



Parallel working group: Training leave and income replacement Discussion summary

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This working group has been discussing one of the oldest and yet most relevant issues in lifelong learning policy, this is, **how to make time for adult learning**.

First, it was acknowledged that this **concern** is **not new**. Making time for learning has been on the political agenda for decades, most visibly through the **ILO Convention No. 140 on paid educational leave** adopted in the 1970s. Today, it is reaffirmed in the **Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts**, which underlines that paid training leave is a core element of the enabling framework for lifelong learning.



Second, the workshop explored the **different forms that training leave** takes across Europe. In some countries, workers have an **individual right** to training leave that employers cannot refuse; in others, employer consent is required, creating potential inequalities. The duration can range from **short leaves** of just a few days or weeks, to **extended leaves** of several months or even year(s). Whatever the format, maintaining employment rights and the guarantee of return to work is fundamental to ensuring that workers feel safe to use these opportunities.

Third, the group discussed the key **difference between short and extended learning activities**. For **short activities** (like workshops, short courses, microcredentials), the main challenge is aligning work and family schedules. Here, **employer flexibility and supportive work organisation** are key. Allowing self-chosen learning during working hours can have a strong motivational effect. But we should also remember that some groups might be disadvantaged even when accessing these short training leaves (SMEs, low skilled workers, etc), so, some form of support is needed.

For **extended programmes** (particularly upskilling, reskilling or formal second-chance education), the situation is very different. Most adults cannot sustain full employment while studying for months. This is where **training leave and income**

replacement become essential. Reduced working hours, part-time study, or temporary withdrawal from work must be accompanied by **income support or wage-replacement benefits**, otherwise participation is not viable.

Fourth, we examined **how training leave interacts with other instrument groups**. For instance, and on the employee side, adults may use unemployment periods for learning while receiving income support, although this way is getting increasingly difficult in some Member States. **Training leave thus sits at the intersection of education, employment, and welfare policy**, and its effectiveness depends on coordination among these systems.

Fifth, the discussion turned to **financing arrangements**. For short leaves, employers may continue paying wages, sometimes with public reimbursement. For longer leaves, public schemes offering wage replacement or grants are essential. Without these, access remains limited to those who can afford a temporary income loss. The Danish model was highlighted as an example: **employers can receive partial reimbursement for wage costs**, and **employees on unpaid leave may claim a public wage-replacement payment**, linked to the *AMU (Arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser)* system for continuing vocational education and training.

Sixth, the participants discussed **current challenges and recent developments**. In many countries, the use of training leave remains low due to administrative complexity (bureaucracy), lack of awareness or information, or dependence on employer approval, insufficient replacement rates for household obligations, etc. Moreover, it was discussed that several national schemes have undergone significant changes and reductions (Finland, Austria). Paid training leaves are expensive.

Seventh, the role of **social dialogue and governance** was highlighted. In the example of Denmark, social partners play a pivotal role in designing and financing training leave systems. Their involvement increases legitimacy, helps balance flexibility with fairness, and links training leave to real labour market needs.

Finally, the lessons. The discussions revealed several overarching messages:

1. **Adequate income replacement** is essential if training leave is to reach all groups and training needs, not just the privileged few.
2. **Equity and inclusiveness must be embedded in the design**, with specific outreach to low-skilled, part-time, and self-employed workers, and attention to gender inequalities.
3. **Strong social partnership and policy coherence** are indispensable for sustainability and legitimacy. In this regard, it is key to **embed and best fit the design of training leaves within the existing system of training support**, so to better suit them and increase efficacy of result