



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Adults are learning, but need more encouragement

Europe's labour force is getting older, but not enough adults participate in learning. In 2014, just over 10% of adults (aged between 25 and 64) participated in lifelong learning, well below the European Union's (EU's) target benchmark of 15% by 2020. There are signs that more employers are providing training, but other changes are needed to encourage adults to learn more.

According to the continuing vocational training survey (CVTS), which measures training in enterprises, in 2010, 38% of employees participated in continuing training courses up from 33% in 2005. The survey also found that, despite the economic downturn, between 2005 and 2010 the proportion of enterprises providing training increased from 60% to 66%. But problems in finding time and the costs are barriers both to employers providing and adults participating in learning.

Cedefop has looked at how EU Member States are trying to increase adult learning. Many have developed and expanded different learning formats, such as modular courses, to overcome the barriers of time. Member States also have a range of financial measures for individuals and employers to overcome cost problems. But the benefits to the individual of participating in and to the employer of providing training also need to be clearer.

For individuals, adult learning often does not lead to a qualification. Consequently, people may be discouraged from participating. Opportunities to validate all types of non-formal and informal learning, including that taking place at work so that it counts towards a recognised qualification and/or other learning pathways could encourage more adults to participate.

How employers perceive the benefits of adult learning is influenced by their business strategy. The 2010 CVTS found that for 77% of the enterprises that do not provide training their main reason was that they saw no need. But whether or not an enterprise provides training can depend on if it sees training as a medium- or long-term investment for competitiveness and innovation. A Eurobarometer in 2013 found that 51% of EU enterprises investing in training expect the benefits to last less than two years. Support for small and medium-sized enterprises to integrate adult learning into their business strategies may encourage more employers to provide training.

Note to editors

Read more about Cedefop's work in the field of adult learning in these recent publications:

- [Briefing note - Encouraging adult learning- July 2015](#)
- [Benefits of VET in Europe for people, organisations and countries](#) (2013)
- [Return to work. Work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market](#) (2013)
- [Policy handbook – Access to and participation in continuous vocational education and training in Europe](#) (2014)
- [Stronger VET for better lives](#) (2015)
- Forthcoming: Job-related adult learning and continuing vocational training in Europe: A statistical picture

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About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training. www.cedefop.europa.eu

