

Empowering vulnerable adults to tackle labour-market challenges

Background note to the synthesis seminar

Cedefop is organising this synthesis seminar to discuss issues related to the successful integration of vulnerable adult learners (aged 25 to 64) into the labour market. The results of the seminar will be included in a publication to be prepared by Cedefop in 2012.

The main objective of the seminar is to discuss policies and practices and to explore solutions to the challenges that vulnerable adult learners (migrants and ethnic minorities, low-skilled and older people) face in gaining access to the labour market.

The aim of this note is to present some key aspects of the European policy and strategy context, in which labour market integration of vulnerable adult learners is currently discussed. This paper also presents in outline two parallel workshops that will explore examples of successful practice in EU Member States in the following areas:

1. helping adult migrants and ethnic minorities to enter and/or stay in the labour market;
2. supporting adult low-skilled and older workers (+55) to find a job and/or stay in employment.

The examples are selected from study visits organised in the academic years 2010/11 and 2011/12.

The event will bring together 40 organisers and participants of study visits, representatives of initiatives identified during visits as examples of good practice, experts on the themes and representatives of the study visits national agencies. Participants have relevant experience and substantial expertise in areas contributing to the labour-market integration of at risk groups at the local, regional, national and European levels.

Empowering vulnerable adults to tackle labour-market challenges: European policy developments

One of the most significant challenges for Europe in the coming years is to combat the global economic crisis through measures to reduce unemployment and increase productivity, economic growth and social inclusion in the Member States.

Long-term unemployment (periods of 12 months or longer)⁽¹⁾ is increasing throughout the European Union and carries the risk of extended exclusion from the labour market and society.

The European Union's ambitious goal of achieving an employment rate of 75 % for all people between 20-64 years old⁽²⁾ by 2020 can be reached by adopting measures to stimulate job creation and encourage vulnerable groups to participate in the labour market.

Further efforts are also needed to reach the EU target for adult participation in lifelong learning, which is 15 % by 2020. The challenges of increasing adult participation in learning by ensuring that all groups have equal access to and participate in adult learning are addressed at EU level, and the importance of adult learning is emphasised in several policy documents.

For example, the Council Resolution on a renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning⁽³⁾ defines the following priority areas for the period 2012-14:

- increasing the supply of and encouraging individuals' engagement in adult learning as a means of strengthening social inclusion and active participation in the community and society, and improving access to adult learning for migrants, Roma and disadvantaged groups, as well as learning provision for refugees and asylum-seekers;
- enhancing learning opportunities for older adults in the context of active ageing, including volunteering and the promotion of innovative forms of intergenerational learning and initiatives to exploit the knowledge, skills and competence of older people for the benefit of society as a whole.

Ensuring access to adult learning can create opportunities for social integration and for improving the basic skills and employability of the low-skilled, migrants and older workers⁽⁴⁾. The Member States should strengthen their national policies to enable the low-skilled, unemployed adults and, where appropriate, citizens with a migrant background to gain a qualification, take their skills a step further ('one step up')⁽⁵⁾ and speed up processes of assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups⁽⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Eurostat: In 2008 the long-term unemployment accounted for 2.6 % of the active population and 37.0 % of all unemployment. In 2011, long-term unemployment accounted for 4.1 % of the active population and 42.9 % of all unemployment. Date of extraction: 19 April 2012.

⁽²⁾ European Commission (2010). *Europe 2020: a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm

⁽³⁾ Council of the European Union (2011). *Draft Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning*. EDUC 268. SOC 981. Brussels, 17 November 2011. Available from Internet: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/11/st16/st16743.en11.pdf>

⁽⁴⁾ Council of the European Union (2010). *Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training*. Official Journal of the European Union, C 135, p. 2-7. Available from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:135:0002:0007:EN:PDF>

⁽⁵⁾ Council of the European Union (2010). *Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training*. Official Journal of the European Union, C 135, p. 2-7. Available from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:135:0002:0007:EN:PDF>

⁽⁶⁾ Official Journal of the European Communities (2008). *Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning* (2008/C 140/09). Available from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:140:0010:0013:EN:PDF>

The acquisition of basic skills, upskilling, reskilling and further development of key competences (communication, social and civic, digital or learning-to-learn competences) are the essential prerequisites for access to employment and active participation in society (⁷).

Workshop 1: Helping adult migrants and ethnic minorities to enter and/or stay in the labour market

Building an inclusive society by integrating migrants is essential for maximising the economic and social benefits of immigration, for individuals as well as societies. Cedefop's latest skill demand and supply forecast for the European Union for 2010-20 shows that migration influences the size and skill composition of the workforce in Member States and has important implications for skill demand and supply (⁸).

Across Europe migrants and ethnic minorities tend to have lower employment rates than host country nationals. In 2010, when the overall employment rate in the European Union was 64.1 % the European Union, the employment rate of non-EU citizens was only 55.2 % (⁹). Non-EU citizens are more likely to be unemployed because of inactivity and job mismatch, which are sometimes associated with perceived discrimination and negative views on migration (¹⁰). Moreover, there is misuse of the skills and qualifications of highly qualified migrants without a job and a large number of highly qualified migrants work in jobs for which they are overqualified.

Migrants should have the opportunity to learn the language of the receiving country, to have access to employment, health and care systems, as well as to have the economic capacity to support themselves (¹¹). They should be better equipped with the skills required in the labour market and receive better support to overcome barriers, such as discrimination, unrecognised skills and qualifications, inadequate information, advice and guidance, low confidence or lack of basic skills. Some migrants need special assistance in finding jobs, for example, training and assistance in building up networks and possibly temporary employment to gain experience.

One of the most vulnerable ethnic minorities is the Roma. This group tends to face a range of disadvantages in gaining access to education, employment, housing and

⁷ Council of the European Union (2008). *Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning*. Official Journal of the European Union, 2008/C 140/09. Available from Internet: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:140:0010:0013:EN:PDF>

⁸ Cedefop (2012). *Europe's skill challenge. Lagging skill demand increases risks of skill mismatch*. Briefing note. March 2012. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9068_en.pdf

⁹ Eurostat, Labour Force Survey. Date of extraction: 19 April 2012

¹⁰ Cedefop (2011). *Migrants, minorities, mismatch? Skill mismatch among migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5516_en.pdf

¹¹ European Commission (2011). *Communication on migration*. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions. Brussels, 4.5.2011 COM(2011) 248 final. Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/intro/docs/1_EN_ACT_part1_v11.pdf

healthcare⁽¹²⁾. Countries with Roma populations are designing, developing and delivering social policies and measures that improve their access to education and training and contribute to their successful integration into society and the labour market.

The study visits findings reveal, for example, that:

Migrants are provided with information about the labour market in the receiving country (Czech Republic) and obligatory and government-funded language courses are provided for newly arriving migrants (the Netherlands) or migrants with a refugee background (Turkey). Central assessment centres (Norway) and career guidance services (Finland, Sweden) are available to help migrants to enter the labour market. In Germany, there are promotional activities to reach migrant communities. A refugee assessment and guidance unit provides guidance and training for migrants with a refugee background (United Kingdom). Support for migrants with a refugee background is also offered through a federal programme with 43 networks in Germany or through networks for migrants who suffer discrimination in their workplace (Greece).

Migrants are trained as cultural mediators to help their peers gain access to the health care system in Greece. Senior traveller training centres (Ireland) encourage Irish travellers to undertake training courses and gain qualifications. Some people trained in these centres are also employed there. Jobs for members of ethnic minorities (including the Roma community) were created in Slovakia.

The following questions will be addressed in the workshop:

- How are migrants and ethnic minorities supported in your country to enable them to exploit their knowledge, skills and competences to the full?
- How do the various stakeholders cooperate to help migrants and ethnic minorities to participate in learning and to enter the labour market (for example, partnerships at regional and local levels between public services, education and training providers and employers, etc.)?
- What issues related to effective use of migrants' and ethnic minorities' skills and competences need to be addressed in the future?
- What have you learned from the workshop presentations? Which messages do you plan to take back to your own organisation?

⁽¹²⁾ European Commission (2009). *Joint report on social protection and social inclusion 2009 – Summary*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available from Internet: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=637&langId=en&pubId=332&type=2&furtherPubs=yes>

Workshop 2: Supporting adult low-skilled and older workers (+55) to find a job and/or stay in employment

Low-skilled

Today, in Europe some 72.7 million 25-64 year olds have either low qualifications or no qualifications at all (¹³). The unemployment rate amongst the low-skilled increased from 11.6 % in 2008 to an average of 16.6 % in the first half of 2011 due to sectoral transition towards higher technology and changes associated with the impact of the economic crisis.

Cedefop's latest skill demand and supply forecast for the European Union for 2010-20 indicates that the share of people with high-level qualifications will rise to more than one third of the workforce, and people with medium-level qualifications will continue to account for about one half of the workforce (¹⁴). Even those occupations that used to require mostly low-level skills are increasingly requiring medium- or even high-level qualifications. This means that people with low-level (or no) formal qualifications will find it more difficult to find a job in the future.

The Member States are developing and implementing measures to encourage education and training institutions and employers to collaborate, particularly in the training of low-skilled adults. They are also developing procedures for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, supported as appropriate by national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) (¹⁵). Many countries devote considerable attention to the role of NQFs in supporting the validation of non-formal and informal learning (¹⁶).

The study visits findings highlight, for example, that:

Participation in second-chance learning opportunities is a key means for low-skilled adults to raise their education and qualification level and improve their prospects on

(¹³) Eurostat. Data of 2011 for EU27. Date of extraction: 19 April 2012.

(¹⁴) Cedefop (2012). *Europe's skill challenge. Lagging skill demand increases risks of skill mismatch*. Briefing note. March 2012. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9068_en.pdf

(¹⁵) Bruges Communiqué (2010). *The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-2020*. Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf

(¹⁶) Cedefop (2012). *Development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe. October 2011*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6112_en.pdf

the labour market (Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). The regional adult education centres provide support for adults who have not completed compulsory secondary education (Spain).

Vocational training courses help to develop the literacy skills of disadvantaged learners (Belgium) and basic skills needed for life and work (Slovenia). Vocational training and re-training possibilities are offered in occupational rehabilitation centres for disadvantaged adults (Germany).

The competences centres offer training for low-skilled adults and opportunities for them to have their learning assessed and validated (Belgium). Standardised methods of recognition/validation of prior learning are used in Denmark.

Unemployed/low-skilled women are helped through career guidance and vocational training to re-enter the labour market in Poland and Turkey.

Older workers (55+)

Addressing the skill needs of older workers through more and better education and training, promoting active ageing, creating more inclusive labour markets as well as tackling labour market segmentation and segregation are fundamental challenges for our societies.

Currently the employment rate for older workers (55-64 years old) in the European Union is 50 %⁽¹⁷⁾. The key policy goal is to create an overall environment that encourages older workers to stay in employment rather than leave the labour market early due to low levels of up-skilling, low demand from employers, lack of support for jobseekers, etc. Upskilling and increasing lifelong learning opportunities⁽¹⁸⁾ are crucial for older workers and special attention should be given to those in mid-career⁽¹⁹⁾.

The European Year of active ageing and solidarity between generations (2012)⁽²⁰⁾ aims to support Member States' action to promote active ageing and empower older people to stay in good physical and mental health and contribute more actively to the labour market and to their communities.

During study visits participants learned:

Special programmes are implemented for older workers in remote areas (Austria) and delivered to older unemployed and employees by the federal government (Germany). Older workers are encouraged to take part in employment promotion activities (the Netherlands). They have the opportunity to validate and certify their prior learning (*validation des acquis de l'expérience*) and improve their employment prospects in France. Workers 45+ receive support in Italy in the form of information, career guidance and training opportunities. Older manual workers with limited qualifications or no qualifications at all are trained on the job in the Netherlands.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Eurostat (2011). Employment rates of older workers by gender. Available from Internet: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsiem020>

⁽¹⁸⁾ The participation of this group in lifelong learning is very low. According to the Labour Force Survey: 5.3% for this group in 2010.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Commission of the European Communities (2006). Communication on adult learning. *It's never too late to learn*. Brussels, 23.10.2006. COM(2006) 614 final. Available from Internet: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0614en01.pdf

⁽²⁰⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp?langId=en&catId=970>



The following questions will be addressed in the workshop:

- How are the low-skilled and older workers helped in your country to exploit their potential to the full?
- How do the various stakeholders cooperate to help low-skilled and older workers to participate in learning and enter the labour market (for example, partnerships between public services at the regional and local levels, education and training providers and employers, etc.)?
- What issues related to supporting low-skilled and older workers in finding a job and keeping them in employment need to be addressed in the future?
- What have you learned from the workshop's presentations and discussions?
Which messages do you plan to take back to your own organisation?

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For further reading:

Cedefop (2010). **Working and ageing. Emerging theories and empirical perspectives.** Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available from Internet: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3053_en.pdf

Cedefop (2011a). **At greater risk: migrants and minorities face wider skills mismatch.** Article available from Internet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/articles/18736.aspx>

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and benchmarks – 2010/2011. Brussels: Publications Office. Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/report10/report_en.pdf

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