to say that they trust others very little. Adults with low skills have lower levels of political efficacy, and are only half as likely to participate in volunteering activities. Low-skilled adults are twice as likely to report fair or poor health as high-skilled individuals. These results hold valid even when controlling for educational attainment and other characteristics that are likely to influence these outcomes.

There is longitudinal evidence that adult learning (to which basic skills serve as a gateway) can improve these outcomes. A set of studies that followed UK adults throughout the course of their lives found that participation in adult education contributed to positive changes in social attitudes.[35] These studies also found increased civic and political participation, and concluded that participation in adult learning was correlated with increased optimism, increased self-efficacy and better self-rated health.[36] Participation in adult learning benefited those who had struggled in compulsory education just as much as it did those who had done well at compulsory level. Furthermore, optimism and self-efficacy increased the most among adults who had struggled in school, suggesting that adult education targeted at the disadvantaged can help reduce the "well-being gap". The same set of studies found that participation in adult learning was associated with better rates of giving up smoking and taking up exercise. Researchers found both transformative and sustaining effects of adult learning: participants were more likely than non-learners to develop new, healthy habits (transformation), and were also more likely than non-learners to sustain those habits. Such individual gains are likely to have cascading impacts on family and community as well.

To promote participation and inclusion, we need better outreach and collaboration

More effective outreach strategies can increase awareness of the basic skills deficit, and increase individuals' motivation to improve their skills.[37] For many adults, poor basic skills are a source of embarrassment and even shame. There is evidence that media campaigns can reduce the sense of taboo surrounding poor basic skills while informing the general population about the true extent of the problem.[38,39] Attracting adults into basic skills provision can have positive economic and social impacts. For example, research has found that when migrants do not have early access to language courses, they are more likely to learn to get by without integrating or improving their language

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32 Hanushek, Eric and Woessmann, Ludger (2011) The Cost of Low Educational Achievement in the European Union, EENEE Analytical Report No. 7, http://www.eenee.de/doc/cost_of_low_achievement.pdf

33 European Commission (2013) The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. DG-EAC.

34 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

35 Feinstein, L. and Hammond, C. (2004) The contribution of adult learning to health and social capital. Oxford Review of Education, 30(2), 199-221.

36 Hammond, C. and Feinstein, L. (2006) Are those who flourished at school healthier adults? What role for adult education?[Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report No. 17]. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning.

37 EU High Level Group of Experts On Literacy (2012) Act now! Final report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

38 NAO (National Audit Office) (2004) Skills For Life: Improving adult literacy and numeracy. London: The Stationery Office.

39 NALA (2005) Read Right Now: Series 5 evaluation. Dublin: National Adult Literacy Agency.

skills. And the longer migrant learners are in a country without taking a language course, the slower their progress once they do.[40]

For many adults, the main purpose of adult education and training is to get a job, or a better one. Many of these people are held back by poor basic skills, but do not want to take stand-alone literacy classes, as they are seen as irrelevant, too much like school, too hard or too boring. Integrating literacy instruction in Vocational Education and Training (VET) can get around these obstacles, and in countries where vocational programmes at upper secondary level have a significant general (academic) component, they often include an element focused on basic skills improvement.[41]

There is evidence that integrating basic skills education into vocational programmes can benefit participants. A recent Cedefop study shows that work-based learning programmes that incorporate the acquisition of basic skills can contribute to getting low-skilled unemployed adults back to learning and back into the labour market. The analysis of policies and practices in 15 EU member states indicates a need for more systematic policy approaches in this field. Casey *et al.* explored the impact of integrating literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) training into 79 vocational programmes.[42] The integrated courses had much higher success rates than the non-integrated ones, nearly doubling participants' rate of success, while also improving VET course completion rates. On fully-integrated courses, 93% of learners with an identified literacy need achieved a literacy or language qualification, compared to only 50% for those on non-integrated courses. However, there is also evidence that, if done incorrectly, the integration of basic skills can have negative consequences. Basic skills tutors and vocational tutors must work closely together to develop and deliver courses. When basic skills provision is delivered by vocational tutors lacking the appropriate experience and pedagogical training, the probability of learners achieving their literacy and numeracy qualifications was much lower than when courses were delivered by a team of teachers with vocational and literacy and numeracy specialisms working in combination. The benefits of integrated learning cannot be achieved by simply adding basic skills to the vocational teacher's responsibilities. Rather, learners benefit when taught by teams of staff, with their own different areas of expertise, working closely together. Unfortunately, basic skills are absent from most continuing vocational education and training (CVET) policy documents and research).

Box 3
Upskilling the workforce: workplace basic skills courses as a stepping stone to vocational training (Norway)

In Norway, there is a shortage of employees with vocational qualifications at upper secondary level. Research confirms that employers prefer to train their current employees rather than recruiting new ones. However, employees with a low level of formal education often have low basic skills, and see this as a barrier to acquiring better vocational qualifications. This barrier puts an artificial limit on human skills development.

The Norwegian Basic Competence in Working Life Program (BCWL) is a grant scheme that funds flexible training for employees who have little formal education. The scheme aims to give adults the basic skills they need to cope with the changing demands of working life. Around NOK 100 million (€10.5m)

40 Baynham, M., Roberts, C., Cooke, M., Simpson, J., Ananiadou, K., Callaghan, J. and Wallace, C. (2007) Effective teaching and learning: ESOL. London: NRDC.

41 Hoghielm, R. (2011). Adult Basic Education – A Challenge for Vocational Based Learning. Adult Learning and Education, 95.

42 Casey, H., O. Cara, et al. (2006). "You wouldn't expect a maths teacher to teach plastering…." Embedding literacy, language and numeracy in post-16 vocational programmes-the impact on learning and achievement. London: NRDC.

is allocated each year to courses in reading, writing, numeracy, oral communication and digital skills. Both private and public enterprises can apply for grants.

For many employees, participating in the BCWL programme, the basic skills courses are the first step towards acquiring a trade certificate. Being able to attend training at the work place acts as powerful motivation for the employee. The programme offers convenient and flexible provision, and employees retain their jobs and wages during training, which ensures their economic security. Companies can upskill their workforce and employees acquire much needed qualifications in a familiar and supporting atmosphere.[43]

There is evidence that recruitment messages focusing on non-economic motivations may attract adults into basic skills provision. These motivations include the improvement of digital skills. ICT skills are increasingly important for employment, inclusion and social engagement, meaning that adults who lack these skills suffer from a digital divide. They are less likely to find jobs; in turn, people without jobs are less likely to develop their digital skills at work. This creates a vicious circle in which the "have-nots" fall ever further behind the "haves".[44]

Family learning programmes provide parents with the strongest possible motive for participation: improving their child's chances in life.[45] Many policy makers see this as a means to "lure" parents into learning, with such programmes serving as a stepping stone to further education. A central message of these and other successful recruitment drives has been that adult literacy course are not like compulsory school (see Box 4 for an example).

Box 4
Family learning leads to further learning: Clare Family Learning Project (Ireland)

The primary aim of the Ireland's Clare Family Learning Project is to encourage parents to get involved in their children's education, particularly through supporting their children's literacy and numeracy development. The programme teaches parents about the Irish educational system, shows them how to help with their children's school work, and gives them confidence they need to communicate with school staff. This is a "win-win" process: by getting more involved in their children's education, parents improve their own basic skills and develop the confidence and knowledge they need to take up further learning.

Many participants come from the following groups: single-parent families, teenage/young parents, refugees and asylum seekers, migrant workers, Roma and Travellers, and carers and foster parents. The programme collaborates with schools, social services, libraries and community groups to connect with parents who would benefit from family learning. A learning champion helps the programme to engage with families from the Roma and Traveller communities.

Children function as the programme's 'hook' for drawing parents in and introducing them to further education. Once engaged in family learning, many

43 For a video report from a company where BCWL courses have been combined with courses leading to a trade certificate, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gmuvn-Ezxcs&feature=youtu.be More information is available at EPALE (the ePlatform for Adult Learning in Europe): https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/basic-skills-training-working-life-benefit-individual-business-and-society . For more discussion of the need to embed basic skills in CVET, see https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/basic-skills-and-cvet-missing-link

44 Bynner, J., Reder, S., Parsons, S., & Strawn, C. (2008). The digital divide: Computer use, basic skills and employment: A Comparative Study in Portland, USA and London, England: Research Summary.

45 Carpentieri, J., Fairfax-Cholmeley, K., Litster, J., Vorhaus, J. (2011) Family literacy in Europe: using parental support initiatives to enhance early literacy development. London: NRDC, Institute of Education.

parents become aware of their own potential for learning, and are exposed to new educational opportunities. For many parents, family learning thus serves as an essential stepping stone to adult education. Clare Family Learning offers a broad range of classes, and the majority of parents who complete a class continue onto other learning opportunities.

International evidence suggests that workplace basic skills courses can increase productivity, improve efficiency, enhance the use of new technology in the workplace, and reduce staff turnover and costs.[46] These courses also have a strong record of improving attitudes to further learning, giving many previously disaffected adults their first experience of enjoyable, personally satisfying education.[47] Workplace literacy initiatives have been successful in attracting adults who will not participate in other forms of learning, particularly males, older workers, and those who say they would not take a college-based course.[48] Such courses can help low-skilled workers break out of the "low skills trap",[49] providing low-skilled workers with the training they need to progress their careers. Workplace basic skills courses thus help to redress a key imbalance at many workplaces: the far higher level of training typically devoted to highly skilled workers, as compared to their lower-skilled colleagues.

To improve skills levels, high quality programmes are essential

Basic skills courses

Adults are not children, and need different teaching methods and materials. Adult basic skills education requires adult-specific, evidence-based curricula. Because of their age and life experience, the materials and methods suitable for children are unlikely to be suitable for adults. Authenticity and relevance are especially important for adults, who typically learn best when programmes focus on real-world tasks and relevant challenges.[50, 51] There is evidence that most adults prefer problem-centred rather than subject-centred learning.

It is important that adult basic skills educators use a variety of teaching methods and strategies. In many countries, adult literacy teachers are provided with very little state guidance on those methods; with some exceptions, curricula tend to be developed at local level or not at all. In England[52] and Serbia (see **Box 5**) and Austria[53], governments have introduced professionally designed curricula, with strong results.

Box 5
High quality programmes need high quality teaching: Initial and ongoing teacher education (Serbia)

In 2011, the Serbian government introduced a three-level, competence-based curriculum for adult basic education. Basic skills are the focus of the first

46 Ananiadou, K., A. Jenkins and Wolf, A. (2004). "Basic skills and workplace learning: what do we actually know about their benefits?" Studies in Continuing Education 26(2): 289-308.

47 MacLeod, S. and Straw, S. (2010) Adult basic skills. Reading: CfBT.

48 Wolf, A. and Evans, K. (2011) Improving literacy at work. London: Routledge.

49 OECD (2013) OECD Skills Outlook 2013: First results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

50 Brooks, Greg (2010) "Adult literacy (age 18 and beyond)", in Kamil, et al (eds.) Handbook of Reading Research, Volume IV. London: Routledge.

51 EU High Level Group of Experts On Literacy (2012) Act now! Final report: EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

52 NAO (National Audit Office) (2004) Skills For Life: Improving adult literacy and numeracy. London: The Stationery Office.

53 https://www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at/fileadmin/docs/PPD_2015-2017_Stand_11_12_2015.pdf

curriculum level, which lasts one school year. During this year, learners participate in 400 classes covering reading, writing, spoken language, numeracy, digital skills and basic life competences. The basic skill curriculum is in turn integrated with the next two levels of adult basic education: these levels continue learners' basic skills development by devoting half their classes to basic skills development. The network for the implementation of the adult basic education programme is spread throughout Serbia. Sustainability and status are enhanced by including the basic education programme in Serbia's formal education system, which is financed from the national budget.

Quality is enhanced through a variety of measures, including a strong focus on teacher education. One of the key conditions for the implementation of the programme is a well-educated teaching workforce, with specific qualifications in andragogic approaches and competences. The professionals who teach adult basic skills in Serbia are well-trained basic skill teachers who have additional andragogic training, i.e. training in how to teach adults. This training is regulated by law, and includes modules on: key andragogic competences, and the implementation of an andragogic approach in the curriculum covering literacy, reading, numeracy, digital literacy and basic life skills. Beside these modules, which are compulsory for realisation of the basic skills programme, teachers can undertake continuing professional development of their andragogic competences through the state accredited programmes. [54]

Many basic skills learners have had negative school experiences, so the transition to the learning environment must be handled sensitively. Specially targeted Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) can help support participation and persistence (see **Box 6** for an example). Information, advice and guidance is effective when potential learners are aware of all the learning possibilities and the best match is made between learning needs and the learning offer. Tyers *et al.* found that in-depth guidance had a positive impact for "hard-to-reach" groups, with successes including qualifications gains and movements from unemployment to paid labour.[55] Adults engaged in work-based learning who receive IAG services are more likely to be satisfied with their course and to progress to further learning.[56,57]

Box 6
Bringing high quality guidance to marginalised adults (Slovenia)

Slovenia's Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) has developed a network of adult education guidance centres staffed by well-trained, professional counsellors. This network seeks to connect as many local adult education and guidance providers as possible into a network focused on increasing quality and harmonising activities.

Guidance centres in the network provide adults with free, impartial, confidential information and guidance about learning and education. The centres aim to bring high quality guidance to adults who live in marginalised areas, have difficulties accessing education, are low skilled and/or low-educated, and are less active in learning, education and society in general. Many of these adults have low basic skills and key competences.

Counsellors support adults in identifying their education needs and opportunities, and, where needed, help them "learn to learn". Counsellors encourage and motivate clients, support them in overcoming obstacles, and

54 A film about the programme can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vwo9s93PAGY More information is available at http://www.mpn.gov.rs/obrazovanje-odraslih/

55 Tyers, C., Aston, J., Barkworth, R., Willison, R. and Taylor, J. (2003) Evaluation of Adult Guidance Pilots. London: Department for Education and Skills.

56 Hillage, J., Loukas, G., Newton, B. and Tamkin, P. (2006). Employer training pilots: final evaluation report.

57 MacLeod, S. and Straw, S. (2010) Adult basic skills. Reading: CfBT.

can represent them in other institutions. Guidance can be delivered in a variety of ways, including face-to-face and by telephone and email, and can be provided one-to-one or in groups.

Slovenia's adult education guidance centres build on the EU's Action Plan on Adult Learning: ("It is always a good time to learn"), focusing particularly on:

- Bringing high quality information and guidance closer to current and potential learners, e.g. in their communities and workplaces
- Enabling flexible access to assessment, validation and recognition of prior learning
- Widening access to higher levels of education
- Encouraging individuals to invest in their own learning.

The Slovenian model of adult education guidance is being further developed through GOAL (Guidance and Orientation for Adult Learning), a European Commission ERASMUS+ project coordinated by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, which runs to 2018 [58]

Policies which support the recognition and validation of prior learning represent a shift of focus away from the measurement of learning inputs and processes to learning outcomes. Validation recognises that much skills development happens outside of academic settings. For adult learners, validation of skills developed in informal and non-formal settings can provide necessary qualifications, allowing entry into better employment and/or further educational opportunities.

Teacher quality

Well-qualified staff appear to produce better outcomes for learners.[59] In general, adult literacy teachers tend to be well-educated but to lack specific qualifications in adult-focused teaching methods. They also tend to lack theoretical understanding of the cognitive processes involved in adult literacy development. At European level there is a push to improve the qualifications of adult basic skills educators. In England, the government has placed a strong emphasis on developing a qualified adult basic skills workforce. Since 2007, new educators have been required to gain qualifications in literacy, numeracy and/or English as a Second Language as a subject matter and in adult learning teaching methods. In some countries, the workforce is a mix of professional educators and volunteers. In Ireland, for example, volunteers account for 80% of adult basic skills educators, though they teach only 20% of learners. This disparity is primarily because volunteers are recruited to focus on remote, rural learners in small group or one-to-one tuition, while professionals work in classrooms.[60] The Austrian Initiative for Adult Education (see **Box 7**) also has also put a strong emphasis on improving the quality of adult basic education.

Box 7
A comprehensive approach to improving basic skills: The Austrian Initiative for Adult Education

The Austrian Initiative for Adult Education enables adults who lack basic skills or never graduated from a lower secondary school to continue their education. The Initiative, which is a collaboration between the Austrian Federal Ministry of

58 (See more at http://www.projectgoal.eu/index.php/slovenia/slovenian-institute-for-adult-education.) To read more about the Slovenian approach to adult education guidance, see http://kakovost.acs.si/international/index.php?id=930.

59 Besser, S., Brooks, G., Burton, M., Parisella, M., Spare, Y., Stratford, S. and Wainwright, J. (2004) Adult literacy learners' difficulties in reading: an exploratory study. London: NRDC.

60 Bailey, Inez (2005) "Overview of the adult literacy system in Ireland", in Comings, J., B. Garner, et al. (2005). Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Volume 6: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice: A Project of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Routledge.

Education and Women's Affairs and the nine Austrian provinces, is distinguished by the implementation of quality guidelines for all courses, and the fact that these courses are free of charge for learners, thanks to national funding and – since 2015 – co-financing by the European Social Fund (ESF).

The Initiative is linked to the national Lifelong Learning Strategy. Following a successful first programme period (2012-14), the Initiative has been expanded for a second phase, which runs to 2017. To take part in the Initiative, institutions apply for accreditation and must satisfy several criteria for programme quality. They must:

1 meet national standards for educational establishments;

2 provide detailed information about curricula, target groups, specific outreach strategies, previous dropout rates, partnerships, guidance and assessment strategies, and other quality criteria; and

3 ensure that trainers and counsellors meet the Initiative's qualification standards, e.g. through special training for basic skills teaching professionals.

Institutions which satisfy these criteria are eligible for funding. To take part in the Initiative, they must commit themselves to continuous monitoring, a process which is supervised by a monitoring board. Findings from the monitoring and evaluation process are then used to address problems and improve programmes.[61]

Long-term funding and focus

Developing an effective adult basic skills system can take significant time and investment[62] (see **Box 8** for a recent example for long-term commitment). However, such an investment will pay off in the long run in the form of better skills. High commitment to support particularly those who cannot afford it is important. Financial incentives and funding mechanisms can help increase access, participation and provision of adult learning. Innovative means of funding based on shared responsibility such as cost-sharing schemes (e.g. tax incentives, grants, vouchers/individual learning accounts), have great potential.[63] Cedefop's database on financing adult learning provides information on design and performance of cost-sharing schemes in EU Member States to increase participation and investment in formal and non-formal education and training.[64] The European Commission thematic working group on financing adult learning (2012-13) developed suggestions for policy-makers and a toolkit of different instruments that can be used to review and develop funding policies[65]. Quality cannot simply be decreed from the top down; it must also be built from the bottom up, e.g. through initial and ongoing professional training and the development of accountability systems which support rather than detract from effective teaching and learning.

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61 An English-language programme description as well as examples of monitoring reports and the latest evaluation report (in German) can be found at www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at.

62 Comings, J. and Soricone, L. (2005) "Massachusetts: A Case Study of Improvement and Growth of Adult Education Services", In Comings, Garner, and Smith (eds.) The Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Volume 5, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/ann_rev/rall_v5_ch4.pdf

63 For an overview see Cedefop (2014): Policy handbook. Access to and participation in continuous vocational education and training (CVET) in Europe. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/de/publications-and-resources/publications/6125.

64 http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/FinancingAdultLearning/

65 European Commission (2013): http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/2013-financing-final_en.pdf

Box 8
A National Decade for basic skills and literacy (Germany)

In September 2015, the German Federal and Regional Governments (Länder) launched a National Decade for Basic Skills. Building on previous basic skills initiatives, the National Decade will support a range of initiatives at regional and federal level, including the:

- expansion of basic skills courses and networks
- improvement of quality standards , including the professionalization of the teaching workforce
- upgrading of online learning platforms such as "ich will lernen.de" and "ich will Deutsch lernen.de", and telephone guidance services
- development of smartphone applications to help refugees learn German
- increased focus on basic skills research and evaluation at German universities.

The National Decade will also feature awareness raising campaigns using tools such as flyers, posters, videos, and radio and cinema spots. The National Decade seeks to address findings from the University of Hamburg's "leo.level-one" study, which found that 7.5m adults in Germany (14% of the working age population) have problems with reading and/or writing. 58% of this group are native German speakers (see http://blogs.epb.uni-hamburg.de/leo).

The National Decade has a budget of €180m for 10 years, and is supported by a broad range of stakeholders inside and outside government, including employers, trade unions, NGOs, scientific institutes and the media. For more information, see https://www.bmbf.de/de/nationale-strategie-fuer-alphabetisierung-und-grundbildung-erwachsener-1373.html.

Successful programmes give learners sufficient time to improve their skills. US research[66] suggests that there may be a threshold of participation in adult literacy courses beneath which most learners cannot make sufficient progress to take the next step up. In the US context, Comings[67] found that learners typically need somewhat more than 100 hours of learning time in order to progress the equivalent of one grade/year level. In the UK, studies have found that learners who attend courses for more than 50 hours make more progress than those who attend less, and that regular attendance is correlated with better progress.[68]

More research on policy effectiveness and impacts

The best adult basic skills policies and programmes are evidence-based. By investing more now in research on what works in their particular context, countries can make their programmes more effective and efficient, saving money in the long-term. There is a particular need for longitudinal research investigating the long-term impacts of policies and programmes on skills development over the life course, and the economic and wider benefits of those skills gains.[69,70,71] Such research would give policy makers additional

66 Comings, J., Cuban, S., Bos, J. M., Porter, K. E., & Doolittle, F. C. (2003). As long as it takes. Responding to the Challenges of Adult Student Persistence in Library Literacy Programmes. New York: MDRC.

67 ibid.

68 Brooks, Greg (2010) "Adult literacy (age 18 and beyond)", in Kamil, et al (eds.) Handbook of Reading Research, Volume IV. London: Routledge.

69 Reder, S. (2012) The Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning: Challenging assumptions. Montreal: Centre for Literacy.

70 Carpentieri, JD (2013) 'Evidence, Evaluation and the 'Tyranny of Effect Size': A Proposal to More Accurately Measure Programme Impacts in Adult and Family Literacy', European Journal of Education 48(4): 543–56.

evidence to support arguments for programme and policy expansion – for example, by allowing for more accurate estimates of the long-term cost savings associated with improved employment and better physical and mental health. Longitudinal research would also help to make programmes more efficient and effective.

The graphic overleaf summarises the main policy conclusions of this section.

71 Carpentieri, J. (2015) "Adding new numbers to the policy narrative: Using PIAAC data to focus on literacy practices". In Hamilton, M., Maddox, B. and Addey, C., (eds.) Literacy as Numbers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


European Commission
Adult basic education everywhere
ACQUIRING BASIC SKILLS IN ADULTHOOD MAKES A DIFFERENCE!
Benefits of closing the adult basic skills gap
More civic participation
Improved self-esteem
Less unemployment
Higher wages
Better health
Tailored solutions
Cooperation and tailored support are required to address multiple needs of adult learners
Digital skills & educational resources
Effectively support adult basic skill acquisition
Specialised educators are the key for success in adult learning
Competences of educators
Raise awareness of the basic skills gap
Increase individuals' motivation to improve their skills
Outreach to new adult learners
Coherent adult learning policies
Overcoming gaps in basic skills of adults is a continuous, long-term endeavour
This requires cooperation across policy fields, shared adult skills strategies and lifelong learning
WHO ARE THE ADULTS WITH GAPS IN BASIC SKILLS?
About 70 million adults
More nationals than migrants
More older than young people
Majority employed
Education and Training

3 Information technology and open educational resources: the key to opening up adult learning for everyone, everywhere

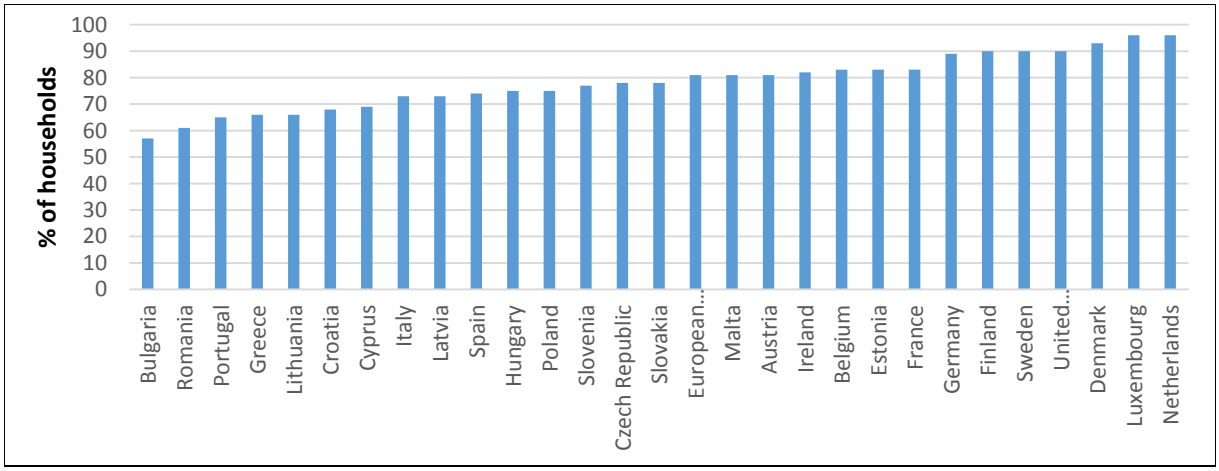
A growing digital divide

As we have seen from the previous chapter, a number of issues regarding adult skills and adult learning in Europe need to be addressed urgently. The fact that one in four EU adults cannot solve simple problems using ICT is alarming in today's society where digital technologies are embedded in the way people communicate, work and trade. Amongst adults over 65, the number of people with low skills is very likely even higher. The importance of a workforce with high ICT-competence cannot be underestimated as a basis for an effective labour market, innovation and smart jobs. Experts and policy-makers all agree that the capacity to manage information and solve problems using digital devices, applications and networks has become essential for life in the 21st century.[72]

A new digital divide in the EU is growing, between those adults who have and those who do not have access to innovative, technology-based education as well as public and private on-line services. According to Eurostat, on average 81 % of households in the EU now has access to the internet and access to various types of facilities is still rapidly increasing. For example, the proportion of individuals using any mobile device such as a smartphone or a tablet for entering the internet increased from 36 % in 2012 to 51 % in 2014. This indicates that the digital divide, originally conceived as unequally distributed *access* to computers and digital infrastructure, has evolved into a divide between those who have and those who do not have necessary skills to use and benefit from the internet.

72 European Commission, (2013). The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC): Implications for education and training policies in Europe. Luxembourg

Figure 2
Level of access to the internet in EU households



Source: Eurostat Households - level of internet access [isoc_ci_in_h] 2014.[73]

ICT's potential to enhance adult learning

The appropriate and relevant use of ICT in learning can increase learners' motivation and engagement – meaning that they are likely to spend more time on their learning – and enhance student learning and educational outcomes.

Mobile technologies can play an important role in supporting adult learners; they bring a flexibility which makes learning possible from any location at any time, and can encourage learners to take more responsibility for directing and managing their own education. The ability to access learning opportunities outside the classroom can also help learners contextualize and apply their learning in the real world. The networking and communication features offered by mobile technologies can help learners develop social skills and relationships by facilitating collaboration.

Social media are used more and more in an educational context. They allow the user to create, contribute, communicate and collaborate online without the need for specialized programming skills; they support an open-ended learning environment and provide the learner with multiple possibilities for activities. They support interaction between mobile devices and internet, making way for increased mobile learning (or the use of "smart", mobile devices in learning).

Social networking sites are particularly well suited to be used in education as they can support interaction, communication, and collaboration. These applications make it possible for learners, even those with modest digital competence, to actively create their own learning process rather than passively consume content. Learning can become a more participatory, life-long social process.

In terms of pedagogy/ andragogy, the use of mobile phones – particularly smartphones – in adult learning brings a wide range of opportunities: from using mobiles to integrate aspects of informal learning, to set up episodes of situated learning, to generate learning and media contexts, to construct conversational bridges, to support learners as experts of media use in everyday life, and to set up responsive contexts for development and learning. Adult educators need to be aware of these possibilities and know how to use them to maximum effect.

73 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics_-_households_and_individuals

The use of mobile devices in adult learning also enables educators to rethink learning; for example, instead of thinking in terms of traditional "learning rooms" we can think of "learning spaces": open contexts of learning where the learner generates his/her own learning paths; this means that the focus can be put on learners rather than on the content to be learned; learners can be provided with a scaffold and supported to enable them to manage their "learning space". Further, mobile devices enable educators to think of "activities" rather than traditional "courses"; mobile devices are at present mainly viewed by users as informal and personal tools to be used in daily life, but are increasingly being seen as a means to deliver formal courses.

Mobile devices can also be seen as cultural/learning resources because of the role they play in people's everyday life: for identity formation, social interaction, the derivation of meaning, and entertainment. From such a perspective, mobile devices can provide multiple learning opportunities such as supporting exploration and widening the learning context, enhancing self-expression and self-representation, enabling media production, and supporting social networking and connections.

Increased use of mobile phones in adult learning in practice means in most cases institutionalising the principle called Bring Your Own Device (BYOD). This means that learners bring their own device - be it a smartphone, tablet, laptop or other device - to school in order to access the internet and/or school network by 3G or Wi-Fi. BYOD is coming under serious consideration globally by education providers for many reasons, not only funding issues but also the integral nature of these devices to the learners' own world, and pressure from learners to use their own devices in and for learning.

European initiatives to support the use of ICT in adult learning

ICT's potential to enhance adult learning is recognised in a number of policy documents such as the Bruges Communiqué on vocational education and training (2010)[74], which specifically points to the use of ICT to maximise access to training, to promote active learning, and to develop new methods in both work- and school-based VET, in order to facilitate the participation of "at risk" groups. In A Digital Agenda for Europe[75]], the European Commission states that it will give priority to digital literacy and skills through the European Social Fund and develop tools to identify and recognise the skills of ICT practitioners and users.

The Commission's Communication 2013 'Opening up Education' initiative emphasised the need to fully explore the potential of ICT to improve the effectiveness of education and training systems, whilst promoting more personalised learning, a better learning experience, and an improved use of resources.

The Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning (2011)[76] recognises the potential of ICT in motivating adults to take up learning opportunities and in widening access to new target groups, for example those with special needs or who live in remote areas. The potential of ICT is also seen in supporting the objective of "improving the quality and efficiency of education and training". The same is true for the Council Recommendation on Recognition and Validation of Non-formal and Informal learning (2012)[77] and the Communication Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources (2013)[78].

74 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52012SC0375

75 [COM(2010) 245 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0245

76 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2011.372.01.0001.01.ENG

77 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222(01)

78 http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52013DC0654

Few countries have a comprehensive policy on making use of ICT in adult learning

Despite all of these advantages, and this policy support, only a few countries have taken a comprehensive policy approach to making better use of the potential of ICT in adult learning.

A recent report[79] (see box 9) looked into the state of play of ICT use in adult learning and the take-up of ICT among adult learners across a range of countries[80]. The study includes a comparative analysis of evidence on the state-of-play and take-up of OER among adult learners across the countries included in the study. It was evident that those countries carrying out the most successful implementation of ICT in adult learning all have an integrated strategy for lifelong learning and ICT; they also demonstrate a high degree of collaboration between public and private actors including municipalities and local providers of adult education, display innovative ICT approaches and actively address barriers that prevent the development of ICT-enhanced adult education. An analysis of policy documents and the research literature confirmed that the benefits of ICT and OER in adult learning are widely acknowledged amongst policymakers and practitioners. However, there remain considerable differences across Member States in adult skill levels, access to ICTs, the availability of relevant content, and in the development of educators' innovative learning skills and competences. It concludes that there are significant variations across Member States in the extent of ICT and OER developments for adult learning.

Box 9
A new study on ICT in Adult Learning

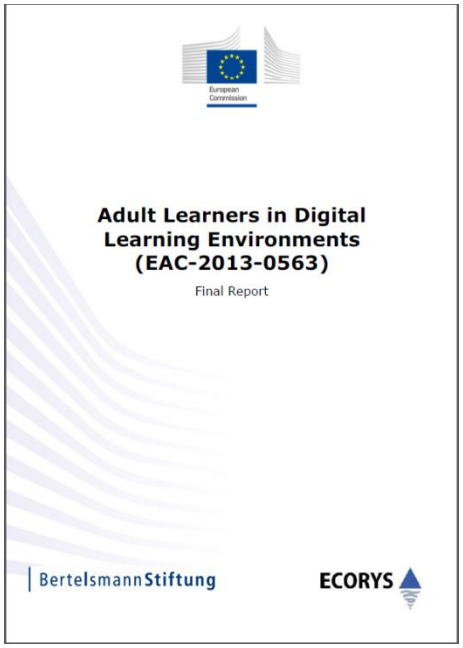
Ecorys and Bertelsmann Stiftung were commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture to provide a detailed picture of the current provision and take up of ICT-enhanced learning, including open educational resources (OER), in adult learning.

The study concludes that governments and adult learning providers across the EU can contribute to developing innovative adult learning using ICTs and OER. This can be achieved through effective organisational strategies, ensuring that their educators are fully skilled and knowledgeable in the innovative use of ICTs and OER, and that the institutional ICT infrastructure focuses on a sustainable development of ICTs and OER, oriented around the specific needs of their adult learners.

An enriched evidence base for adult learning across Europe can better inform policy development.

The report identifies a number of benefits of using ICT and OER in adult learning which include to:

- extend and diversify the provision of learning;



79 European Commission (2015). Adult Learners in Digital Learning Environments - Final Report. Brussels: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=&pubId=7820&type=2&furtherPubs=yes

80 CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, HU, NL, PL, PT, SE, UK, NO and Brazil, Turkey, USA.

- enable provision to be tailored in terms of content (by making learning available in smaller units), and time and place (by disconnecting learning from traditional learning settings); and
- widen access, building on conventional distance learning techniques and providing new forms of non-traditional learning.

The report recommends the European Union to support the sharing of good practice on the use of ICTs and OERs in adult learning and to create an environment for the effective pan-European use of ICTs and OERs in adult learning.

Member States are recommended to build national information and resources to promote the value of adult learning using ICTs and OER and to develop policies and strategies to enable the development and take-up of innovative adult learning using ICTs and OER.

The ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning has been interactively working with the contractor for the study, guiding and commenting on the conclusions and the recommendations. The findings of the study have informed the Group in the development of the key policy messages and recommendations.

Some Member States, including all the Nordic countries, have a legislative framework which establishes the right for every adult to acquire basic reading, writing and numeracy skills. Some countries also explicitly include digital skills among the basic skills that everyone has the right to acquire for free.

Actions and initiatives in Member States to raise adults digital skills

Member States need to invest in four main areas: ICT infrastructure, hardware, digital learning resources and digital skills for educators and trainers. There are also initiatives seeking to overcome digital exclusion, reaching out to citizens broadly. Several actions and initiatives have been carried out around Europe, with the aim of raising adults' basic skills, to enable citizens to benefit from advantages offered by ICT and prevent digital exclusion, of which a few are presented here:

Investments in ICT for adult learning

Investments are being made in infrastructure and devices, platforms, production of content and training for teachers and adult learners, and Member States choose a variety of ways to do this.

- Denmark has invested in fully digitally equipped Adult Education Centres[81] across the country. In order to cover remote areas some of the centres are mobile (in large trucks). Moreover Denmark has invested in a national digital platform, called EMU, which is a unique constellation of virtual entries targeted at specific user groups. Each entry has themes on different topics, educational sequences, resources, best practice, news and much more. For adult education there are materials providing inspiration, guidelines and resources for teachers.
- The Belgian initiative InnoTice[82] is a programme regarding both infrastructure and digital devices in order to integrate e-learning to improve quality, effectiveness and efficiency in the adult education and training system. The goal is to enable the users, who are both learners and trainers or teachers, to have access to innovative resources to increase their autonomy and their capacity to learn how to learn.

81 http://www.emu.dk/omraade/amu

82 ref.

- Latvia and Lithuania have introduced active labour market policies using coupons or vouchers for learners[83] in order for them to acquire informal education, vocational continuing education and vocational improvement education, together with other measures to increase their competiveness and opportunities on the labour market.
- Germany has invested in learning portals for literacy and the German language[84]. They have been online since 2004 and 2013. With almost 500 000 learners and 30 000 exercises the portal ´ich will lernen.de´ is the biggest learning portal in Germany. It offers courses in literacy, promotion of the ability to obtain a school leaving certificate and employability, as well as courses on life and money (basic economic education). Furthermore the newer portal ('ich will Deutsch lernen.de') offers language courses for migrants wanting to learn German for working purposes. So far the Ministry of Education has invested some €2 million in videos and self-study materials, including a "soap opera part". All the courses are offered free of charge for the learner. The portal ´ich will Deutsch lernen.de´ will be modernized and re-launched soon.

Overcoming digital exclusion

A key issue is digital inclusion; an example of an initiative that sought to overcome this is the Digital Lighthouse-keepers project from Poland,

- In Poland the NGO 'Digital Lighthouse-keepers'85 uses volunteers such as local leaders, digital champions and enthusiasts of digital education, to encourage people from the 50+ age group to take their first steps into the digital world. According to this initiative, the main causes for digital exclusion are lack of personal motivation, fear of unfamiliar technical solutions, and a lack of ICT knowledge and skills. Therefore, the Digital Lighthouse-keepers aims to ensure that the first steps into the digital world are connected with a presentation of the advantages of ICT in daily life and at work, including an explanation of the daily activities which can be carried out online and the development of basic computer and Internet skills.

Large-scale initiatives to provide ICT skills for adults

Another key issue is the large number of people who could benefit from adult learning. Examples of initiatives that sought to overcome this problem of scale are the 'Come along' project from Estonia and the Digidel project from Sweden.

- The Estonian project "Ole kaasas![86]" (Come Along!) aimed at providing basic and advanced computer training to 100,000 people and connecting 50,000 more families to the Internet over period of three years. Learners studied both in traditional and mobile classrooms as well as in an e-bus that travelled throughout Estonia. Some people enhanced their internet skills via web training and at public one stop-shops. Free training and guidance were offered in Estonian and Russian. The training was given in almost 300 locations all over Estonia. The Ole kaasas! project is also a charity initiative – different companies donated old computers which were then revamped and delivered to elderly or disabled people, large families etc.
- The Swedish campaign "Digidel[87]" aimed at the digital inclusion of at least 500 000 more Swedes. It focused on elderly people, immigrants and other people without basic digital competencies. The campaign was conducted by 16 organisations and

83 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1073&eventsId=937&furtherEvents=yes
84 Ich-will-lernen.de, ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de
85 http://groups.itu.int/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=J2lK2fWaI1U%3D&tabid=1862
86 http://www.vaatamaailma.ee/en/
87 http://digidel.se/

450 actors across the country, mainly public libraries, liberal adult education actors and the foundation ".SE". When the campaign ended in December 2013 it had achieved its goals.

Support for teachers to use ICT in adult learning

Teachers need to be equipped to use ICT and high quality digital learning resources effectively. They also need support on how to find and evaluate the quality of digital learning resources, both open educational resources (OERs) and resources provided by educational publishers, as well as how to develop and share own resources.

- In Norway the Centre for ICT in Education have developed an aid for teachers who want to evaluate the suitability of digital learning resources88 in different educational contexts, as well as recommendations and requirements for developers and purchasers.

Member States could support teachers to increase the use of mobile devices, such as learners' own mobile phones, in teaching and learning by providing them with guidelines, tutorials and handbooks on how to use mobile phones in teaching and learning.

- In 2009 researchers at the Danish national e-learning centre published guidelines on mobile learning89, with the goal of providing educators and other interested parties with an introduction to the use of mobile technology in schools. The guidelines describe, for example, the technical capabilities of smartphones, and how podcasting can be used to distribute educational materials, facilitate group work and support student presentations.
- In Estonia the programme VANKER90 has been initiated to raise the professional competence of VET teachers in the implementation and designing of e-learning tools and opportunities. This is done mainly by providing training opportunities for teachers. As a part of the programme educational technologists supported the teachers to use and create e-learning tools.

Supporting teachers by providing digital resources for adult learning

Teachers' professional development needs to be at the heart of strategies to make better use of digital resources in education.

The Spanish Educalab's Procomún[91] (Space of Open Educational Resources) combines the teaching exchange of digital learning resources with networking and sharing of experiences and ideas. Procomún was established to meet some of the challenges faced by the formal adult education system, namely to adapt schools to the spectacular progress of the new technologies in society, and to improving the low level of ICT skills among adult learners and, not at least teachers.

- The main way to overcome the challenges is to create a national strategy for a digital culture in schools, and to set up special plans for teacher training and support mainly by creating a network of training centres for teachers across the country.
- An important starting point for the teacher training courses is the actual needs of teachers. On the basis of teacher requests the National institute of education, technologies and teacher training offers courses both online and face-to-face (around 10,000 per year).

88 https://iktsenteret.no/ressurser/kvalitetskriterier-digitale-laeringsressurser

89 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002161/216165E.pdf

90 http://www.innove.ee/UserFiles/International%20cooperation/EE_2014_Innovation%20in%20VET-2.pdf

91 http://educalab.es/recursos/procomun

- Other activities include improved school connectivity and high speed internet access, to create quality standards for online resources, and to create a hub for free online and printed resources.

Research to strengthen the evidence base

Member States need to invest more in research and development (R&D) on the use of digital devices in adult learning, in order to achieve a sound base for strategic decisions on efficient policies for ICT in adult learning. As an example, research in this field is carried out in the British project MoLeNET[92].

- MoLeNET is one of the largest and most diverse mobile learning initiatives in Europe. Implemented from 2007 to 2010, the programme involved approximately 40,000 learners and over 7,000 staff. Over £12 million was invested in MoLeNET by the UK government and participating institutions, including colleges and education providers. The R&D programme investigated the exploitation of ubiquitous hand-held technologies, together with wireless and mobile phone networks, to support and extend the reach of teaching and learning. Learning activities could take place at any location and at any time, including traditional learning environments, such as classrooms, as well as other locations, including the workplace, home, community sites, and in transit.

The benefits of using ICT in adult learning

ICT has the capacity to enhance adult learning

One of the most commonly reported effects of the introduction of computers or tablet PCs in school is that students' motivation and engagement increases. A literature review conducted in 2010[93] found 20 studies that demonstrated increased motivation and fewer discipline problems due to the introduction of ICT enhanced learning. Although this review mainly builds on research regarding younger learners, it is echoed in many other research briefings, which cover a broader range of learners. The results are important since motivated learners are more engaged and are likely to spend more time on their learning.

Already ten years ago Gulek and Demirtas concluded that: "There is substantial evidence that using technology as an instructional tool enhances student learning and educational outcomes."[94] This research used multiple indicators of learning to find significantly higher test scores and grades for writing, English and mathematics with the strongest impact being seen in special education students. Similar findings are compiled in a literature review done by the State of New South Wales, Australia.[95]

One of the largest and most long term initiatives with one laptop per learner has been carried out in the State of Maine, USA. It started in the academic year 2002/2003 when over 17,000 seventh graders and their teachers in over 240 middle schools across Maine received laptop computers. The following year all eighth graders and their teachers also received laptops, and each subsequent year thereafter, all seventh and eighth graders and their teachers have received laptop computers, paid for by the State. In 2011, eight years after the inception of the programme, the University of Southern Maine concluded that the "program has had a significant impact on curriculum, instruction, and learning in

92 http://www.molenet.org.uk/about.html

93 reference

94 Gulek & Demirtas (2005): Learning with technology: the impact of laptop use on student achievement, Journal of Technology, Learning and Assessment 3 (2)

95 State of NSW (2009): One-to-one computing: literature review. State of NSW, Department of Education and Training, Curriculum K-12 Directorate, January 2009

Maine's middle schools".[96] Furthermore they said that: "Results indicate that students' writing has improved. In mathematics there is evidence that a well-designed and executed professional development resulted in improved student performance in mathematics. A science study also found significant gains in student achievement, both short term and longer term, when students used their laptop to learn science."

The research evidence also suggests that not every programme initiating computers in education is successful. It is not enough to invest in technology. Computers can never replace the teacher. To be successful there needs to be a balance between investments in technology, in teachers' competence to use the technology, and in digital learning content. Furthermore, there needs to be leadership to guide all the systems and processes so that the right choices are made and so that collaboration is possible within and outside the institution. This is clearly pointed out by the Dutch foundation Kennisnet, when they summarise their experiences after more than 15 years of monitoring ICT use in Dutch schools[97]. These findings are most likely to be relevant also for adult learners since they regard the learning environment more than the learner himself.

ICT can widen access to learning opportunities

The European project Mobile Technologies in Lifelong Learning: best practices (MOTILL)[98] investigated how mobile technologies may impact the diffusion of a social model where learning and knowledge are accessible to all. They noted numerous benefits of the incorporation of mobile technologies in lifelong learning. One observation made by the project is that mobile technologies can play an important role in supporting learners who are changing their "status" – moving between different grade levels or institutions, switching from individual to collaborative work, or even recovering from illness back to good health. Mobile learning can help provide continuity for learners during these periods of transition, when traditional educational opportunities may be unavailable. Additionally, the flexibility afforded by mobile learning, which makes learning possible from any location at any time, can encourage learners to take more responsibility for directing and managing their own education. The ability to access learning opportunities outside the classroom can also help learners contextualize and apply their learning in the real world. Finally, it is noted that the networking and communication features offered by mobile technologies can help learners develop social skills and relationships by facilitating collaboration.

The widened access to learning brought by use of information technology is also demonstrated in the handbook for mobile learning, produced by the MyMobile[99] project, carried out in Belgium, Germany, Italy and UK. Practical examples of how ICT can increase flexibility in terms of time and space, thus enabling personalised learning "anytime and anywhere", are demonstrated in the study Adult Learners in a Digital Environment[100]. It is also echoed by a majority of the European population: in a Flash Eurobarometer opinion survey of November 2008, 72 % of interviewees responded that the internet had improved their opportunities to learn.[101]

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96 Silvernail et al (2011): A Middle School One-to-One Laptop Program: The Maine Experience. Maine Education Policy Research Institute, University of Southern Maine, August 2011

97 reference

98 Http://www.open.ac.uk/iet/main/research-innovation/research-projects/motill-project (National Lifelong Learning Strategies (NLLS) - Transversal programme - Key Activity1: Policy Cooperation and Innovation of the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013)

99 http://www.mymobile-project.eu/ LLP 2007-2013

100 http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=&pubId=7820&type=2&furtherPubs=yes

101 http://is.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pages/documents/RedeckerPunieEC-TELfinal-print.pdf

Mobile Learning

Mobile technologies have undergone enormous changes in the past decade. Where mobile phones once simply enabled users to place voice calls, this functionality is now of almost secondary importance. Owners of smartphones can check their email, log in to social media platforms and download applications to assist them in a wide variety of tasks ranging from getting directions to learning a language or trading stocks in real time.

For four or five years mobile phones have been complemented by tablet PCs. Typically larger than smart phones, tablet PCs are better equipped for multimedia use and production. Given their lower price compared to desktop PCs and laptops, and their intuitive interface, they have become popular devices in educational settings. Since they are relatively new on the market, there is so far only limited research on the use of tablet PCs in education. Most of the research published so far, relates to higher education. The results resemble findings from one-laptop-per-learner programmes; only the threshold to get started seems lower and the positive impact seems to come quicker. These technological developments create new pedagogical challenges and offer opportunities for learning at any location.

The use of mobile phones – particularly smartphones – in adult learning is growing. The authors of the MyMobile handbook on the use of mobile phones in adult learning note that, at first glance, the use of mobile technologies for learning is not obvious.[102] This is because mobile technologies are commodity items and originally not designed for learning but for entertainment, communication, networking etc. and they are sold as part of users' lifestyle choices and for media consumption. At a second glance, though, a manifold range of opportunities emerges.

Box 10
MyMobile Project

The MyMobile Handbook gives a number of examples on how mobile phones can be used in adult learning.[103] These range from using mobiles to integrate aspects of informal learning, to set up episodes of situated learning, to generate learning and media contexts, to construct conversational bridges, to support learners as experts of media use in everyday life, and to set up responsive contexts for development and learning. The authors also describe seven training scenarios using mobile phones, including bridging informal and formal education through mobile images, developing young adults' self-expression skills through mobile storytelling, connecting older people in rural areas, and exploring the possibilities of mobile phones in a university course for educators.

It should be remembered that despite mobile devices and the internet being so widespread, people have very different levels of access to and competence in using technologies. In addition, Mobile phones come with many different levels of complexity; some are characterized by very basic functions whilst others support multimedia applications and internet navigation.

The authors of the MyMobile Handbook also highlight two implications related to the use mobile devices in adult learning. The first is to think "learning spaces/places" not "learning rooms". By this they mean that whilst a "learning room" is a finite and fixed place with a limited number of resources, a "learning space" is an open context of learning where the learner generates his/her own learning paths. In practice this means that the focus should be put on learners rather than content by providing the learners with a scaffold and support in

102 http://www.mymobile-project.eu/IMG/pdf/Handbook_web.pdf
103 Ibid

order to enable them to manage their "learning space". The second implication is to think "activities" not "courses". Considering that mobile devices are mainly viewed by users as informal and personal tools to be used in daily life, they could hardly be seen as a means to deliver formal courses.

Almost eight out of ten European citizens have a mobile phone. But, as the MyMobile project points out, even more important than the high distribution is the high degree of personalization of mobile devices and their level of penetration in everyday life: mobile devices and mobile phones in particular, are highly individualized, and always available in physical proximity to the subject. A further strength of using mobile devices in learning is that they enable linkage of formal and informal learning contexts.

Although the use of smartphones in learning on a larger scale is a fairly recent phenomenon, computer-supported mobile learning in Europe began in the 1980s when handheld devices were first tested in a few schools.[104] A broader perspective arose in the mid-1990s with research projects to exploit a new generation of handheld devices for learning. The European Commission has been the most important player in Europe in promoting mobile learning by financing research and development projects. A few countries have initiated national or co-financed international research and development projects in mobile learning, most notably the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The early projects were mostly technology-driven and explored the utilisation of new mobile technology to support teaching and learning. The techno-centred view was soon challenged by an organic approach to mobile learning which is not "delineated by the use of mobile devices to deliver content, but by the transformation of everyday life worlds into spaces for learning". As regards the concept of mobile learning, UNESCO argues that a definition should focus on the mobility of the learner, the learning tool and the experience of learning with mobile devices, rather than devices and technologies.[105] The MyMobile project takes this view even further and views mobile devices as cultural/ learning resources, considering them not so much for their technical functionalities but for the role they may play in people's everyday life as strategic tools for identity formation, social interaction, the derivation of meaning, and entertainment. In such a perspective, mobile devices can provide multiple learning opportunities such as supporting exploration and widening the learning context, enhancing self-expression and self-representation, enabling media production, and supporting social networking and connections.

Bring Your Own Device

Some adult learning providers offer their learners mobile devices, e.g. tablet PCs. Although no reliable statistics are available, institutionalising the principle called Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) seems to be an exception. But providers that have the opportunity to provide their learners with tablets more and more view mobile technologies as another aspect of ICT in education, considering it to be one more element in a technological toolkit that can be used to support both formal and informal learning. Concerns about the introduction of BYOD programmes include mainly equity issues, which would appear to be more relevant in schools than in adult learning where learners own devices can complement the provision from the educational provider.[106] Also, a BYOD programme which allows a wide variety of devices may not supply the best tool for the task, though some argue that this is overcome by browser based apps.

104 UNESCO (2012): Turning on Mobile Learning in Europe. Illustrative Initiatives and Policy Implications. Paris 2012. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002161/216165E.pdf

105 Ibid.

106 Stavert (2013): BYOD in Schools Literature Review 2013. State of New South Wales, Department of Education and Communities, Australia 2013.

Social Media in Learning

The use of ICT to enhance learning goes back at least some 20 years in most European countries. But it has often been done from the perspective of the educational institutions rather than the learners. Learning Management Systems (LMS) that integrate geographically dispersed learners have been widely available to educational providers for many years. They are often well suited for managing course descriptions, lesson plans, exams, messages etc. but they are designed for the management and delivery of learning, not for supporting learners' self-governed and problem-based activities. Social media or social software on the other hand, allowing the user to create, contribute, communicate and collaborate online without need for specialized programming skills, is better suited to support an open-ended learning environment and provide the learner with multiple possibilities for activities. They also support interaction between mobile devices and internet, making way for increased mobile learning (or the use of "smart", mobile devices in learning).

As society continues to be influenced by the plethora of emerging technologies, the methods for information exchange continues to proliferate. Popular online tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google have changed the way in which we experience the internet by providing a platform for unlimited information mining and peer-to-peer content sharing that is relevant to our needs. This new approach to information exchange has not only affected the way we communicate and conduct business, but has also presented new opportunities within the context of teaching and learning. Social media is used more and more in an educational context. This is a fairly recent phenomenon which as yet has not resulted in a large body of research.

Social networking sites are particularly well suited to be used in education. As already mentioned, these sites can support interaction, communication, and collaboration. These applications make it possible for learners, also with modest digital competence, to actively create their own learning process rather than passively consume content. Learning can become a more participatory, life-long social process. LeNoue et al[107] argue that learners build and maintain communities of learning in online environments by engaging in many of the processes and behaviours associated with offline communities. "Ongoing interaction is the foundational theme underlying all these community-building behaviours." Well-designed courses take this into account and harnesses the opportunities offered by the online tools.

On the other hand, LeNou et al note that some adult learners may be resistant to using new technologies. They may simply lack experience, skill or access. But the authors conclude that: "while this may initially seem to be a substantial downside to deploying these new online tools, any negative effect is easily outweighed by the secondary learning represented by gaining proficiency in the use of the technology tools that are becoming prominent and permanent fixtures in modern life."

Social networking sites

The openness of the social networking sites and their participatory design might be of particular importance to learning. In a book dedicated to improving adult literacy instruction Lesgold and Welch-Ross look at literacy in the digital age.[108] They conclude that "after years of absence from formal learning situations or having negative earlier experiences, adult students can be intimidated by overly structured, test-centred programmes. Many times these programmes, full of young people, presume basic

107 LeNoue, Hall, Eighmy (2011): Adult Education and the Social Media Revolution. Adult Learning March 2011 22: 4-12

108 Lesgold and Welch-Ross (eds) (2012): Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Practice and Research. http://www.nap.edu/catalog/13242/improving-adult-literacy-instruction-options-for-practice-and-research

computer literacy or English proficiency, and they do not take into account how adults who have not been involved with ICT use can be intimidated and anxious about adopting these new roles in unfamiliar educational settings. Furthermore, many of these programmes have a narrow view of technology and literacy, prescribing constrained uses of computers and not taking into account the wide range of purposes people might have in using technology".

According to the statistics available, the proportion of adults not using internet and social networking sites is fairly limited and diminishing. Pew Research Centre (2014) reports that 80-85 % of United States people aged over 18 use internet or email at least occasionally.[109] 58 % report using Facebook and 23 % LinkedIn. Looking only at the proportion using internet, at least 74 % used a social networking site of some kind, 42 % of them use multiple social networking sites. The proportion of women using a social networking site is larger than men, 76 % of the women compared to 72 % of the men. eMarketer shows that 68 % of internet users around the world use a social network site at least once per month.[110]

These figures suggest that many adults already use social networking sites of some kind, lowering the threshold of using social media in learning contexts. Statistics from the European Union is less easy to find. According to the social media research company "We are social" 78 % of the total population in Europe (including Russia) were unique mobile phone users.[111] According to the same study, Europe had an internet penetration of 68 % and 40 % of the total population used social networking sites.

Fernandez-Villavicencio (2010) look at ways in which learners can become competent in information and media-literate by embracing social networks and other digital tools that allow users to find, produce, and share digital information.[112] The author contends that it is absolutely essential that all individuals learn to become information- and media-literate in this digital world; social networking tools, including the rich portfolio of applications they encompass, can substantially assist people in achieving that goal.

Experience in favour of using social networks in adult learning includes the fact that social networks closely resemble what happens in face-to-face discussions, which according to some, makes students feel more committed, engaged, and known to each other. Online collaboration is not new in the adult learning context, but the increase of social networking engagement makes it easier because of their availability and familiarity. Since many people are familiar with social networking sites such as Facebook, they can easily adopt any similar social network without feeling burdened by having to learn anything new. A feeling of learner ownership is another positive argument as well as the ease and speed of questions being asked and answered, by other participants rather than by the teacher or trainer.

Four in Balance – a model for implementing ICT in Adult Learning

As demonstrated above, any programme for implementing ICT in adult learning should cover ICT infrastructure, hardware, digital learning resources and digital skills for educators, which all involve considerable investment. When considering investment in ICT the importance of a balanced and holistic view should be stressed.

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109 Pew Research Centre (2013): Social Media Updates 2013. http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/12/30/social-media-update-2013/. See also Pew Research Centre (2014): Social Media Update 2014 http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/

110 eMarketer report, "Worldwide Social Network Users: 2013 Forecast and Comparative Estimates," - See more at: http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Social-Networking-Reaches-Nearly-One-Four-Around-World/1009976#sthash.QGppQ9GO.dpuf

111 http://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/social-digital-mobile-in-europe

112 Fernandez-Villavicencio (2010): Helping students become literate in a digital, networking-based society: A literature review and discussion. International Information & Library Review, 42(2), 124-136.

The Dutch organization Kennisnet[113] seeks to ensure that educational institutions avail themselves of the opportunities offered by ICT. According to the organization, research has shown that a balanced and coherent use of four building blocks is essential in order to apply ICT for educational purposes: vision and leadership, expertise, digital learning materials, and ICT infrastructure. The model is not only a useful conceptual framework for a national benchmark, it is also an implementation model for the sustainable use of ICT in education, intended to help education providers that wish to use ICT make choices that will improve their quality of teaching and learning and obtain related benefits. Annual monitoring on the use and benefits of ICT, carried out by independent researchers and based on the four building blocks in the 'Four in Balance' model , is carried out in Dutch primary, secondary and vocational education and training institutions, and the results are published in the yearly Four in Balance Report. In the 2015 'Four in Balance Monitor'[114]it is stated that "if the four basic elements are in balance, then our use of ICT will be effectual, targeted and controlled".[115]

The working group has discussed the model at length and has modified it to make it appropriate to an adult learning environment; it now provides an analytical tool to support the successful implementation of digital tools in adult learning.

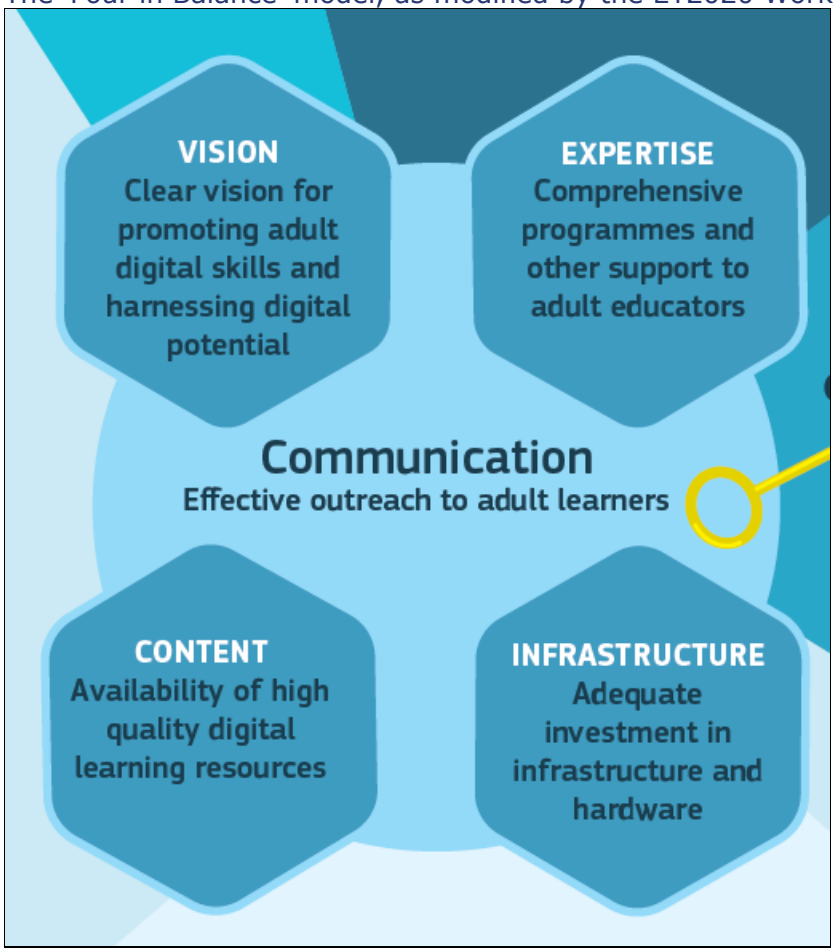
The 'Four in balance' model approach should be used as a coherent strategy to guide government interventions in the adult education sector, so that, in turn, the sector could contribute better to the empowerment of the (self-directed) adult learners in using ICT/ OER for their own learning pathway.

113 https://www.kennisnet.nl/

114 https://www.kennisnet.nl/fileadmin/kennisnet/corporate/algemeen/Four_in_balance_monitor_2015.pdf

115 ibid

Figure 3:
The 'Four in Balance' model, as modified by the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning



Four in Balance - The building blocks

Vision and leadership - Providing the orientation

The success of the strategy depends on vision and leadership. Given the diverse landscape of adult education provision, a vision of how alliances in various sub-fields (e.g. liberal adult education, formal adult education in schools and training programmes provided on behalf of the public employment services) could be formed would be required. In addition a vision would be required how to cater for the multiple groups of trainers/ adult educators/ facilitators. Finally, strong leadership would be required for communicating the aims and strategies across the various sub-fields.

Content - Digital learning material

A successful strategy has to include a plan for content. There are many gaps, where no high quality open educational resources targeting an adult population are available. To create or provide appropriated high-quality digital open educational resources, filling these gaps, is a demanding task and calls for cooperation among stakeholders in adult learning. Digital media – both open resources and resources not open, yet, available for free – are plentiful for many learning purposes but of varied quality. Both learners and trainers of adult learning need support to navigate among seemingly promising, but possibly weak or inappropriate sources.

Knowledge and expertise - of adult educators or learning facilitators

Adult educators needs further support for strengthening their competence in using ICT and OER in their particular fields. Furthermore, approaches speeding up the diffusion of recently upcoming approaches and materials are required. As technical support might not be available in sufficient way, stronger core ICT competences are required by the adult educators for allowing a smooth integration and allowing for a 'bring your own device' strategy.

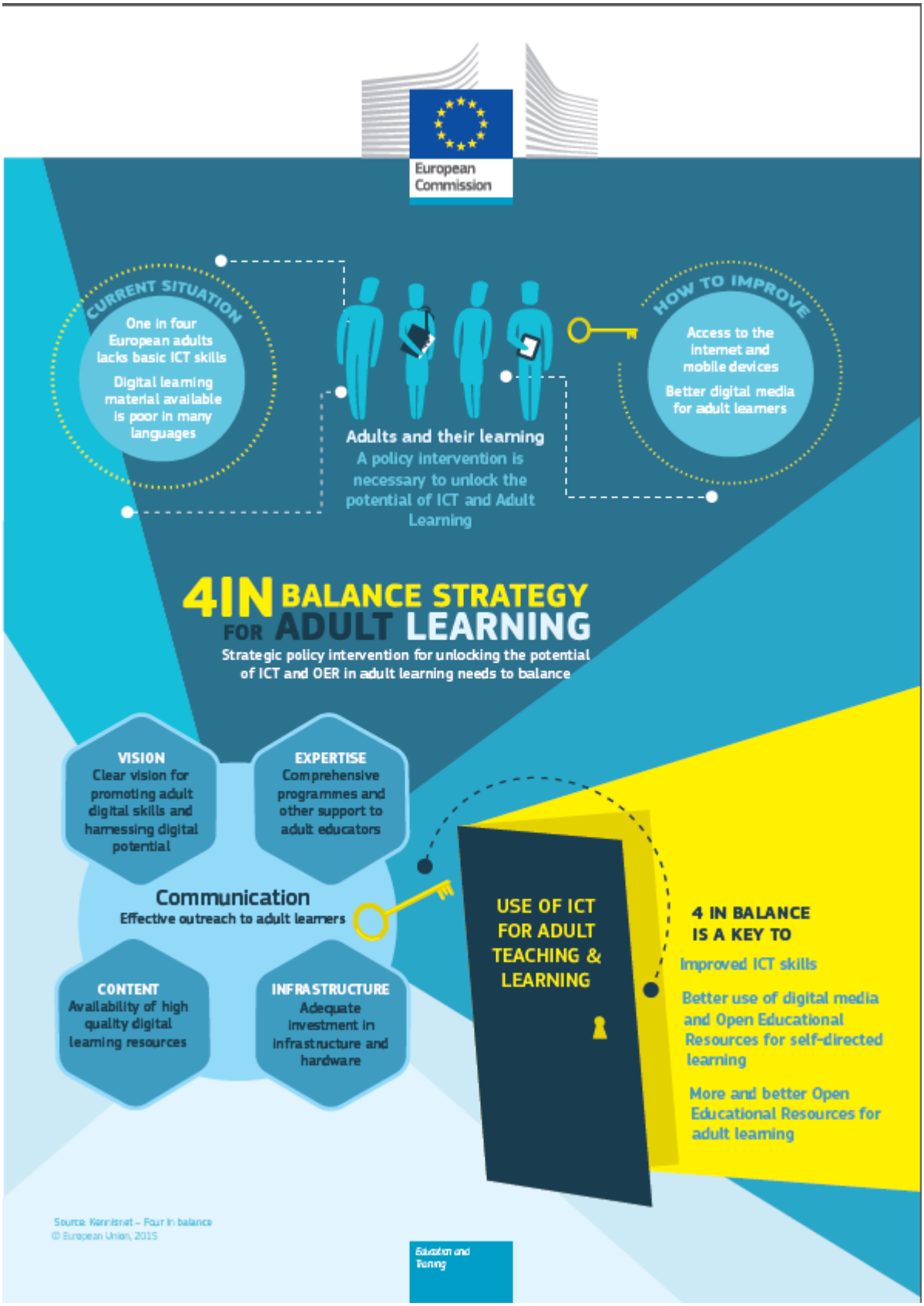
Infrastructure and hardware

Resources are needed for infrastructure and support. Adult education providers struggle in keeping up with technological developments. This includes the update of software environments for all their educational provision (beyond ICT courses in particular). They also need resources to employ and continuously develop ICT experts supporting all educators and learning groups with various hardware and software related topics. Given the high costs of up-to-data high quality hardware (able to sustain heavy use by various groups of learners), strategies for shared use (e.g. of the infrastructure of schools) are required.

Communication

Outreach is critical to success, and ICT initiatives in the adult learning sector need to be effectively communicated to the intended target groups. Communication can for this reason be considered a fifth building block. This is contrary to the case in the school sector where communication is not a vital part of successful ICT initiatives.

The graphic overleaf summarises the main policy conclusions of this section.


European Commission
CURRENT SITUATION
One in four European adults lacks basic ICT skills
Digital learning material available is poor in many languages
Adults and their learning
A policy intervention is necessary to unlock the potential of ICT and Adult Learning
HOW TO IMPROVE
Access to the internet and mobile devices
Better digital media for adult learners
4 IN BALANCE STRATEGY FOR ADULT LEARNING
Strategic policy intervention for unlocking the potential of ICT and OER in adult learning needs to balance
VISION
Clear vision for promoting adult digital skills and harnessing digital potential
EXPERTISE
Comprehensive programmes and other support to adult educators
Communication
Effective outreach to adult learners
CONTENT
Availability of high quality digital learning resources
INFRASTRUCTURE
Adequate investment in infrastructure and hardware
USE OF ICT FOR ADULT TEACHING & LEARNING
4 IN BALANCE IS A KEY TO
Improved ICT skills
Better use of digital media and Open Educational Resources for self-directed learning
More and better Open Educational Resources for adult learning
Source: Kennisnet – Four in balance
© European Union, 2015
Education and Training

4 Improving coherence in adult learning policy: the key to widening participation and improving outcomes

Support for adult learning has become a key focus of policy since the mid-1990s in EU Member States, for the European Commission and on global scale[116]. Beyond support for liberal and civic adult education, more and more other policy fields rely on adult learning to achieve their ultimate goals. For example, in employment policy, providing further education and training has become a fundamental issue, and supporting learning in enterprises has become a must for innovation policy. For migration policy, adult learning is a basic component for the integration of newly arrived people into society, and also for health policy, supporting adult learning has become a vital strategy. Funding for adult learning may therefore come from diverse budgets governed by different ministries.

The successful implementation of adult learning as a strategy across these different policy fields has significantly increased the need for coordination because if policies on adult learning are steered in different policy domains, and target different policy objectives there is a risk that they will lack coherence, that they may not reinforce each other or even that they may undermine each other's impact.

To meet the new needs for policy coherence, various initiatives have been established to steer and coordinate policy making. The European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong learning[117] (2000) and the subsequent flow of Lifelong Learning strategies or comparable documents in a majority of Member States are the most visible examples of approaches aiming to increase the coherence of policies on learning[118]. The OECD's Skill Strategy project[119], in which various Member States actively participate, aims to unlock the potential of more coherent policies across fields of policy making.

Given the highly dynamic developments and changing policy responses to upcoming challenges, however, coherence in adult learning policies is something that cannot be achieved at once and for good. Recent EU-policy documents as well as various observers agree that there is still a considerable lack of policy coherence in adult learning. As the latest UNESCO report on Adult learning states:

"The processes underlying policy-making are often neither linear nor rational. Hence, outcomes are often characterised by incoherence and continuing tension. Being the result of negotiation and compromise between conflicting interests and involving stakeholders with different values and assumptions, policy processes and policy products are necessarily multifaceted."[120]

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116 Milana, Marcella , & Holford, John (Eds.). (2014). Adult Education Policy and the European Union - Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives. Rotterdam: Sense Publisher. Institute for Lifelong Learning, & Unesco. (2013). 2nd Global report on adult learning and education (Repr. with minor rev. ed.). Hamburg: UNESCO Inst. for Lifelong Learning; Zarifis, George K., & Gravani, Maria N. (Eds.). (2014). Challenging the 'European Area of Lifelong Learning': a critical response. Dordrecht: Springer.

117 Commission of the European Communities. (2000). A Memorandum on lifelong learning; Commission staff Working paper. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities.

118 For an overview on recently developed strategies, see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2015). Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities - Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

119 http://skills.oecd.org OECD. (2012). Better Skills - Better Jobs - Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to skills policies. Paris: OECD

120 (Institute for Lifelong Learning, & Unesco. (2013). 2nd Global report on adult learning and education (Repr. with minor rev. ed.). Hamburg: UNESCO Inst. for Lifelong Learning, p. 48

So working to achieve policy coherence in adult learning is best understood as an ongoing process, requiring constant attention and involvement by all parties concerned. Adult learning is delivered by different institutions using various settings and formats. Thus, changes to make it more attractive, inclusive and accessible require communication, coordination and coherence, at and across national, regional, local and sector levels, involving all stakeholders.[121]

Against the backdrop of the relative shortage of research literature on this topic, the Working Group has addressed the key questions of policy coherence in adult learning policies in two in-depth country workshops and in several working group meetings, by analysing concrete policy examples and working on concrete policy fields.

The following section, with its telling country examples, key messages and recommendations, also reflects the experience of the working group members in the related policy processes in their Member States.

Adult learning is necessary – and adult learning policies are required to make it a reality for all members of society

Evidence abounds about the benefits of adult learning. Adult learning benefits individuals, companies and society. Adults that continue to learn earn more, are more employable, enjoy better health and are more active citizens. Adult learning improves companies' innovation performance, productivity, profitability and workforce motivation. It helps to improve a country's economic competitiveness and growth.

Yet too few adults have access to adult learning. The EU's modest goal of reaching 15% adult participation in learning by 2020 is far from being attained. In some countries the adult participation rate is as low as 1.5 %. Various groups of adults,[122] among them men and women with poor basic skills – as detailed in Chapter 2 - are largely excluded from participation in adult learning. Particular provision addressing their basic skill issues is important.

The workplace is a key site of adult learning, but as vulnerable groups such as older adults, low-qualified adults and particular groups of adult migrants have poor access to gainful, learning-conducive work and are at risk of further falling behind more advantaged groups, a vicious circle threatens to undermine social equity and cohesion. The findings of Cedefop's European skills and jobs survey also emphasise the importance of developing and using employee skills in the workplace. According to Eurostat estimates based on the Adult Education Survey (AES), employers are among the most common providers of non-formal education and training activities. However, there are considerable inequalities as regards participation. AES data show that adults with high education levels (ISCED 5-6) participate roughly three times as much in employer-sponsored job-related training than those with low education levels (ISCED 0-2).

Adult learning policy therefore needs to counteract the situations in which some have access to adult learning but many have not. By deciding on the right mixture of support for the provision of adult learning, by providing incentives to enterprises and households and by building up required institutional structures, equal rights to full participation in today's society could become a reality.

A strategic, long-term focus on sustainable adult learning provision, with strong governance and a systemic approach to increase participation and improve skills,

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121 Cedefop (2015): Briefing note - Encouraging adult learning. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/de/publications-and-resources/publications/9099

122 Cedefop. (2015). Unequal access to job-related learning: evidence from the adult education survey Cedefop research paper; No 52. Luxembourg: Publications Office. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/de/publications-and-resources/publications/5552

particularly basic skills, will also provide significant return on investment in the form of lower social spending and a richer, more dynamic economy.

Adult learning policies need to be coherent

As demonstrated by the examples on supporting adults' acquisition of basic skills and on mainstreaming ICT in adult learning, policies need to be specific to their particular goal.

The in-depth studies have demonstrated that adult learning policies do not work in isolation but are anchored in a variety of policy fields, making important contributions to many other policies (e.g. economy, health, family, justice …). Responsibility for adult learning policy is divided across several ministries and agencies (e.g. education, training, migration, justice …) and several levels of policy making (municipal, regional, national). This shared responsibility often results in a situation where adult learning policy is fragmented and its efficiency suffers from insufficient coordination,

A call to improve coherence in adult learning policies has been high on the adult learning policy agenda for a long time and has been restated in recent EU policy documents in the field. Key documents such as the European Memorandum of Lifelong Learning have proposed common principles which should be applied everywhere and allow for linking policies across domains of policy making, commonly referred to as lifelong learning principles.

Although progress has been made towards improved coordination – for example the majority of EU Member States have adopted a national lifelong learning strategy or related guiding document[123], – a common shared framework for addressing key aspects of coherence is missing, and there is a lack of systematic work on the issue of coherence in adult learning policies.

Coherence at national level is defined as 'systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policy actions across government departments and agencies creating synergies towards achieving the agreed objectives' (OECD 2001[104]). Key aspects of coherence in adult learning policies include; *coherence across policy fields, coherence across policy levels, coherence across policy types* and *policy coherence over time*. These aspects are introduced and discussed below, and exemplified by country cases.

Coherence across policy fields

Policies across fields could be complementary, so that one policy may enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of another. On the other hand, policies could interfere with each other: one policy may undermine the effectiveness and efficiency of another. Beyond coherence at the individual policy level, it is therefore necessary to work towards coherence of policies across policy fields.

Policy fields supporting adult learning differ in their logic and rationale as well as the timing of their policy cycles. To achieve coherence across policy fields, policymakers and stakeholders need to know what is going on in other fields and the rationale for the different initiatives. Collaboration and partnerships between, among others, Education, Employment, Welfare, Business, Justice and Health ministries, social partners and civil society promote the creation of a shared knowledge base and mutual understanding. Building on this shared knowledge, stakeholders can negotiate adjustments between policies and coordinate their policies, or develop new integrated policies, to enhance their potential and achieve common goals. This could in particular be of importance for simplifying access to services and making effective outreach to difficult-to-engage groups of adults (in particular vulnerable groups) which require a coherent approach.

123 SWD (2015) 161; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2015)

Box 11
Coherence across policy fields - Validation of Skills (Belgium – French-speaking)

The Programme for Validation of Skills[124] in Belgium (French-speaking Community) is carried out in the region's highly complex policy structure, with ministries in the three French-speaking community governments (Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Wallonia and Brussels) and the regional governments all playing a role in policy development, implementation and funding.

A consortium coordinates the accreditation of validation centres, establishes the methodology for assessing their skills and competence, issue certificates and ensures the overall management of the whole process of validation in the French-speaking part of Belgium.

The Consortium is composed of the stakeholders of training and second chance education and social partners and representatives of the ministries involved.

Great efforts are made to ensure that the end users (i.e. adults having their skills validated) are presented with a simple, easily understandable interface.

Another key principle informing the Programme for Validation of Skills is that this programme should seek to facilitate cross-organisational ownership by remaining small itself, but helping its partner organisations grow larger. A central aim is to avoid any one policy organisation having a monopoly on the recognition and validation of skills; rather the effort should be shared across a range of stakeholders, with quality assured through a well regulated system of stakeholder certification.

These efforts have met with success. However, a number of challenges, such as the need for more, and more reliable, evidence of impact continue to exist and to be addressed.

Box 12
Coherence across policy fields - Language for Life (Netherlands)

In the Netherlands, the government works closely with an NGO (the Read Write Foundation) to design, implement and govern adult basic skills policy and programmes. Within government, there are strong efforts to achieve political consensus and ownership across a range of ministries, and there is also a broader policy trend within the Netherlands of decentralisation, resulting in larger policy roles for municipalities and a more facilitating role for central government.

The need to provide training for an increasing number of people with low levels of literacy, coinciding with a decrease in public finance and increased decentralisation, made a new approach necessary. The Language for Life[125] policy was launched in six regions in 2012, with a strong emphasis upon cross-organisational partnership. The policy combines bottom-up and top-down approaches, with increased efforts to create more effective local infrastructures for adult basic skills education. National policymakers and their partners then use rigorous research methods to monitor and evaluate results, note effective practices, and feed this information back to the local level.

Local Literacy Hubs are the most visible manifestation of the partnership based orientation of the policy: these are community-based centres based in libraries, hospitals and other public spaces, at which potential adult learners can find help desks volunteer tutors, and opportunities to receive guidance, and can also undergo literacy assessments. These Literacy Hubs also contribute to the broader objective of ensuring that policy ambitions are concordant with policy resources. By making use of civic spaces, the Language

124 http://www.cvdc.be/
125 https://taalvoorhetleven.nl/cursist/ik-wil-leren

for Life programme makes efficient use of resources while maximising opportunities for public outreach.

All of these coherence-related factors have impacts on policy, with some impacts having both a positive and negative aspect. For example, in working with the Read Write Foundation, the Netherlands government benefits from that NGO's high level of understanding of basic skills issues, and its years of addressing the issue. However, such a partnership can create challenges for governments – for example, because the Read Write Foundation has a high level of expertise, it also demands a high level of autonomy with regard to policy implementation. Government needs to grant the NGO the status of an equal partner on a level playing field, with fully shared policy ownership. The NGO is not just a vehicle for implementation and/or advice.

Throughout all these processes, there is a need for constant feedback loops, running both horizontally and vertically. Establishing and sustaining such loops is resource intensive, but does contribute to policy coherence. Such coherence, after all, must be worked at constantly if it is to be sustainable.

Coherence across national, regional and local levels of policy making

Adult learning policies are implemented on different levels of policy making, and initiatives are often spearheaded locally before being rolled out across regions and taken up by policy makers at a national level. Actual implementation, delivering adult learning, is carried out by a wide range of government, private sector and voluntary organisations. The effectiveness of adult learning policy and provision as a whole is often undermined by the lack of coordination between these many parties, leading to fragmented and incoherent provision. Mutual adjustment of policy interventions is therefore a key requirement (see Box 13).

Box 13
Coherence across national, regional and local levels of policy making (Italy)

Coherence and effectiveness in adult learning policies is supported by a solid regulatory framework with a clear definition of the actors involved, their roles and responsibilities[126] .

During the last few years Italy underwent a strong legislative process to ensure quality, effectiveness and efficiency in the governance and management of interventions related to adult learning, building on the national lifelong learning system - established by law n.92 (June 2012). This recognises citizens' right to training in basic as well as to specific skills, to counselling /guidance services such as training needs identification and to validation of competences acquired in any learning context.

In an agreement signed in July 2014 between the Government, Regions and Local Authorities, roles and responsibilities are defined, and the operational conditions and governance modalities among them are described. This agreement allows the design and establishment of a multilevel coherent model of governance.

In particular, this concerns the dimension, composition and mandate of the regions in charge of implementing the national lifelong learning system. The structure of the regional network foresees the participation of the local education, training and employment services - both private and public -, including Adult Learning Centres (CPIA) managed by the Ministry of Education, Universities, training agencies, enterprises (represented by social partners'

126 Source: Accordo tra Governo, Regioni ed Enti locali sul documento recante: "Linee strategiche di intervento in ordine ai servizi per l'apprendimento permanente e all'organizzazione delle reti territoriali" http://www.statoregioni.it/DettaglioDoc.asp?IDDoc=44401&IdProv=13119&tipodoc=2&CONF=uni

organizations), Chambers of Commerce, the National Observatory of migration, and Public Research Centres.

Under a multilevel governance approach, the model designed by the National Agreement determines that:

- the identification of the strategic priorities and specific policies in adult learning as well as monitoring, piloting and evaluation functions are the responsibility of national authorities;
- at the regional level, regional authorities and Autonomous Provinces plan the integrated use of available adult learning resources, making the most of the roles and competences of each network member. This process takes into account the identification of skills and professional needs in the region also associated to innovation and competitiveness drivers and to the evaluation outcomes of local development programmes;
- at local level, the network actors define the organizational and working modalities to ensure citizens the access to the services provided by the network, and personal support to enter a learning pathway.

Coherence across policy levels is also fostered by the interaction between top-down and bottom-up policy processes. Key triggers for policy development may come from the field, i.e. from the front lines of programmes (bottom-up). Good practice then filters upward, influences policy, and is disseminated back downwards, where it can spread horizontally. Policymakers learn from the field, i.e. front-line practitioners, and then support the spread of good practices throughout that field. Policy is also influenced from the top down, and in some countries EU policy guidance such as expressed in 'The renewed Adult Learning Agenda'[127] and 'Opening up Education'[128] is seen as having a powerful influence.

Coherence across types of policies

There is a need to combine different policies to increase participation in and the quality of adult learning. The right mix of policies could enhance the effectiveness (and efficiency) of each single policy, but any incoherence in approach is likely to weaken the intended outcomes. Case studies of large scale reform programmes (for example, the two large scale reforms of adult learning in Sweden in the 1990s and the early 2000s[129]) give reason to believe that the right scale and combination of measures can make a lasting difference. However, there is a lack of systematic empirical evidence on how to combine policies in a coherent and thereby mutually reinforcing way[130].

Box 14
Coherence across types of policies - The New Norwegian skills initiative

In Norway a National Skills Policy Strategy is being developed as a follow-up to the OECD Skills Strategy project, to be implemented in 2016. It is being coordinated by Vox, the agency in charge of implementing adult learning policies, and will involve several ministries, local and regional authorities, social

127 European Council. (2011). Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning 2011/C 372/01. Official Journal of the European Union.

128 European Commission. (2013). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources COM(2013) 654 final Brussels.

129 Rubenson, Kjell. (2001). The Swedish Adult Education Initiative: From Recurrent Education to Lifelong Learning. In D. Aspin, J. Chapman, M. Hatton & Y. Sawano (Eds.), International Handbook of Lifelong Learning (Vol. 6, pp. 329-338): Springer Netherlands.; Rubenson, Kjell. (2006). The Nordic model of Lifelong Learning. Compare, 36(3), 327-241.

130 ICF 2015

partners and other central skills actors in the framework of a strategic partnership.

Norway's economy is to a large extent based on industries and sectors that require a highly skilled labour-force, a demand that will increase. In spite of a well-functioning economy, low unemployment rate and a relatively highly qualified workforce, present challenges include a high drop-out rate from upper secondary education, approximately 700 000 adults without upper secondary education, about 400 000 adults with inadequate basic skills and many adults on disability pension. There is also a worrying health-related exclusion from the labour market, especially among youth and people with low educational attainment.

The National Skills Policy Strategy shall improve achievement with respect to good access to skilled labour by: good education-, jobs- and career- choices for individuals and society as a whole, targeted and employer- relevant learning and training in and for working life, and improved skills for disadvantaged low-skilled adults.

Under each above mentioned main objectives of the Strategy, the different partners´ responsibilities, policies, measures and suggestions for new actions and enforced efforts, including new political initiatives, will be described and made clear. This includes the different actors´ financial resources, monitoring and evaluation of actions. Key partners /each actor and ministries /authorities will develop an action plan within their own responsibility mandate specifying actions and how their respective measures and resources will be used to reach the Strategy's goals.

Coherence over time

Providing the time needed for adult learning policies to become effective is crucial; not allowing adequate time for policies to take effect undermines their effectiveness and efficiency. Frequent changes and stop–and-go decisions undermine the coherence of systems and are likely to cause a loss of motivation among all parties involved. The 'Great Recession'[131], starting in 2008, interrupted ambitious policy programmes in various European countries, leading governments to scale down available funding for adult learning, for example in Ireland or in Portugal (see box 15).

Box 15
Coherence over time - The rise and fall of the New Opportunities Initiative (Portugal)

Portugal's New Opportunities Initiative (NOI) 2005-2011 focused on several measures, with a special emphasis on recognising and validating adults' skills. It did so against the backdrop of relatively low qualification levels in Portugal, with 72% of the labour force lacking secondary-level qualifications.

The Initiative sought to achieve these objectives through a large, comprehensive and coherent policy effort, involving a broad range of measures, stakeholders, high levels of vertical and horizontal integration, and world-leading efforts at public participation. These ambitious policy efforts built on former policies, including the creation of a national agency for adult education and training and approaches for recognising and validating prior learning. The NOI, which ran from 2005 to 2011, therefore displayed an important level of chronological policy coherence. However, it expanded upon these earlier efforts greatly – for example, by seeking structural coherence through the creation of a national qualification system.

The goals of NOI included helping one million adults to gain at least an upper secondary education qualification, out of a total national population of

131 Gallie, Duncan (Ed.). (2013). Economic crisis, quality of work, and social integration: the European experience (First edition. ed.). London: Oxford.

approximately 10 million. Over the seven-year life of the policy, these efforts led to the creation of 451 New Opportunities Centres throughout the country, and the participation of more than 1.4 million adults, with more than 770,000 of these embarked upon basic education levels and nearly 650,000 participating in secondary education-level pathways. By 2011, more than 450,000 Portuguese adults had achieved some type of certification recognising prior learning, with more than 330,000 gaining a basic level certification and nearly 125,000 achieving a secondary certification. These figures means that adults certified through recognition of priori learning processes represent more than 80% of the number of adults certified with the basic level or secondary level in this period of 7 years.

Ultimately, however, the New Opportunities Initiative was abandoned. A number of factors contributed to its demise, most importantly political changes (governmental changes. Other factors included the extreme economic crisis faced by Portugal, high level of dependence on the European Social Fund and difficulties in realising the policy's hoped-for labour market impacts which were particularly difficult to achieve during a period of rapidly rising unemployment.

Since 2011, Portugal has continued its efforts to recognise and validate prior learning, albeit in a much scaled down manner.

Adult learning policies need to be effective

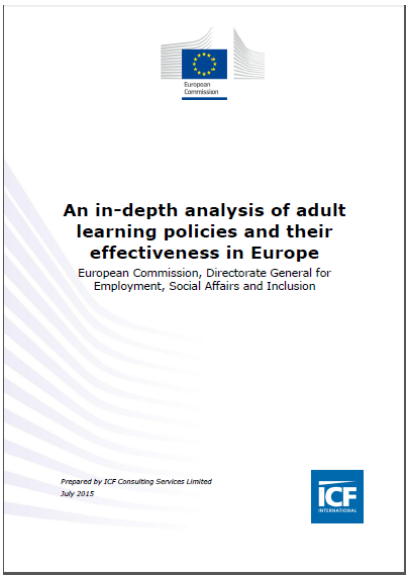
Adult learning policies need to bring change and open up opportunities for adults, organisations and society, which would not be available otherwise. This implies safeguarding the delivery of the right learning opportunities to adults who need them, at the right time in their lives. Because every adult's learning career and learning needs are different, learning opportunities should be tailored to the specific needs of each individual. This means that teaching content, methods and environments need to be appropriate to adult learners. Putting the adult learner and her or his expressed needs at the centre of policymaking has therefore been an established key policy principle since the renewed interest in adult learning from mid of the 1990s onwards.

The past two decades have brought about both large scale experimentation with policies and accompanying research studying their effectiveness. However, evidence collected has often not been available to policy makers in an appropriate way. To help fill this gap, the European Commission in 2013 commissioned a study on adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe (Box 16) which aimed to identify the factors that help make adult learning policies effective. It provides a framework for listing policy approaches and reporting on evidence available on their effectiveness in a systematic way. It concludes that adult learning policy could be made significantly more effective through a more systematic collection of data, and a more rigorous approach to evaluation to enable Member States' policy actions to be monitored against their objectives.

Box 16
A new study on effectiveness of adult learning policies

Key findings

- A systemic review of the latest evidence confirms the significant benefits that adult learning brings to individuals, companies and society;
- However, the statistical evidence shows that these benefits are not accessible to a very large number of adults who do not undertake any learning;
- The study found that policies to ensure adults' access to learning are often not in place or not sufficient to have a systemic impact;



- The study has identified a number of policy actions that are proven to be effective in increasing adult participation in learning;
- However, Member States mostly lack sufficient policy monitoring systems to ensure that the policy actions that are implemented do achieve their intended impact;
- The study thus proposes an analytical framework: a template that can assist policymakers in analysing their adult learning policies and increasing their effectiveness.

By no means all countries routinely set targets for policy actions so that they can monitor whether they have achieved improvements in adults' participation in learning or in adults' competences. Only a small number of countries have set targets in their national strategies or plans, the attainment of which can be monitored either through information collected from adult learning providers or from surveys of learners. As a consequence, it is often difficult to assess if policy actions are making a difference or if they are efficient.

The study concludes that adult learning policy could be made significantly more effective through a more systematic collection of data, and a more rigorous approach to evaluation to enable Member States' policy actions to be monitored against their objectives.

However, two key challenges must be addressed in order to enable an effective assessment of the actual impact of policies implemented; firstly: to improve the statistics on adult learning policy (frequency, stability, coverage and relevance); secondly: to enhance administrative and qualitative policy monitoring (by gathering more data on the outputs, quality and implementation of specific policy actions) in order to construct causal links between macro level indicators and the outputs of concrete policy actions.

Recommendations include actions that could be taken by Member States, the European Commission and other stakeholders, in particular to make use of an analytical framework in designing adult learning policies and provision, and in monitoring policy effectiveness.

National authorities should make sure that their policies take into account the six key factors for successful adult learning, in particular by improving equity of adult access to learning, and ascertain the extent to which the necessary types of policy action are in place.

Better coordination of adult learning and other economic and social policies at national, regional and local levels is also recommended in order to ensure coherent provision and thereby ensure the best outcomes from policy interventions. In addition the study recommends that more cross-country comparative research at a system level be carried out in order to enable evidence-based suggestions on steps towards improved coherence in adult learning policies.

The ET 2020 Working Group on Adult Learning has worked interactively with the contractor for the study, guiding and commenting on the conclusions, the analytical framework and the prototype web tool that will enable countries to self-assess the effectiveness of their adult learning policies and guide policymakers in their decisions on adult learning policies. The findings of the study have informed the Group in the development of its key policy messages and recommendations.

Adult learning policies need to be efficient

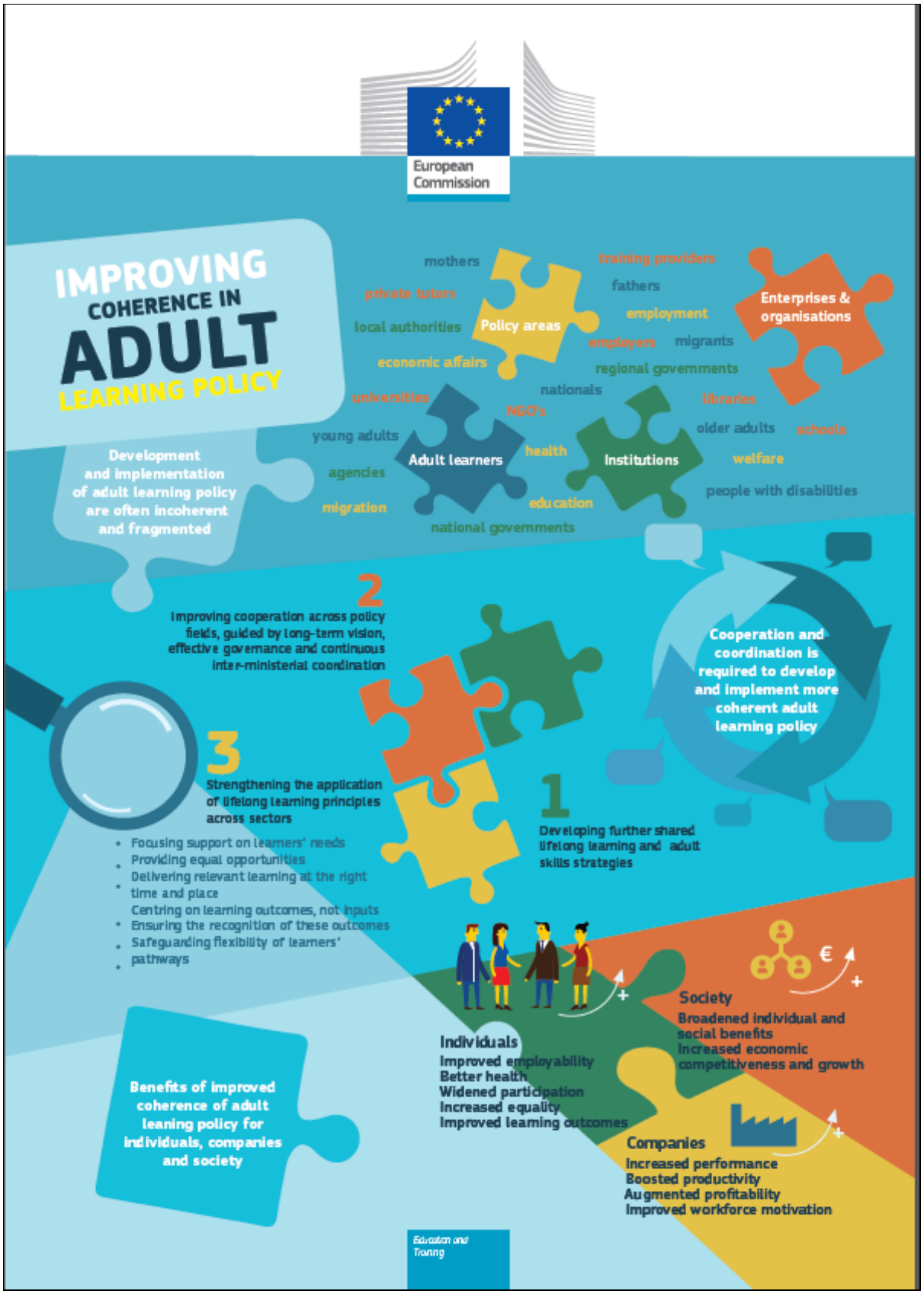
Improving efficiency – making better use of funds; making the right choices between similarly effective solutions with differences only in their 'price tag', ensuring economy of scale, and making smart choices for sustainability - is complex and need to be systematically described and evaluated to enable bench learning.

At present, solid evidence on the efficiency of adult learning policies is not available at a European level. However, there is a broad agreement that much can be gained by 'fine-tuning' implemented instruments, attuning to changing local environments. Available studies show[132] that the administrators and practitioners who were responsible for the implementation of single instruments over longer stretches of time hold valuable tacit knowledge on how initiatives could be made more efficient without becoming less effective. However, this local knowledge is seldom collected and systematised against the rigorous standards applied for evidence-based policy making. Existing knowledge is not systematically described to inform policy makers about the right choices of practices and interventions to be implemented.

Making the best of public resources available will remain a key requirement for future adult learning policies. However, the members of the working group identified a clear lack of evidence on how two improve adult learning policies' efficiency without undercutting their effectiveness.

The graphic summarises the main policy conclusions of this section.

132 See for example, a cross-country comparative study on cost-sharing mechanism and their evolution over time in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and South Tyrol - Käpplinger, Bernd, Klein, Rosemarie, & Haberzeth, Erik (Eds.). (2013). Weiterbildungsgutscheine - Wirkungen eines Finanzierungsmodells in vier europäischen Ländern. Bielefeld: WBV.


European Commission
IMPROVING COHERENCE IN ADULT LEARNING POLICY
Development and implementation of adult learning policy are often incoherent and fragmented
mothers
private tutors
local authorities
economic affairs
universities
young adults
agencies
migration
national governments
training providers
fathers
employment
employers
migrants
regional governments
nationals
NGO's
libraries
older adults
schools
welfare
people with disabilities
Policy areas
Adult learners
Institutions
Enterprises & organisations
health
education
2
Improving cooperation across policy fields, guided by long-term vision, effective governance and continuous inter-ministerial coordination
Cooperation and coordination is required to develop and implement more coherent adult learning policy
3
Strengthening the application of lifelong learning principles across sectors
Focusing support on learners' needs
Providing equal opportunities
Delivering relevant learning at the right time and place
Centring on learning outcomes, not inputs
Ensuring the recognition of these outcomes
Safeguarding flexibility of learners' pathways
1
Developing further shared lifelong learning and adult skills strategies
Benefits of improved coherence of adult leaning policy for individuals, companies and society
Individuals
Improved employability
Better health
Widened participation
Increased equality
Improved learning outcomes
Society
Broadened individual and social benefits
Increased economic competitiveness and growth
Companies
Increased performance
Boosted productivity
Augmented profitability
Improved workforce motivation
Education and Training

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has summarised the findings of the ET2020 Working Group on adult Learning.

Developing and implementing effective policies that promote adult learning can improve lives, societies and economies. To improve adult skills levels, and in particular to raise adults' basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills), high quality programmes are essential. These should include better outreach to excluded adults, and more effective use of ICT.

Strategies to implement ICT in adult learning should ensure a good balance between four elements: a clear vision for promoting adult digital skills and harnessing digital potential; ensuring the availability of high quality learning resources; comprehensive programmes to support adult educators in updating their skills and using ICT effectively; and innovative approaches to ensure adequate investment in infrastructure and hardware.

The coherence of the many different strands of policy and provision for adult learning needs to be improved and policies need to be informed by evidence and proper monitoring.

Below are the Working Group's key messages and recommendations in each of these three areas.

Overcoming gaps in adults' basic skills

Key message 1 - Proactive policies on adult basic skills can improve lives and economies

Adults in all Member States have problems with basic skills. Improving these skills can enhance individuals' personal development and employment opportunities, and nations' economic competitiveness. Adult basic skills learning and education can improve mental and physical health, reduce social inequality, increase inclusion and promote active citizenship.

Recommendation

Member States should act on the findings of PIAAC and other key studies in order to reduce the number of adults with poor basic skills and increase the number with high skills levels.

Key message 2 - Proactive policies can improve opportunities and incentives for adults with basic skills needs while also facilitating integration and opportunities for migrants and refugees.

Recommendation

Member States should establish and support adult basic skills programmes aimed at improving the literacy, numeracy and digital skills of citizens, and providing in all types of programmes for improving adult basic skills, including language for adult migrants and refugees.

Key message 3 - Improving adult basic skills requires a strategic, long-term focus.

Recommendations

Member States should establish sustainable adult basic skills provision, with strong governance and a systemic approach to improving national basic skills. Where

these are already established, efforts should focus on maximising their efficiency and effectiveness through proactive policymaking and the use of high quality research evidence.

Member States should provide stable funding for adult basic skills provision beyond project-based (e.g. ESF) funding. EU funding programmes and other forms of support should help Member States along the path to sustainable, long-term policies and programmes.

Consideration should be given to prolonging current EU funding initiatives for further periods to facilitate the development of the sector.

Key message 4 - Poor adult basic skills are not just an educational issue.

To promote participation and inclusion, we need better outreach and collaboration

Poor adult basic skills are a societal problem, not just an educational one. A broad range of policy areas, including Education, Employment, Welfare, Business and Health will reap long-term rewards from improved adult basic skills. Effective policies require cross-ministerial, cross-organisational collaboration, also involving social partners and civil society.

Recommendation
Member States should support and facilitate collaboration and networking on adult learning policy across ministries, social partners and civil society.

Key message 5 - More effective outreach strategies can increase awareness of the adult basic skills gap and increase individuals' motivation to improve their skills.

Recommendations
Member States, regional and local authorities, working with social partners and civil society, should intensify their outreach and awareness raising activities to improve public understanding of the adult basic skills deficit.

Member States should provide high quality, well-targeted courses, and generate demand for formal, non-formal and informal basic skills learning.

Key message 6 - Adult basic skills education does not just happen in formal classrooms

Workplace basic skills programmes and workplaces that provide opportunities to use, maintain and acquire skills continuously, produce benefits for employees, employers and society alike.

Recommendations
Member State governments should work closely with employers, social partners and other stakeholders to increase the number and scope of workplace basic skills programmes and to foster workplace learning.

Member States should support the quality of adult basic skills provision as part of initial and continuing vocational training. Individuals' basic skills needs must be identified and addressed in order to improve access to, and opportunities in, VET.

Employment services should support basic skills improvements amongst job seekers and other service users.

Key message 7 - To improve adult basic skills levels, high quality programmes are essential

Adult basic skills education requires adult-specific, high quality curricula and resources.

Recommendations

Member States should develop quality curricula and learning materials for adult basic skills programmes based on learning outcomes. These should include authentic materials from everyday life. Member States should develop initial, formative and summative assessment strategies (including self-assessment) that support motivation and learning.

Adult basic skills teachers should use teaching strategies that are appropriate for adults, not children. This requires provision that does not copy initial education methods and environments.

Key message 8 – Teaching adult basic skills requires special competences

Teaching adult basic skills is a real challenge, and requires special competences to be successful. A highly professional adult teaching workforce requires quality initial teacher education followed by ongoing professional development, and attractive careers with similar status and pay to teachers in other sectors.

Recommendations

Governments, other authorities, social partners and other relevant stakeholders should provide adult basic skills teachers with attractive career pathways and appropriate employment conditions, on a par with educators in other sectors. National basic skills systems should support the professionalization of the workforce, including through improved working conditions.

Member States should provide high quality initial education to adult basic skills teachers, followed by ongoing professional development; these should be based on quality curricula, and focus on the acquisition of cognitive skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy and/or digital skills) and adult-specific teaching strategies (andragogy).

Key message 9 - ICT is a key component of innovative adult basic skills programmes: learners do not just need better literacy, they also need better digital literacy.

Recommendations

Adult basic skills programmes should cover literacy and ICT from the start (instead of "first literacy and then ICT").

Member States should promote the inclusion of digital competence in adult basic skills programmes, even at the lowest levels, making proper use of ICT and open educational resources (OER) as tool for learning and to provide increased flexibility and relevance.

Key message 10 - Adult learners with basic skills needs often need additional support to start or complete their learning journey.

Recommendations

Programmes should provide and promote clear opportunities for learners to progress to further learning. They should provide dedicated guidance to support adult basic skills learners in taking the next step in learning. To meet the needs of adults with low basic skills, guidance professionals need specialised training.

To encourage participation and persistence, programmes should offer practical support on matters such as course fees, travel costs, childcare, and time off work. Teaching and learning need to occur as close as possible to participants' local community. Adult learning providers should be proactive in supporting learner retention, e.g. by providing options for restarting after dropping out.

Member States should ensure that adults have opportunities for accreditation and certification of prior learning in order to open up progression opportunities.

Key message 11 - More research for more knowledge

The most effective adult basic skills policies and programmes are evidence-based. By investing more now in research on what works in their particular contexts, countries can make their programmes more effective and efficient, saving money in the long-term.

Recommendations

Member States and the EU should develop stronger evidence bases on basic skills programmes, their effectiveness, efficiency and long-term impacts on employment, inclusion, health, engagement, families and the economy.

Member States and the EU should help to support international and national research initiatives to increase understanding of what works best in each national context.

Information technology and open educational resources

Key Message 1 - Digital skills are essential for social inclusion and an effective labour market

A digital skills divide is growing in Europe. Too many adults are at risk of exclusion due to a lack of basic digital skills.

Recommendation

Digital skills should be regarded as basic skills which every adult has the right to acquire for free. Member States should take this into consideration while defining their social, employment and educational policy frameworks. Increased efforts are needed to make greater use of the workplace as a site of learning, and to mobilise employers, social partners and the civil society to this end.

Key Message 2 - Information and computer technology (ICT) can help raise participation and improve quality

ICT can make adult learning more tailored, relevant, attractive and up-to-date but is still not exploited sufficiently in many countries.

Recommendation

Member States should ensure that ICTs are used systematically to enhance the quality and accessibility of adult learning. They should stimulate educational providers to use ICT and open educational resources (OER) in their teaching and support the production of high quality digital learning resources.

Member States should use efficiently promote outreach and lifelong guidance services in order to attract adult learners and to help them to identify their learning needs and relevant training in digital skills.

Key Message 3 - Balanced investments are needed to enhance digital adult learning

Weak infrastructure, educators' lack of digital skills and a lack of high quality digital learning resources are preventing Member States from reaping the benefits of ICT in adult learning. Visionary leadership and efficient outreach are also required.

Recommendations

Member States and educational providers should take a holistic approach to ICT in adult learning, making sure that investments are balanced between infrastructure,

expertise, learning resources and leadership. This could be supported by using the Four in Balance model presented in this report.

Member States should ensure that pre-service training enables adult learning teachers and trainers to become skilled ICT users. They should support and stimulate educational providers to make the necessary investment in systematic and continuous professional development that prepares teachers both technically and pedagogically to be proactive and effective users of ICT and OER.

Member States should promote the creation of, and ensure access to, quality learning resources such as OER in national languages; EPALE can support this.

All providers of adult learning should be encouraged to invest in open networks. They should implement 'Bring your own device' strategies to empower learners and increase the number of devices available to them. Technical support for teachers and trainers should be part of the strategy.

Key Message 4 - More research for more knowledge

Member States can benefit from each other's experiences. There is a need for more research on how ICT can improve the efficiency of adult learning.

Recommendations

The European Commission should continue to support Member States to stimulate innovation by sharing good practice in the use of ICTs and OERs in adult learning and support European network-building and communities of practice of adult learning providers and educators. EPALE can support this.

Member States should foster data collection and research on the outcomes of ICT use in adult learning and help disseminate results.

Member States should invest in research on how to use ICT effectively to achieve better learning outcomes for specific targets groups, e.g. immigrants, in adult learning.

Improving coherence in adult learning policy

Key message 1 -Adult learning is a necessity

Adult learning benefits individuals, companies and society. Too few adults have access to adult learning. Policy interventions to broaden access for all are required.

Recommendation

Member States should adopt coherent, sustainable long term strategies for adult learning.

Key message 2 - Adult learning policies need to be coherent

Adult learning policies need to be coherent across policy fields, across national, regional and local levels of policy making, across types of policies and across time.

Recommendations:

Policy makers should adopt clear leadership and governance arrangements to ensure the coherence of adult learning policies across policy fields.

Member States should develop intra-governmental cooperation by putting in place projects and policies in which multiple ministries, regions, agencies and other

stakeholders cooperate to enhance learning opportunities for particular adult target groups.

Member States should ensure that adult learning policies are coherent over time i.e. based upon a long-term strategic vision. Member States should put in place governance processes that are flexible enough to respond to societal challenges (such as the current refugee crisis) and issues such as long-term unemployment.

Member States should invest in an appropriate evidence base to support effective policy making and monitoring of outcomes.

Key message 3 - Adult learning policies need to be effective

Adult learning policies need to be effective: they need to be designed and delivered in such a way as to achieve their stated objectives.

Recommendations

Member States should tailor adult learning policies so that adults can engage in meaningful learning opportunities throughout their life course, irrespective of their employment status or life circumstances.

Member States should work towards stable support structures for adult learning and the continuous evolution of a comprehensive adult learning system, able to provide continuity of provision and to respond adequately to emerging needs.

Member States should develop systems and tools to anticipate adults' skills needs, both for employment and other policy objectives (e.g. health).

Member States should increase investment in adult learning and coordinate funding streams across domains of policy making.

Member States should fully implement the Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning as its measures can help ensure better targeted adult learning provision.

Member States should monitor the effectiveness of adult learning policies at all levels and choose appropriate outcome indicators to document them.

Key message 4 - Adult learning policies need to be efficient

Adult learning policies need to be efficient: they need to be designed and fine-tuned over time, so that they achieve maximum impact with the means available.

Recommendation

A framework approach for observing and comparing adult learning policies and their effectiveness and efficiency across European Union Member States should be developed.

Member States should make better use of resources such as staff, funds and infrastructure by working in strategic partnerships.

Key message 5 - More research for more knowledge

Member States can benefit from each others' experiences. There is a need for more research on how to improve the efficiency of adult learning.

Recommendation

Member States should ensure that policies are evidence-based by creating national networks of research on adult learning, developing detailed and comparable information on policies and their outcomes, exploiting national data sources and monitoring changes and the impact of policies in a long term perspective.

Annex 1

ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning 2014 – 2015: Membership

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