

## Case study Denmark

# The future of vocational education and training in Europe Volume 4

Delivering lifelong learning: the changing relationship between IVET and CVET

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# Part 1: Introduction - IVET and the learning of adults

In Denmark, systematic provision of adult<sup>1</sup> learning dates back to the 1960s, when rapid economic growth led to a demand for a more qualified workforce.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, basic vocational education for adults ('Grunduddannelse for voksne', GVU) was introduced with a view to enable adults to obtain an upper secondary vocational qualification without having to follow the entire programme for young people. The programme targeted persons with at least two years of relevant employment and involved validation of prior learning as basis for an individual learning plan. In 2015, as part of a comprehensive reform of VET, this programme was succeeded by vocational education for adults ('Erhvervsuddannelse for Voksne', EUV), which will be analysed in detail below.

Currently (2022), publicly provided education and training for adults takes place in three separate systems: general subjects are taught in adult education centres ('Voksenuddannelsescentre', VUC); in the IVET system (Erhvervsuddannelsessystemet) there is a specific pathway for adults to obtain a full occupational qualification ('Erhvervsuddannelse for Voksne', EUV); and in the system for continuing labour market training and education, ('Arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser', AMU), short sector- or occupation specific courses are provided. These courses are targeted at adults already in employment but are frequently used to upskill unemployed as well. Outside the public sector, a significant share of continuing training is provided by private training providers and NGOs.

A major vocational education and training reform went into force 2015. The main goal of the reform was to increase the attractiveness of VET for adults as well as for young people. (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2017). As part of the reform, a new pathway for adults in the IVET system, EUV, Erhvervsuddannelse for Voksne (Vocational education for adults) was introduced.<sup>3</sup> The main change compared to the previous programme was that it made validation and recognition of prior learning compulsory, and that it introduced extensive criteria for how much the programme should be shortened following the result of the validation. The EUV programmes for adults are fundamentally identical to the programmes for young people, but the duration of the programme may vary depending on potential students' existing qualifications and labour market experience. Standard catalogues of courses that award credit have been developed for every IVET course, and three model programmes of different duration (EUV1, EUV2, and EUV3) are thus available for potential participants, depending on their documented experience.<sup>4</sup> Participation in the EUV programmes is free. The means of support for the participants depends on the situation as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> In the Danish education system, being adult means being at least 25 years old.

<sup>2</sup> Blegvad, M.(2015). 'Voksenuddannelse' (adult education) in *Den Store Danske*. Online: [voksenuddannelse | lex.dk – Den Store Danske](https://lex.dk).

<sup>3</sup> It replaced the previous pathway, called Basic (vocational) education for adults, Grunduddannelse for Voksne (GVU).

<sup>4</sup> See explanation (in Danish) on the website of the Ministry of Children and Education, [Generelt om euv | Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet \(uvm.dk\)](https://www.uvm.dk)

- Participants already in employment: The workplace pays the apprentice wages, and the company will receive a salary refund for periods, when the employee is at school.
- Unemployed participants: The individual need for (workbased) training during the programme (assessed by the school based on the validation of prior learning) determines whether the participant should apply for a state education grant (Statens Uddannelsesstøtte, SU) or will obtain an apprenticeship salary paid by the training company.
  - If the participant has sufficient relevant work experience, and the EUV course is thus deemed to be fully school based, the participant should apply for SU.
  - Unemployed participants 30 years of age or over and unskilled may continue to receive unemployment benefit (somewhat higher than the SU).
  - If it is decided that the participant needs a proper apprenticeship programme, the employer will pay the apprentice salary.
  - If, however, the unemployed participant is unable to find a training company, the participant should apply for SU.<sup>5</sup>
- Training companies may apply for a salary refund from the Employers' Training Contribution (AUB). Vocational training on unemployment benefits

If you are in employment, aged 25 and unskilled, your company can receive grants to train and employ a unemployed temporary worker while you are in education. It's called job rotation.

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<sup>5</sup> Uddannelsesguiden (in Danish), [Erhvervsuddannelser for voksne - euv | UddannelsesGuiden \(ug.dk\)](#)

## Part 2: Further analysis of the selected policy development and the direction of travel

When the reform, entitled 'Better and more attractive vocational education and training programmes', was launched in August 2015, it was with clear goals to reduce the drop-out rate, make vocational education more attractive, and get more people to choose this educational path<sup>6</sup>.

More specifically, the reform had four overarching objectives: (a) More students must choose a vocational education directly after the 9th or 10th grade, (b) More people must complete a vocational education, (c) Vocational education must challenge all students to become as proficient as their abilities allow and (d) Confidence and well-being in vocational schools must be strengthened.<sup>7</sup>

The political objective that more adults should obtain a vocational qualification should be seen in the light of developments in the labour market, where it was expected that there will be decreasing demand for low skilled workers and increasing demand for skilled workers as well as for employees with a higher education qualification.

Seeing that a low share of young people chose a vocational pathway, it was deemed even more important to ensure that more adults who had left education after primary school obtain a vocational qualification.<sup>8</sup> In addition, forecasts<sup>9</sup> indicate that only a little over 10% of job openings in the next decade in the EU will require low or no qualifications, while the overwhelming majority will require high or medium level qualifications. The potential for educating migrants to close the gap has not been discussed widely in Denmark, and there are no specific VET programmes for migrants. In order to be enrolled in upper secondary VET, migrants have to fulfil the same criteria as native students, i.e. have competences in Danish language and mathematics equalling the grade for passing the leaving examination in primary school.

In Denmark it is foreseen that there will be, in the near future, a significant shortage of skilled workers (Denmark could face a shortage of 70 000 and 99 000 skilled workers by 2025 depending on the date and methodology forecast<sup>10,11, 12</sup>), which could ultimately slow the pace

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<sup>6</sup> Cedefop (2020). Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015-19: Denmark. Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies.

<sup>7</sup> Regeringen (2014). Aftale om Bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddannelser. Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet.

<sup>8</sup> Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut (2017). Evaluering af erhvervsuddannelse for voksne (EUV): Hovedrapport.

<sup>9</sup> Andriescu. M, Broek. S, Dohmen. D, Molyneux. J & Revenhall. M (2019). Adult Learning policy and provision in the Member States of the EU. Ecorys.

<sup>10</sup> Andersen, Ole Dibbern & Helms, Niels Henrik (2019). Vocational education and training in Europe: Denmark. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports (2018).

<sup>11</sup> Cedefop (2020). Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015-19: Denmark. Cedefop monitoring and analysis of VET policies.

<sup>12</sup> Damm, E. A. et al. (2021) Ubalancer på arbejdsmarkedet (in Danish). AE Rådet. Online: <https://www.ae.dk/analyse/2021-03-danmark-mangler-99000-faglaerte-i-2030>

of economic growth. Likewise, a surplus of unskilled workers (59 000) and of young people with no education beyond upper secondary general education (51 000) is expected.<sup>13</sup>

Based on these observations, a political agreement was reached, whereby adults aged 25+ should be offered a more attractive, clear, and targeted path from unskilled to skilled. This would be achieved through the creation of the pathway called Vocational Training for Adults (EUV).<sup>14</sup>

Last but not least, the advance of new technologies and automation highlight the need for adult learning at all qualification levels. Having the capacity and opportunity to adapt occupational and personal skills sets and adjust to the changing world of work is equally important for higher educated individuals.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.1. Change process and (institutional) context

To achieve the overall goals, several initiatives were taken. The reform initiatives were divided into the following 10 focus areas: (a) An attractive youth education environment, (b) Simpler and more clear structure, (c) Better opportunities for continuing education, (d) Focus on guidance and counselling, (e) Clear entry requirements, (f) New business-oriented 10th grade, (g) More and better teaching, (h) Continued efforts to ensure apprenticeship places, (i) New Combined Youth Education and (j) New vocational training for adults (EUV).<sup>16</sup>

The main actor governing the roll-out of the reform was The Ministry of Education. It appears from the document outlining the political agreement that the policy makers agreed that a strategic boost of the education providers was required if the goals of the reform were to be achieved.

‘A strong and professional chain of stakeholders is needed who, together with the vocational schools can support a quality improvement by professional development, new knowledge, development of management and not least, knowledge sharing and coherence across the vocational schools.’<sup>17</sup>To support the implementation of the reform, the Ministry of Education asked the Council for Initial Vocational Education and Training (REU)<sup>18</sup> to set up a follow-up group that would monitor the implementation of the reform and support the achievement of the overall goals. The ministry also consulted with the trade committees for all 107 vocational education programmes and created an implementation secretariat that was to be responsible

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<sup>13</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Regeringen (2014). *Aftale om Bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddannelser*. Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet. (Agreement concerning better and more attractive vocational education). Online <https://www.uvm.dk/erhvervsuddannelser/nyheder-lovgivning-og-reform/politiske-aftaler-og-oplaeg>

<sup>15</sup> Andriescu et al. op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>17</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>18</sup> Rådet for de grundlæggende Erhvervsrettede Uddannelser

for overseeing the implementation of the reform and to serve as secretariat for the follow-up group.

In all, 3.6 billion DKK (approximately 484 million Euro) was set aside for the implementation of the reform in the period 2014-2020. It was agreed that the reform should not lead to increased costs for employers.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to adult VET, the FGU was replaced by the EUV, which defined three separate pathways depending on the qualifications and experience of the individual, to be established through validation of prior learning ('Realkompetencevurdering') and standardised rules for abridgement of the vocational programme:

- EUV1: This pathway targets adults with at least two years of relevant (to the occupation targeted by the VET programme) employment. These students do not have to follow the basic programme<sup>20</sup>, and their programme will not include apprenticeship (since it is the main assumption that they are already in employment, and that any work-based learning can take place in the current workplace). However, this pathway can be followed also by unemployed, provided that they have the two years of relevant employment. In that case, they are offered a supplementary module of up to 9 weeks duration.
- EUV2: This pathway targets adults with less than two years of relevant work experience, or who are recent graduates from another educational programme (e.g., general secondary education or a VET programme leading to another occupation). These students are offered participation in the second half of the basic programme and a main programme including apprenticeship. In order to enter the main programme, the individual has to fulfil the same requirements as the young students who have followed the full basic programme.<sup>21</sup>
- EUV3: This pathway is for adults without relevant employment experience or education. These individuals must participate in the second half of the basic programme and sit the examination at the end of the basic programme at an equal footing with young students. The main programme for this group is identical with the programme for young apprentices.

## 2.2. Results and impact of the policy

The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) followed the EUV for its first two school years, focusing on three of the main elements of the reform: Validation and recognition of prior learning (RKV, realkompetencevurdering), shortening of programmes depending on existing qualifications

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<sup>19</sup> Regeringen (2014). Aftale om Bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddannelser. Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet.

<sup>20</sup> All IVET programmes in Denmark are dual programmes consisting of a basic school-based programme of variable duration, and a main programme, in which periods in a training company alternates with periods at school.

<sup>21</sup> These requirements differ between the VET programmes.

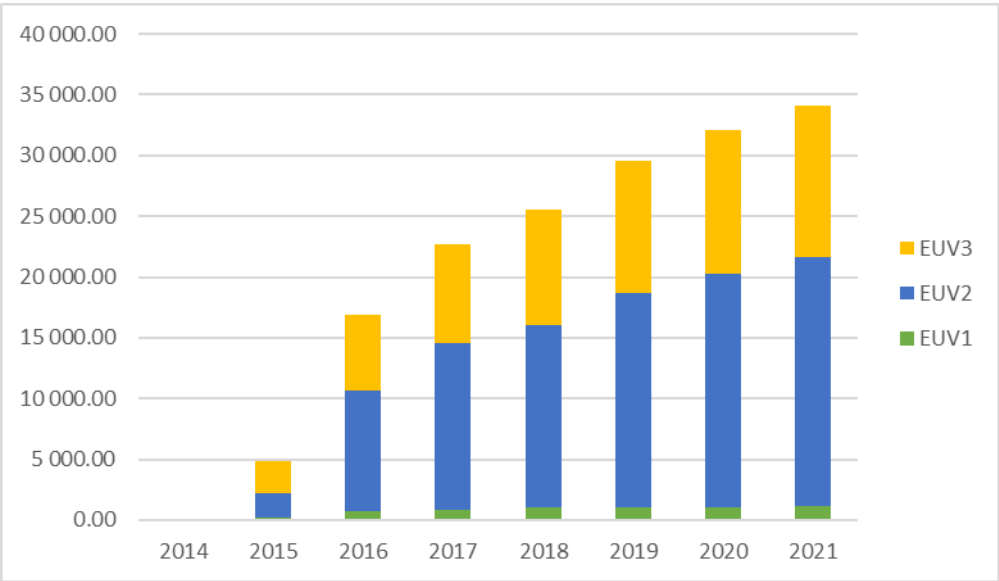
and experience established in the RKV, and the efforts of schools to develop pedagogical environments suited to adults. A report of the evaluation was published in 2017.<sup>22</sup>

The main conclusion of the report is that the political goal to provide adults aged 25 and over with a more attractive, clear, and targeted pathway from unskilled to skilled had not yet been reached. The share of adults in EUV in 2017 was smaller than the share of adults in VET before the reform in 2015.<sup>23</sup>

However, with new initiatives that came into force on 1 January 2018, including that the *obligation* to shorten a VET programme for a prospective adult student was replaced by the *right* for the individual to have the programme shortened, it is EVA's assessment that it will be more attractive for adults to start an EUV in the future.

The chart below indicates that the number of adults participating in EUV has increased steadily over the years.<sup>24</sup> The chart however also clearly shows that the participation in EUV1 is negligible compared to participation in EUV2 and EUV3. Figures have been stagnating at a little more than 1 000 since 2018, while numbers enrolled in EUV2 increased from 14 979 in 2018 to 20 532 in 2021, and numbers enrolled in EUV3 from 9 520 in 2018 to 12 432 in 2021.

**Figure 1 Number of participants in EUV, September**



Source: The database of the Ministry of Children and Education, <https://uddannelsesstatistik.dk>. Author's calculation. The figure is the number of participants enrolled in the programme on the 30. September for a given year.

<sup>22</sup> Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut (2017). Evaluering af erhvervsuddannelse for voksne (EUV): Hovedrapport.

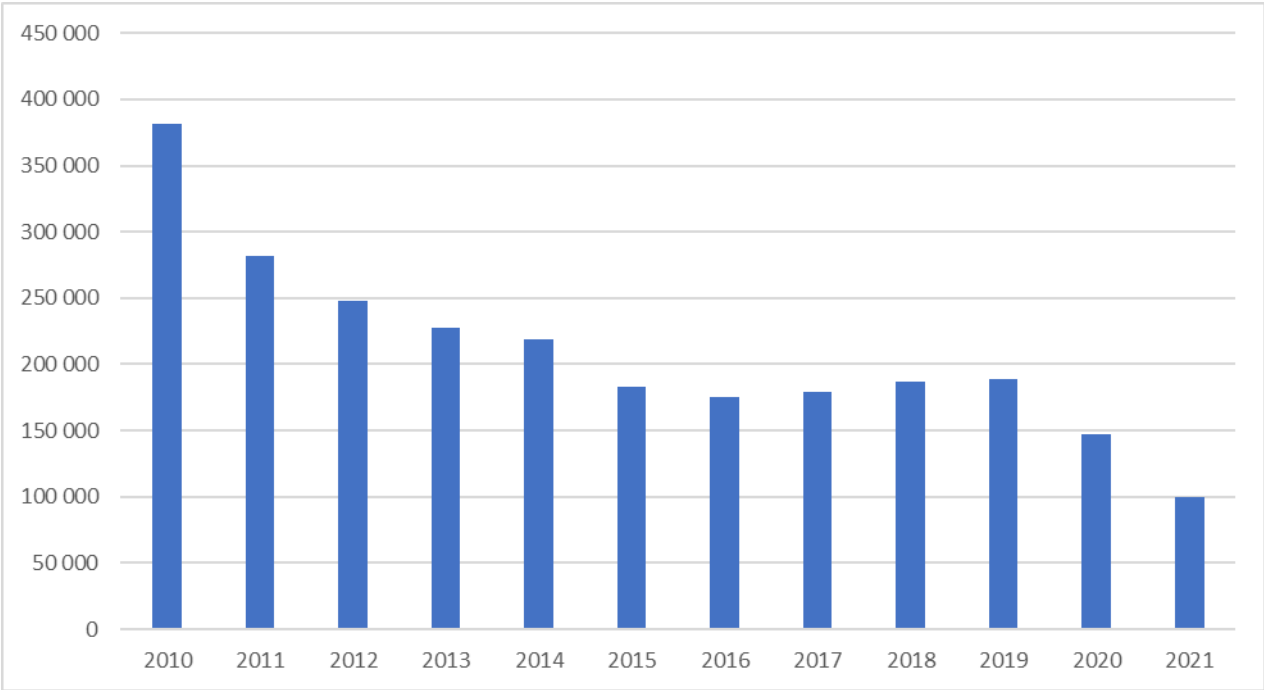
<sup>23</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>24</sup> Figures for 2020 and 2021 should be interpreted with caution due to the impact of Covid-19.



Further, while the participation in EUV is increasing and the participation in AMU has decreased overall since the 2008 financial crisis, the participation in EUV is still only about a third of the participation in AMU, see the chart below.

**Figure 2 Number of participants in AMU**



Source: The database of the Ministry of Children and Education, <https://uddannelsesstatistik.dk>. Author's calculation. The figure is the number of unique individuals enrolled in AMU courses during the year.

While participation in EUV2 and EUV3 has increased steadily, participation in EUV1, which is targeted at upskilling experienced employees, has remained at a very low level. All interviewees suggest that the main explanation for this is the presence of practical barriers for employers associated with sending employees to the programme. Since the school periods in the programme is planned to suit the workplace training of young apprentices, they may conflict with the planning of the enterprise. In addition, if an employer wants to send a group of employees to the same programme, they may end up having to go to school on different days, since the courses they need to follow are decided according to the results of the individual validation and recognition of prior learning.

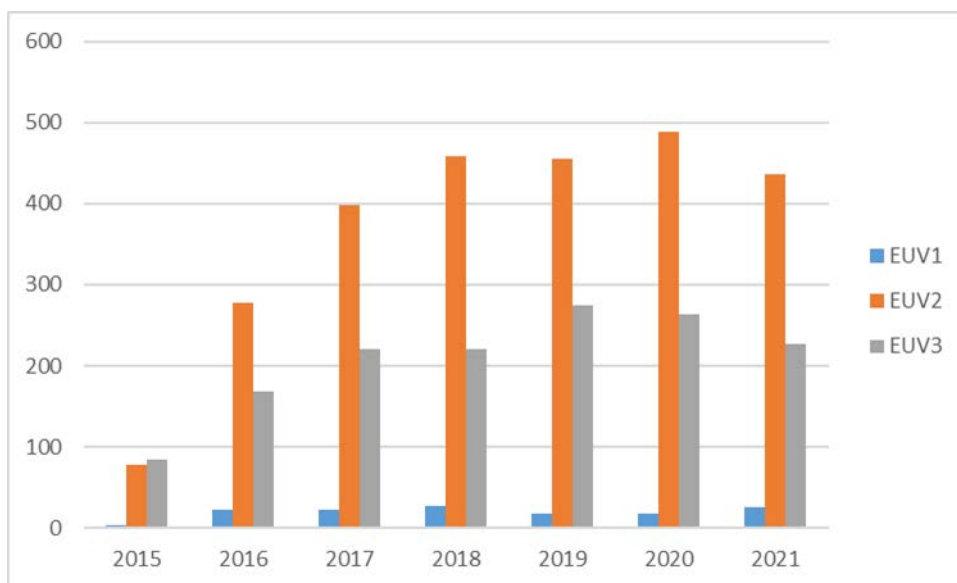
From the perspective of the VET school, in an evaluation of the VET reform of 2014 by the Danish Center for Social Science Research (VIVE) 55% of school leaders found the implementation of validation of prior learning 'easy' or 'very easy' three years after the reform. This results probably reflects that the method was already implemented in the previous system (the GVU). Nevertheless, 75% of school leaders continued to find the implementation of credit

'difficult' or 'very difficult'.<sup>25</sup> These difficulties were confirmed in an interview with the former Director of the Association of Danish VET schools and Gymnasiums. According to the interviewees, low skilled candidates for EUV1 with more than two years of relevant employment face 'robust' requirements for the transition from the basic to the main programme. These requirements concern proof of basic and transversal skills. In order to ameliorate this situation, an adjustment of the reform in 2018 introduced a 'Basic programme+' (Grundforløb+). It entails 10 weeks of extra basic programme with subjects such as methodology and workplace culture, possibly supplemented with some occupational skill teaching. The programme does not, however, include basic knowledge and skills in Danish language, mathematics, physics etc., despite it is exactly these subjects that most often are a challenge for the prospective EUV students.

In spite of the difficulties, the evaluation by VIVE found that the VET programmes had been shortened for individuals to a larger extent after than before the reform, i.e., the average duration of an EUV programme was shorter than had been the case of the GUV programmes prior to 2014. The question raised by VIVE, however, is if this shortened duration reflects the competences and knowledge that the adults bring to EUV.

With regard to participation in adult education and training leading to the two occupational groups of special interest for this study (jobs in mechatronics or automation, and shop floor assistants in the retail sector), the overall picture is rather different in the two sectors, except for the participation in **EUV1**, which shows a similar trend as the average across all programmes, namely that participation has been consistently low over the years, and no upward or downward trend can be detected.

**Figure 3 Participation in the retail education with specialisation, EUV1, EUV2, and EUV3**

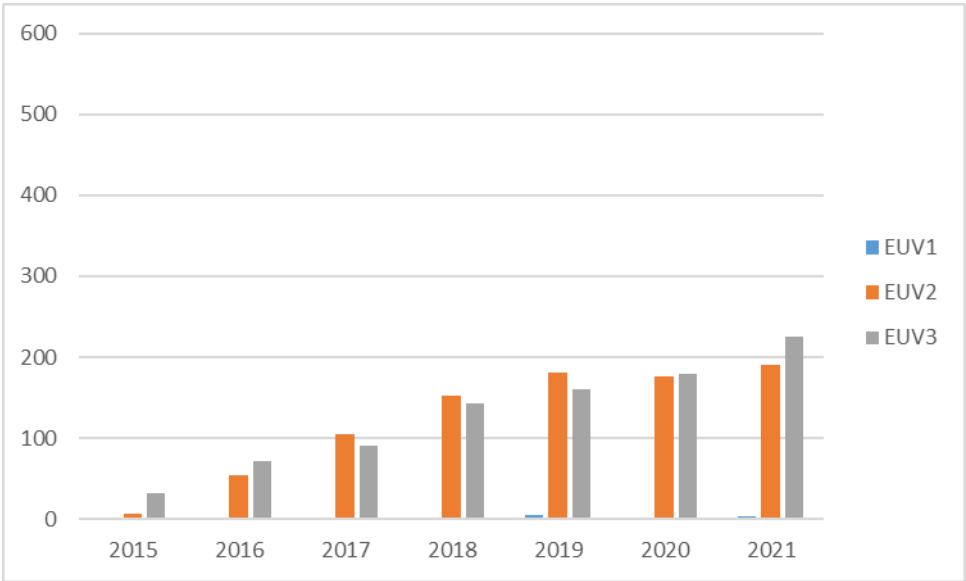


<sup>25</sup> VIVE (2020). *Grundforløb på erhvervsuddannelserne tre år efter reformen* ('The basic VET programmes three years after the reform'). Online. [Grundforløb på erhvervsuddannelserne tre år efter reformen \(vive.dk\)](https://vive.dk)

Source: The database of the Ministry of Children and Education, <https://uddannelsesstatistik.dk>. Author's calculation. The figure is the number of participants enrolled in the programme on the 30. September for a given year.

Figure 0 3 above shows participation in EUV in the retail education with specialisation from 2015-2021. As shown in the chart, the participation in EUV2 was significantly larger than in the other two pathways during the entire period. This indicates that most adult participants in this programme have less than two years of relevant work experience, or they possess already a qualification at least at NQF level 3. Similarly, the lower participation in EUV3 indicates that fewer adults without work experience or education seek the programme. Interviewees have indicated that the sector is characterised by in-house training of employees in the large retail chains. Some of these retail chains send selected adult employees who have completed general upper secondary education, but who do not have any vocational qualification, to the programme with a view to recruit future management from the shop floor. This would explain the figures, since these employees would be candidates for EUV2, but it cannot be confirmed.

**Figure 4 Participation in the programme Technician in automation and process, EUV1, EUV2, and EUV 3**



Source: The database of the Ministry of Children and Education, <https://uddannelsesstatistik.dk>. Author's calculation. The figure is the number of participants enrolled in the programme on the 30. September for a given year.

Figure 0 4 above shows the participation in EUV in the programme 'Technician in automation and process'. This programme is targeted at occupations in manufacturing involving diagnosing, repairing, and setting up automatic production equipment and robots. As shown in the figure, participation in all the EUV pathways was consistently lower for all years than in the retail programme. Noteworthy, the participation in EUV1 was zero in all years except 2019 (5 participants) and 2021 (three participants). Participation in EUV2 and EUV3 has been at roughly the same level and increasing over the years from 2015-2021, The low total numbers

reflect an overall low enrolment in programme – EUV participants make up 34% of all participants.

The generally low participation in EUV1 which could be seen in the total statistics and also when considering the two specific programmes above would appear to indicate that there is little demand from the main target group (already employed, experienced adults with no formal qualification beyond primary school) for EUV in the 2014 reform. The interviewees from the providers and social partners agree that the reform was not followed up with a sufficient focus on the needs of the adults or the employers. At the time of the reform, focus was mainly on getting more young people to choose initial VET and reverse a strong trend towards young people (and their parents) opting for general upper secondary education over VET. The adults, according to the interviewees, were brought into the reform by the social partners, but the instruments were never properly developed with a view to the needs of potential adult learners.

## Part 3: Changed epistemological and pedagogical perspective

The first fact to notice when considering the epistemological and pedagogical perspective is that as a rule, the EUV programmes do not differ from the IVET programmes for young people in respect to curriculum, content, or teaching. The only differences are (1) the shorter basic programme followed by the adult EUV students, and (2) the offer (for those who might need it) of an additional course (Basic programme+). Or in other words: VET programmes leading to full qualifications and aimed at adults are created solely by reducing the duration of an IVET programme aimed at young people.

The reduction of the duration is established at an individual level as a combination of compulsory shortening and individual shortening based on validation of prior learning. The compulsory shortening has two components:

1. The duration of school-based parts must be reduced by 10% for all VET students 25 years and over.
2. Each VET programme in Denmark is regulated by an executive order for the programme. These executive orders have an annex (criteria for award of credit). Each annex consists of two parts:
  - a. Detailed criteria for what should be considered 'two years of relevant work experience' with respect to the programme. Using these criteria, it can be established whether the potential student should go into EUV1.
  - b. Detailed criteria for the reduction of specific parts of the programme and the associated (compulsory) reduction of the part/course/module.

Finally, the validation of prior learning may lead to further shortening depending on criteria decided for each VET programme by the trade committee responsible for the programme. According to the interviewee from the provider association, this option is rarely used, since the guidance counsellors performing the validation are often not trained in translating experiences from one field to another.

Hence, in terms of curriculum content, learning venue, and pedagogics, the only difference between VET programmes for young people and those for adults is that the adults follow only parts of the programme depending on their prior experience and learning.

However, and despite the fact that there are little difference between the programmes for young students and adult students, one of the objectives of the reform was to create learning environments that were suited to the demands and learning styles of adults.

*'In EUV, didactic and pedagogical approaches should be tailored to the needs of adults'<sup>26</sup>*

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<sup>26</sup> Regeringen (2014). *Aftale om Bedre og mere attraktive erhvervsuddannelser, 24. februar 2014* (Agreement concerning Better and more attractive VET). Online [Politiske aftaler og oplæg om erhvervsuddannelser | Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet \(uvm.dk\)](#)

This ambition presents a challenge for schools, since, while schools and employers may want to pool adult learners (for example a group of employees from a company) in separate classes, this is often not practically possible due to the small numbers of EUV students in each VET school. Only in a very few schools with large student populations has it been possible to establish classes only for adults – as a rule, the classes are mixed. It should be noted, though, that the share of very young people (younger than 18 years) is very small in Danish VET, so in reality, classes combine younger adults following a full programme, and older adults following a reduced programme.

The VIVE evaluation indicates that school managers, teachers, and students disagree on whether the learning environment has improved following the reform. An increasing share of school managers find that the learning environment in the school is not good (18% in 2019 compared to 5% before the reform), while a decreasing share find it very good.<sup>27</sup> Teachers' responses indicate that the adult education environment has evolved in a more positive direction. For programmes in the fields of *Care, health and pedagogy, Technology, construction and transport, Office, commerce and business services, and Food, agriculture, and experiences*, over 60% of teachers (within Care, Health and Pedagogy as much as 84% of teachers) state that the learning environment for adults in their school and programme is good to some or to a high extent. Finally, looking at the students' response, their assessment of the learning environment did not change significantly over the three-year period. Around 70% of adult learners find that they thrive in their education, this figure has not changed from before the reform until after the reform.

An important factor contributing to a learning environment suited to the needs of adults is that the teaching can be adapted to the needs of adult learners. More than half of teachers across all programmes except the mercantile programmes expressed that they plan the teaching in order to consider the needs of adults that have not followed the full basic programme. This suggests that a well-functioning adult education environment has been established in several places, but that there is a clear potential for improvement. Further, the size of the school also appears to play a role: the evaluation found that teachers in large VET schools are less likely to consider that the adult learning environment is suitable. This finding is a bit surprising, since it is precisely the large VET schools that – due to the sheer volume of students - offer the most opportunities to create classes and other learning environments dedicated to the needs of adult learners.

Meanwhile, in the manufacturing sector, a small number of shorter programmes, for example 'process operator' or 'industry operator' have been developed. These programmes are not explicitly targeted at adults, but according to the interviewees they have better success in attracting adults to EUV than (longer and more complex) programmes in other sectors.

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<sup>27</sup> VIVE (2020). *Grundforløb på erhvervsuddannelserne tre år efter reformen* ('The basic VET programmes three years after the reform'), p. 109. Online. [Grundforløb på erhvervsuddannelserne tre år efter reformen \(vive.dk\)](https://www.vive.dk/Grundforloeb-pa-erhvervsuddannelserne-tre-ar-efter-reformen)

Another relevant development is the creation of ten ‘sector packages’ of AMU courses in the construction sector.<sup>28</sup> These packages (known also as ‘*contract programmes*’) entail a contract between the student and an employer. The programmes include alternation between work in a company (with no requirements for the employer to carry out training) and short periods at an AMU Centre where the adult students follow predefined AMU courses.<sup>29</sup> For example, the duration of the programme leading to the qualification ‘Concrete maker’ is two years in all. During these two years, students will follow AMU courses with a total duration of 18 weeks plus training for certificates for driving trucks, cranes etc. The remaining time is spent working for an employer. These packages of courses lead to a what is known in the Danish NQF as a *supplementary qualification*. Unlike the EUV, the contract programmes do not include learning outcomes related to basic or transversal skills, just like they do not grant access to further education. Examples of such qualifications include ‘Unskilled bricklayer’, ‘Demolisher’, ‘Asphalt worker’, and ‘Scaffolder’.<sup>30</sup> Regrettably, there is no data available on completion of these packages. However, as an indication of the level of interest in different forms of upskilling in the sector, the number of participants in AMU courses in the construction sector in 2021 was 217 950, compared to 12 453 participants in EUV in construction.<sup>31</sup> According to the interviewee from the providers’ association, the concept of contract programmes is interesting when contemplating the future of VET for adults. In particular, the interviewee pointed out that in a changing labour market, there is constantly a visible share of the workforce who need or want to change from one occupational field to another. For such individuals, the package concept can offer a good option, since it combines a relatively short duration, which is manageable for adults, with a clear and specialised occupational profile.

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<sup>28</sup> Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet (2020). *AMU-branchepakker*. Online. [AMU-branchepakker | Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet \(uvm.dk\)](https://www.uvm.dk/AMU-branchepakker)

<sup>29</sup> Uddannelsesguiden (n.d.) *Byggeriets kontraktuddannelser* (Contract programmes for the construction sector). Online. [Byggeriets kontraktuddannelser \(ug.dk\)](https://www.ug.dk/byggeriets-kontraktuddannelser)

<sup>30</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>31</sup> The database of the Ministry of Children and Education, author’s calculations.

## Part 4: Conclusions and reflections

Retrospectively, the 2014-2015 VET reform has scarcely had significant impact on the provision of vocational education and training to adults. Participation in EUV has been low but steadily increasing since the reform. However, participation in the pathway aimed at upskilling low-skilled employees with more than two years of relevant experience (EUV1) has consistently remained at a very low level and has not increased at the same rate as the other two pathways. Hence, it can be concluded that the reform has largely failed to reach the main target group for the initiative, while it has been more successful in reaching target groups that are not already firmly established in the labour market. In the same period, participation in AMU increased, but only slightly, from 200,523 in 2015 to 209,737 in 2019.<sup>32</sup> While the reform aimed to make it easier for adults to get access to a full VET qualification, in practice, the bureaucratic requirements turned out to give too many challenges for schools and for prospective students, just like the reform did not offer visible incentives for employers to send employees to EUV.

The reform also did not succeed in breaking down the existing barriers between the three systems for provision of adult education. Basic skills are still taught in a non-occupational context in the VEU centres, AMU courses are still narrowly occupational, and EUV is mainly attractive to adults without any prior employment experience. This target group is channelled into the EUV3, which is hardly distinguishable from IVET for young people.

The way forward seems unclear. A study from 2017 (commissioned by the Ministry and carried out by an expert group)<sup>33</sup> on the future of continuing education and training for adults recommended

- One entry point for all adult education in the form of a common platform, including public as well as private provision;
- Increased use of validation of prior learning;
- Establishment of a national analysis and monitoring system;
- Targeting the competence supply to industrial or regional clusters (competence clusters);
- Strengthened partnerships for adult education and training;
- Increased flexibility achieved through increased use of digital learning;
- Improving the basic skills of the workforce;

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<sup>32</sup> In 2020 and 2021, participation in AMU dropped again, probably as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Børne- og undervisningsministeriet (2022). *Landstal for arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser (AMU)*. Online. [Aktivitet på arbejdsmarkedsuddannelser \(AMU\) - Landstal - Nøgletal | Børne- og undervisningsministeriet \(uddannelsesstatistik.dk\)](#)

<sup>33</sup> Ekspertgruppen for voksen-, efter- og videreuddannelse (2017). *Nye kompetencer hele livet. Fremtidens voksen-, efter- og videreuddannelse*. Børne- og undervisningsministeriet. [Online] [Nye kompetencer hele livet | Børne- og Undervisningsministeriet \(uvm.dk\)](#)



- Increased focus on lifelong learning through the provision of individual learning accounts.

So far, none of these recommendations have been brought to the forefront of Danish education policy, and the interviewees from the provider side and the social partners see no signals that a change of direction is underway. In view of the governance structures in Danish VET, all will depend on the ability of the social partners in collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Education to arrive at a common strategy for the way forward. While buzzwords like the 'need for a qualified workforce' are not in want, the solutions are not currently visible on the horizon.

# Annex to case study report

## List of sources

*In footnotes*