Getting Skills Right

Increasing Adult Learning Participation

LEARNING FROM SUCCESSFUL REFORMS

OECD

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

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Foreword

The world of work is changing. Digitalisation, globalisation, and population ageing are having a profound impact on the type and quality of jobs that are available and the skills required to perform them. The extent to which individuals, firms and economies can reap the benefits of these changes will depend critically on the readiness of adult learning systems to help people develop and maintain relevant skills over their working careers. Today, only two in five adults across the EU and OECD participate in education and training in any given year, according to the OECD Survey of Adults Skills. Participation is even lower amongst disadvantaged adults, such as those with low skill levels or unemployed, or those in jobs at high risk of automation. For adult learning systems to be future-ready, governments must increase their efforts to engage more adults in continuous learning throughout their lives.

While much has been written about the need to increase the number of people participating in adult learning, it is less clear how this can be done in practice. Many good ideas struggle to translate into real change on the ground, as they get stuck in the reality of policy implementation. This report seeks to understand the factors that make reforms to increase adult learning participation succeed by examining the experience of six countries that have significantly increased participation in adult learning over the past decades: Austria, Estonia, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands and Singapore. It identifies key lessons from a detailed study of reform design, implementation and evaluation in each country.

This report was prepared by the Skills Team in the Skills and Employability Division of the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs under the supervision of Glenda Quintini (Skills Team manager) and Mark Keese (Head of the Skills and Employability Division). Mark Pearson (Deputy-Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs) provided helpful comments.

The report benefited greatly from discussions with close to 60 experts, officials, employer federations, trade unions, academics and education institutions in Austria, Estonia, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands and Singapore conducted in April to August 2019. It also profited from written comments by the European Commission. Special thanks are given to Mantas Sekmokas (DG EMPL, European Commission).

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AES	Adult Education Survey
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
ANPAL	National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies
CET	Continuing Education and Training
CPIA	Provincial Centres for Adult Education Italy
CVTS	Continuing Vocational Training Survey
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ET2020	Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training
EU	European Union
EUIF	Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HILDA	Australian Household, Income and Labour Dynamics Survey
ICT	Information and communications technology
INAPP	National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies
INVALSI	National Institute for the Evaluation of Education and Training Italy
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MIUR	Ministry of Education, University and Research Italy
MLPS	Ministry of Employment and Social Policies Italy
MOM	Ministry of Manpower Singapore
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OKJ	National Training Registry Hungary
PAIDEIA	Action Plans for Innovation in Adult Education Italy
PAL	Priorities of Adult Learning (dashboard)
PES	Public Employment Services
PIAAC	OECD Survey of Adult Skills
Q&A	Question and Answers
SAA	Skill Anticipation and Assessment
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WRTAL	Australian data on Work-related Training and Adult Learning

Executive summary

Policy-makers have long recognised that adults' participation in learning is key to unlocking the benefits of a changing world of work. However, only two in five adults across the EU and OECD participate in education and training in any given year, according to the OECD Survey of Adults Skills (PIAAC). While much has been written about the need for progress in this area, it is less clear how adult learning participation can be increased in practice. Comparative research on adult learning policy has focused on identifying lessons from countries with highly developed adult learning systems and high participation rates, such as the Nordic countries. This report takes a different approach by analysing what made adult learning reforms succeed in six countries where participation in adult learning was not necessarily high, but did increase significantly over the past decades, i.e. Austria, Estonia, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands and Singapore.

The analysis is based on a sample of adult learning reforms in these countries, i.e. the *expansion of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs),* the *Initiative for Adult Education* and *Paid Educational Leave* for Austria; the *expansion of ALMPs,* the *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* and *State-Commissioned Short Courses* for Estonia*;* the *Free Second Vocational Degree,* the *Basic Skill Courses* and *Open Learning Centres* for Hungary; the *Adult Education Centres* and the *Training Funds* for Italy; the *Network Training*, *Training Vouchers* and *Sector Plans* for the Netherlands; and the *SkillsFuture Credit, SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy* and *SkillsFuture Series* for Singapore. This report seeks to understand the factors that made these reforms succeed. It is based on desk research and 58 expert interviews with government stakeholders, social partners, adult education providers, NGOs, academics and other relevant stakeholders involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of adult learning policies. Key findings include:

- *There is no magic bullet for increasing adults' participation in education or training*. The countries vary significantly with respect to the types of reforms implemented. Typically, the set of reforms implemented in a given country encompassed different types of training, addressed multiple barriers to participation and engaged multiple target groups. In most cases, single adult learning reforms reached less than 1% of the adult population, although in some coverage of the population was much more significant (e.g. the Italian *Training Funds*). It is hence unlikely that any one reform was solely responsible for the observed increase in overall level of adults' participation in learning. Where reforms focused on a specific target group, their contribution to raising the participation levels of this group was likely higher. Comprehensive approaches, covering broad sections of the population and addressing the multiple challenges faced by adults are needed if the objective is to raise participation levels population-wide.
- *Stakeholder involvement is crucial in both the development of adult learning reforms and their implementation*. In the vast majority of reforms under review, the impetus for reform came from the central administration. Yet, in many cases, a range of other stakeholders subsequently co-developed the reforms and were involved in their implementation. Advisory or supervisory groups that involved multiple stakeholders governed several reforms. In light of their proximity to the demand for training, social partners were the stakeholders most frequently involved. In many cases, public employment services were also involved, particularly in the implementation of

reforms. Despite their strong involvement in adult learning on the ground, individual employers, learning providers and regional administrations were less frequently involved in the design and implementation of the reforms under review.

- *Reforms to increase adults' participation in learning do not have to come with a high price tag*. Among the reforms under review, the direct costs of delivering education and training to adults ranged from an estimated EUR 200 to 2 500 per participant. Reforms that covered indirect costs of training, such as paid educational leave, were more expensive. Domestic funding sources for the reforms were typically taxes, or, in some cases, social security contributions or training levies paid by employers. Public and private providers who delivered the reforms accessed funding through calls for proposals in most cases. Several reforms were co-funded by the EU through the European Structural Funds (ESF). While ESF funding facilitated the implementation of more wide-reaching reforms than using only domestic resources, it posed a risk for their sustainability beyond the ESF funding cycle.
- *Adapting reforms to changing circumstances or in response to results from monitoring and evaluation can be important for reaching the reforms' objectives*. The vast majority of selected reforms were altered with respect to their initial design based on monitoring and evaluation results, exchanges of good practices between providers, or the results of skills assessment or anticipation exercises. Incorporating lessons learnt along the way provided an opportunity to overcome barriers to take-up, to identify bottlenecks and to improve the reform's overall effectiveness. Moreover, taking into account updated results from skills assessment and anticipation exercises helped policies stay relevant, even in a context of changing skill needs.
- *High participation in adult learning is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a well-functioning and future-ready adult learning system*. To enable more adults to reap the benefits of participating in learning activities, policy-makers must not only focus on participation rates, but also on training quality, participants' subsequent labour market outcomes, and the alignment of programmes with individual and labour market needs. Moreover, to identify potential deadweight losses and (re-) design policies to limit them, policy-makers should provide funding for continuous monitoring and evaluations, which are required to identify the causal effect of different adult learning programmes, and are a fundamental component of any cost-benefit analysis.

This report is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the approach to this study including the methodology for the selection of countries and reforms. Chapter 2 investigates what other countries can learn from the nature of the reforms, how they were designed, funded and implemented, as well as how policy learning took place. Chapter 3 discusses adults' participation in the selected reforms, and what other factors could have contributed to the observed increases in adult learning participation. Chapter 4 reviews indicators of success of adult learning reforms beyond participation.

1 Approach to the study

Two in five adults across EU and OECD economies participate in learning opportunities in any given year. To harness the benefits of the ongoing changes in the world of work, many more adults will need to participate in education and training in the future. Despite reform efforts in many countries, adult learning participation is not rising as fast as needed. Yet, some countries are bucking the trend and have achieved significant increases in learning participation over the past 15 years. Understanding adult learning reforms that contributed to these increases can yield important lessons for other countries seeking to do the same. This chapter describes these trends in adult learning participation and outlines the approach to the study.

Introduction

Countries need to urgently scale-up and upgrade their adult learning systems to help people adapt to the future world of work. Today, only two in five adults across the EU and OECD participate in education and training in any given year, according to the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC). Participation is even lower amongst disadvantaged adults, such as those with low skill levels or in unemployment, or those in jobs at high risk of automation (OECD, 2019[1]). This is problematic, as participation in adult learning is associated with a wide range of positive social, health and economic outcomes for the individual, economies and societies as a whole (Schuller, 2017[2]). For adult learning systems to be future-ready, governments must increase their efforts to engage more adults in continuous learning throughout their lives.

Policy-makers have long recognised that adults' participation in learning is key to unlocking the benefits of increasingly global and knowledge-based economies, as well as to improving individual and societal well-being. At the EU level the Council of the European Union has repeatedly stated its commitment to strengthen adult learning systems and expand learning participation (Council of the European Union, 2008[3]; Council of the European Union, 2011[4]; Council of the European Union, 2016[5]). In 2009, the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020) even set a target of 15% of adults having participated in adult learning in any given 4 weeks, as measured by the European Labour Force Survey (Council of the European Union, 2009[6]). At the same time, the EU continues to make significant investment into adult learning in Member States through the European Social Fund (ESF).

Similarly, OECD Education Ministers acknowledged the need to increase participation and committed to pursue and implement lifelong learning strategies in their respective countries already over 20 years ago (OECD, 1996[7]). These commitments have been renewed continuously at ministerial meetings since then, last in the context of preparing for recovery after the Great Recession (OECD, 2009[8]), tackling inequality and creating more inclusive labour markets (OECD, 2016[9]).

Despite these policy efforts, progress is slow. In the European context, adult learning participation continues to lag behind the proclaimed ET2020 target of 15% (EC, 2019[10]). In 2018, 11% of adults took part in formal and non-formal learning during the last 4 weeks, according to data from the European Labour Force survey. This is an increase of less than 2 percentage points since 2008.

Aims and objectives of this study

While much has been written about the need for progress, it is less clear how adult learning participation can be increased in practice. Many good ideas struggle to translate into real change on the ground, as they get stuck in the reality of policy implementation. To date, research on how to make education and training reforms work has primarily focused on the initial education system. This research typically highlights the importance of robust governance, stakeholder buy-in, administrative capacity and strong feedback mechanisms for reform success (OECD, 2015[11]; Schleicher, 2018[12]; Snyder, 2013[13]). Given the arguably larger complexity of adult learning systems, more research is needed to understand how to design and implement successful reforms that improve adult learning participation.

Comparative research on adult learning policy commonly focuses on identifying lessons from countries with highly developed adult learning systems and high participation rates (EC, 2015[14]; OECD, 2019[1]). The Nordic countries, for example, have some of the highest adult learning participation rates across OECD countries and their adult learning policies frequently serve as good practice examples for others. However, one can question the usefulness of learning from these 'always high performers', i.e. countries with a strong tradition of adult learning and consistently high adult learning participation. Shifting the attention to countries that managed to improve adult learning participation in recent decades, may provide more relevant insights for countries starting from a relatively lower base.

This report aims to understand the factors that make reforms seeking to increase adult learning participation succeed. It identifies lessons from six countries that have bucked the trend and significantly increased participation in adult learning over the past decades: Austria, Estonia, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands and Singapore. Lessons are based on a sample of reforms in these six countries. This study concerns itself with the details of reform design, implementation and evaluation and provides answers to five key questions:

1. What **types of reforms** increase the participation of adults in learning? What are the barriers they aim to address and which groups do they target?
2. How are these adult learning **reforms developed** and who is involved?
3. How are **reforms funded** and what level of financial resources are employed?
4. What can be learnt from the **implementation of the reforms**? What does the governance of these reforms look like and how are they being delivered to adults?
5. To what extent does **policy learning** take place that enables the continuous improvement of the reforms?

Box 1.1. Key definitions

Adult learning

The focus of this report is on the **learning of adults**, who have completed their initial education and entered working life. One can further distinguish between three types of adult learning:

- **Formal education** are intentional, institutionalised learning activities, which are recognised by the relevant authorities and have a minimum duration of one semester, such as study towards upper secondary qualifications or Bachelor degree studies.
- **Non-formal education** are intentional, institutionalised learning activities, e.g. short-courses, workshops or seminars, which are either of short duration (less than one semester) or not recognised by the relevant authorities.
- **Informal learning** is intentional, non-institutionalised, less structured and can take place anywhere, e.g. learning from colleagues, friends or learning by doing.

Adult learning and *adult education and training* are used interchangeably in this report.

Reforms

Reforms are processes in which changes are made to the formal "rules of the game" – including laws, regulations and institutions – to address a problem or achieve a goal such as increased adult learning participation. They usually involve a complex political process and heterogeneous actors, particularly when it is perceived that the reforms would redistribute economic, political, or social power.

In this publication, the term *adult learning reform is* used synonymously with *adult learning policy* and *adult learning measure*, while all referring to the above definition.

Source: Eurostat (2016[15]), Classification of learning activities (CLA) manual: 2016 edition; OECD (2015[11]), *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264225442-en; OECD (2010[16]), *Making Reform Happen: Lessons from OECD Countries*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264086296-en.

Trends in adult learning participation

Consistent time series data on adult learning participation across countries is scarce. The data that does exist suggests that progress in increasing adult learning participation has been more limited than desired in the past 15 years, although different data sources are painting slightly different pictures. The best sources that allow for cross-country comparison over time are three European surveys (see also Box 1.2):

- **The European Adult Education Survey (AES)** is a survey covering persons between 25 and 64 years old and enquiring about their participation in education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) in the last 12 months. The survey is part of the EU statistics on lifelong learning and covers 35 countries, including all EU Member States, the United Kingdom, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, Serbia and Turkey. Three waves of data collection have taken place (2007, 2011, and 2016).
- **The European Union Labour Force Survey (LFS)** is a large household survey, covering people aged 15 and over. It contains questions on participation in education and training (formal and non-formal) in the last four weeks. The survey covers EU Member States and the United Kingdom, four candidate countries and three countries of the EFTA. Data on participation in education and training are available with an annual frequency mostly from the early 2000s.
- **The Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS)** is a long-running enterprise survey on continuing vocational training and other training in enterprises in the business economy (excluding micro-enterprises with less than 10 persons employed). The survey is part of the EU statistics on lifelong learning and covers all EU Member States, the United Kingdom and Norway. Comparable data are available for the three last waves of data collection (2005, 2010, 2015).

Box 1.2. Data limitations

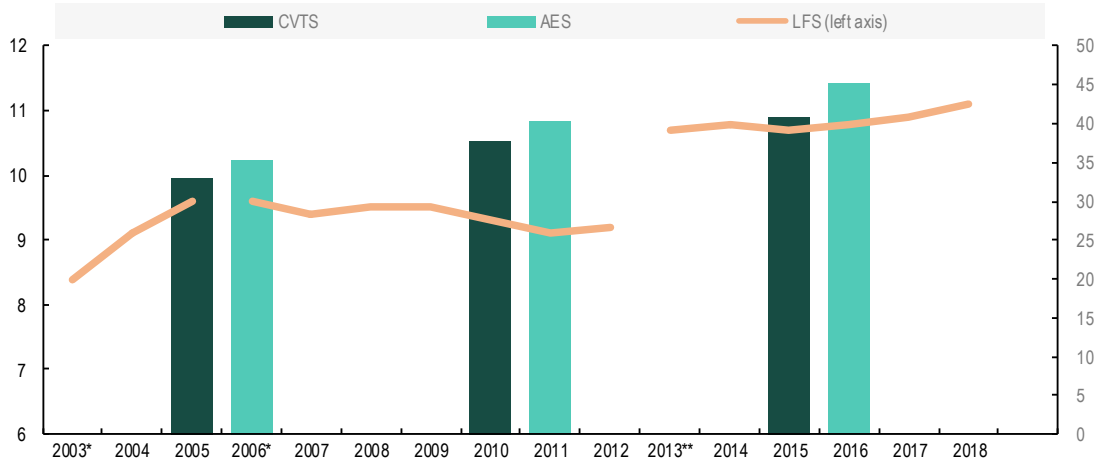
Time series data of adult learning participation that allows for reliable over-time comparison is scarce. While there are national data sources, which provide useful information about changes over time, their relevance in a cross-country setting is limited due to methodological differences between countries. The OECD PIAAC data, which includes comparable information on adults' education and training participation also for non-European countries, is cross-sectional only at this point in time (with a second cycle of data collection taking place 2021-2022).

The three European surveys used in this report (AES, CVTS and LFS) contain time series data on education and training participation that is comparable across countries. Yet, these datasets have their limitations. They only cover the past 15 to 20 years, with data collection for AES and CVTS conducted only in large intervals (typically 5 years). Moreover, over-time comparability can be hindered by changes in the questionnaire. Changes to indicators relevant to this study were made between each wave of AES and CVTS and twice (2003 and 2006) in the EU-LFS. There have also been country-specific changes in translation or data collection methods that make over-time comparison difficult.

Different data sources show different trends in adult learning participation across the EU. Based on AES and CVTS data, adult learning participation has increased considerably in the past fifteen years, while according to LFS increases were more modest. There are a number of possible explanations behind this discrepancy, including different reference periods, reference populations and definitions of adult learning (see Box 1.3). Looking at the three sources together provides the most complete picture of overall trends (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. Trends in adult learning participation in the EU 27 plus UK

Share of adults participating in education and training, %



Note: Secondary axis refers to the columns displaying AES and CVTS data. Values refer to weighted average of EU 27 and the United Kingdom. LFS and AES data refers to participation in formal and non-formal education and training, CVTS to participants in CVT courses, which are financed at least partly by the enterprise.* refers to break in LFS series due to changes in variables, while ** due to revision of the French LFS, which altered the EU average.
Source: Eurostat; Adult Education Survey, Continuing Vocational Training Survey, Labour Force Survey.

Box 1.3. Reasons behind discrepancies between data sources

The **structure of the three key data sources** for this study (AES, CVTS and LFS) differs considerably. AES is a survey of individuals focusing on adult participation in learning activities, LFS is a household and person survey focused on labour market topics, while CVTS is carried out among enterprises with 10 or more persons employed in the business economy. Related to this, the **definition and range of learning activities** considered in the different surveys differs as well. The LFS data used focus on formal and non-formal learning (the later excluding guided on-the-job training), the AES data used focus on formal and non-formal learning, while CVTS, on the other hand, only refers to training measures or activities that are financed at least partly by the enterprises for their staff.

There are considerable differences in the **reference period** as well. AES refers to participation in the previous 12 months, LFS to the previous 4 weeks and CVTS to a specific calendar year. A year-long reference period is preferable as it provides a longer window of observation for adult learning participation. As LFS measures the share of adults participating in a 4-week time period, it effectively measures 'training events' rather than 'participants'. By result, an observed increase in training participation in the LFS may reflect the same individuals participating more often over the year, not necessarily an increase in the learning population.

Source: OECD (2020[17]), *Continuous Learning in Working Life in Finland*, Getting Skills Right, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/2ffcffe6-en.

LFS data show a clear increase in adult learning participation in the EU27 plus the United Kingdom only at the very beginning and the end of the time under observation. On average, participation in adult learning did not increase significantly between 2006 and 2015 (the period for which variables have been harmonised in most countries), if one disregards the 1.5 percentage point increase in 2013, which can be

attributed to changes made in the French LFS. In contrast, according to **AES data,** the average EU27 plus UK participation rate grew steadily over the ten-year window for which data is available, by around 5 percentage points between 2007 and 2011 and by another 5 percentage points between 2011 and 2016. **CVTS** data show a stable increase in training[1] provided by enterprises to their staff following a trend similar to that observed in the AES. The overall increase was 8 percentage points, with a lower growth between 2010 and 2015. Some changes were made to the questionnaire between the different waves of the survey limiting over-time comparability.

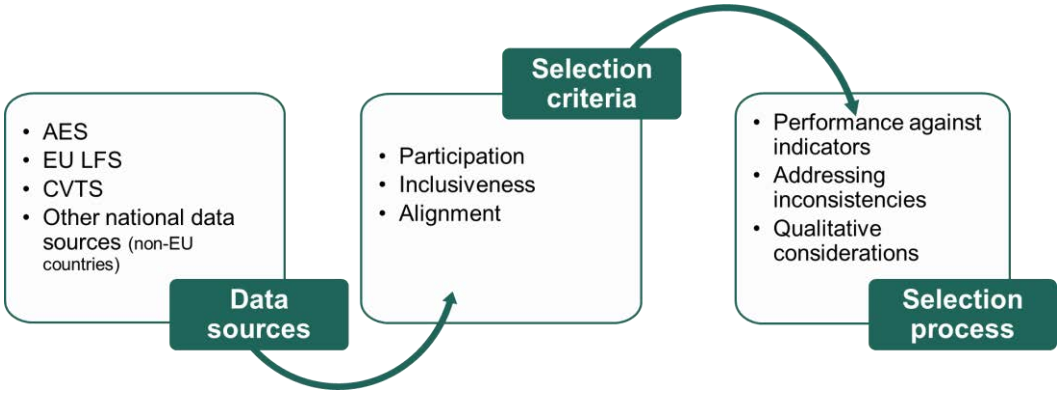
Research methodology

The analysis conducted for this study followed a qualitative approach and was developed in four distinct stages: i) the selection of countries to be included in the study; ii) the identification of key reforms within selected countries; iii) the collection of information through case study research; and iv) cross-country comparative analysis. A detailed description of the methodology can be found in Annex B.

Country selection

As a first step, a set of six countries to be included in the study was identified. For inclusion, countries needed to have experienced a comparatively large increase in adult learning participation and to have implemented reforms that could reasonably be responsible for this increase. The methodology for the selection of countries followed a structured process, which took into account country performance against a set of quantitative indicators, as well as qualitative considerations (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Schematic overview of approach to country selection



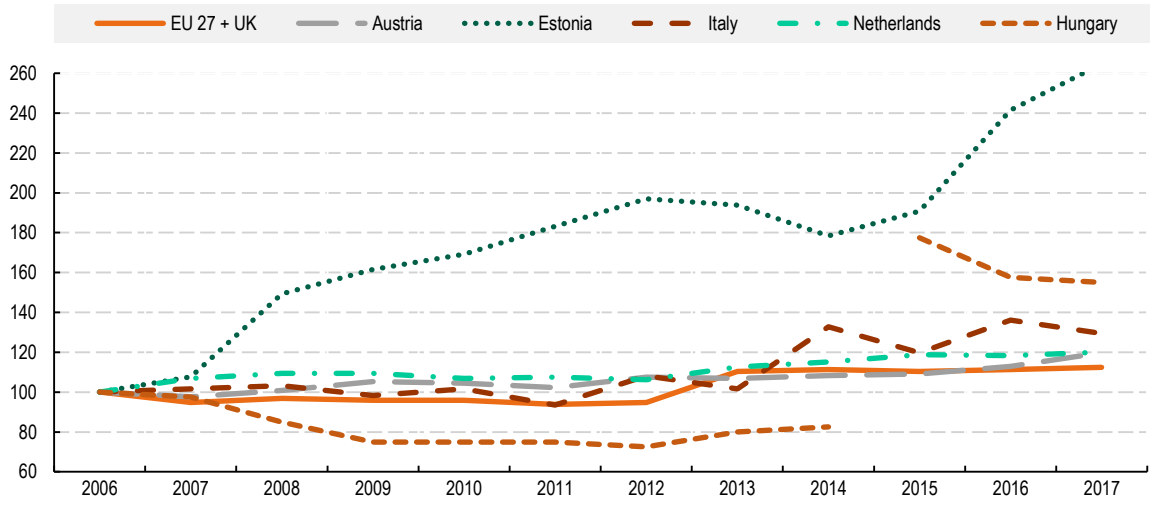
Note: OECD elaboration.

First, a set of criteria for the country selection was specified based on available data sources (AES, CVTS, LFS). The primary selection criterion was an observed increase in adult learning participation based on AES and LFS data. Countries displaying inconsistent trends across the two data sources were excluded from the final selection. Following this, secondary selection criteria were: i) an observed increase in the inclusiveness of adult learning, defined as the participation gap between older and younger adults, as well as between adults with low and medium/high level of educational attainment (based on AES data); and ii) an observed increase in alignment of adult learning with the skill needs of the labour market, defined as the share of training hours not spent in compulsory health and safety courses and the share of companies who respond to future skill needs by providing continuing vocational training to their current staff (based on CVTS data). Further details of the selection criteria and process are provided in Annex B.

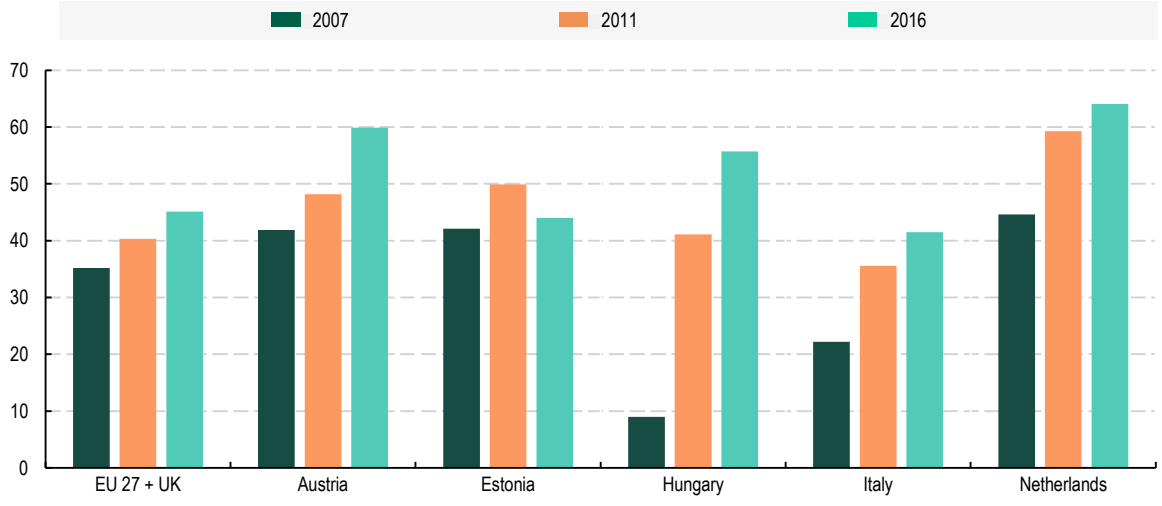
Qualitative considerations such as evidence on the implementation of significant adult learning reforms informed the final selection. The final selection also recognised the need to achieve good representation of the geographic, policy and cultural diversity of European adult learning systems. This process led to the final selection of Austria, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Singapore. These countries have shown some of the strongest increases in adult learning participation in the past 15 years (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3. Trends in adult learning participation in selected countries

Panel A: Change in the share of adults (25-64) participating in education and training during the past 4 weeks compared to 2006, %



Panel B: Share of adults (25-64) participating in education and training in the past 12 months, %



Note: The EU 27 + UK refers to a weighted average of the 27 member countries and the United Kingdom. Panel B: Break in the series for Hungary in 2011 due to changes in the survey.
Source: Panel A: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey ; Panel B: Eurostat, Adult Education Survey

In **Austria**, the increase in adult learning participation was steady over the selected ten-year period. Participation grew by 2 percentage points over the total period based on LFS and 18 percentage points based on AES data, which places Austria among the top performers based on this indicator. The increase in participation was particularly strong after 2011, including training at companies based on CVTS.

Participation in adult learning in **Estonia** increased strongly according to the LFS. The increase by around 9 percentage points implies that participation more than doubled between 2006 and 2017, making Estonia a top performer by international standards. Participation of adults with low qualifications increased even more strongly over the decade, signalling an increase in inclusiveness. Participation according to AES shows an increase between 2007 and 2011 followed by a decline between 2011 and 2016. Training at companies increased by 7.5 percentage points overall, with the majority of the increase taking place between 2005 and 2010.

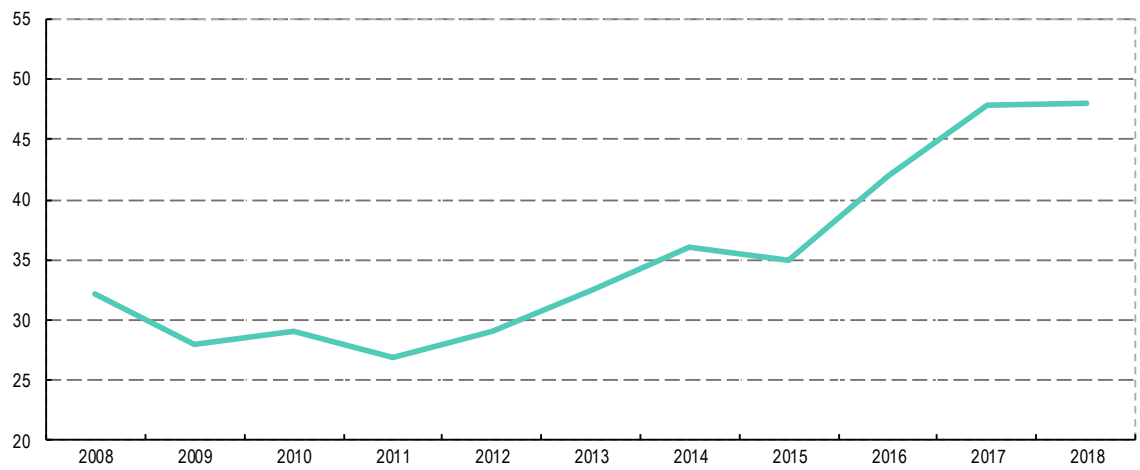
Hungary experienced one of the largest increases in adult learning participation according to both LFS and AES. Because of several breaks in the LFS and AES series, administrative data were used to verify if changes over time reflected the reality on the ground. National registry data confirmed the strong increase in participation. According to domestic registry data from the National Statistical Office, the number of adults enrolled in adult education or training activities more than doubled between 2007 and 2011. The trend was more ambiguous afterwards, with some decrease in recent years.

For **Italy,** all data sources show a significant increase in adult learning participation. Between 2007 and 2016, participation increased by about 2 percentage points according to LFS and by 19 percentage points according to the AES. Participation of older workers increased even more strongly over the same period, signalling an improvement in inclusiveness. Among the selected countries, Italy also experienced the largest increase in continuing vocational training provision by employers.

According to AES data, participation in the **Netherlands** increased considerably. Based on this source, the Netherlands is among the five best performing countries in Europe between 2007 and 2016. However, the increase based on LFS was smaller at just 1.8 percentage points overall, most of which took place after 2012. Inclusiveness of older workers also increased as their participation grew more strongly than the average.

Figure 1.4. Training participation in Singapore

Share of labour force (aged 15-64) participating in training in the previous 12 months, %



Note: Data refer to residents (citizens and permanent residents) engaging in formal or non-formal job-related training.
Source: Supplementary Survey on Adult Training, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower.

As **Singapore** is not featured in the Eurostat data sources, national registry data was used to determine how participation in adult education evolved over time. Based on data from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), the participation rate increased from around 30% to close to 50% over the previous decade as a result of a moderate increase from 2011 and a stark one from 2015 (Figure 1.4).

Identification of key reforms

The selected countries implemented a large number of policy reforms, which may have influenced adult learning participation in the past decades. To focus the review, the second stage of the research process involved the identification of the most important adult learning reforms for the observed increase in participation. To identify these reforms, the following selection criteria were applied:

- The selected reform had the explicit aim to improve some or more aspects of the adult learning system. This implies that major reforms outside the realm of adult learning policy, e.g. of the social security system, were not taken into account.
- The mechanism by which the reform would have increased adult learning participation had to be clear and plausible. Reforms directly affecting learning participation, such as by funding additional training places or initiating new education and training programmes, were given preference over those indirectly affecting adult learning participation, such as lifelong learning strategies or initiatives related to improving the quality of adult learning overall. Exceptions to this rule were made in cases, where multiple experts at national level emphasised the importance of the reform for increasing adult learning participation, even when the mechanism was indirect (e.g. the *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy*).
- It needed to be plausible that the reform had contributed to the observed increased in adult learning participation. This implied that only reforms that were implemented from or after 2005 were selected, as only these could have plausibly contributed to increased adult learning participation between 2007 and 2016. Reforms also had to display large coverage, i.e. reach a large enough part of the population so that it could probably have contributed to increased learning participation.

A selection of reforms meeting these criteria was made based on desk research and interviews with national adult learning experts. Seventeen adult learning reforms were selected to be included in this review (see Table 1.1).

Case study research and comparative analysis

Information on each of the reforms was collected through in-depth case study research, following a common process and exploring a set of pre-defined aspects. This included a review of existing literature on the topic, including academic literature, policy evaluations, documentation of the analysed reforms and relevant legal texts. It also included 58 expert interviews with government stakeholders, social partners, adult education providers, NGOs, academics and other relevant stakeholders involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of adult learning policies.

Standardised case studies provided the basis for the cross-country comparative analysis (for a summary of the case studies see Annex A). The aim of the analysis was to identify patterns of similarities and differences across the selected reforms. Based on the selected reforms, lessons were identified with regard to: i) the types of policies implemented; ii) the design process; iii) the funding; iv) implementation aspects; and v) the extent of policy learning. Results of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 2 of this report.

Selected reforms included in this review

Following the methodology outlined above, seventeen reforms implemented in six countries were included in the review (Table 1.1). It should be noted that these reforms constitute a sample of key reforms implemented in the six countries, selected based on the methodology outlined above. They are not the sole adult learning reforms implemented in these countries in the time period of interest.

Table 1.1. Overview of reforms included in the review

Country	Reform	Short description
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	Increase in funding and scope of training-related Active Labour Market Policies
	Initiative for Adult Education	New programme to provide free basic and second-chance education for adults
	Paid Educational Leave	Multi-stage reform of wage replacement benefit paid to individuals during training absences
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	Increase in funding and scope of training-related Active Labour Market Policies
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	Comprehensive package of policy reforms, including in the area of adult learning
	State-Commissioned Short courses	New programme of free-of-charge short vocational courses
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	Law change that made the acquisition of a second vocational degree free of charge
	Basic Skill Courses	New programme offering free-of-charge basic skills training for public workers
	Open Learning Centres	Establishment of 50 learning centres offering free-of-charge short courses for low-skilled adults
ITA	Adult Education Centres	Reform of adult education centres, introducing greater autonomy and more tailored programmes
	Training Funds	Introduction of training levy paid by employers and used for in-company training
NLD	Network Training	New mandatory job-search training for older unemployed adults (50+)
	Training Vouchers	Introduction of training vouchers for older unemployed adults (50+)
	Sector Plans	New sector wide programmes to improve sectoral/regional labour markets
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	Introduction of training vouchers for Singaporeans aged 25 and above
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	Introduction of 90% training subsidy for Singaporeans aged 40+
	SkillsFuture Series	New training programmes to address emerging skill needs

Source: OECD elaboration.

Austria

Expansion of ALMPs. A series of reforms have expanded active labour market policies (ALMPs) in the past decades. ALMPs expenditure stood at EUR 776 Mio in 2000, it reached EUR 2 118 Mio in 2014 and now stands at EUR 2 680 Mio in 2018. ALMPs in Austria have a strong focus on skill development and the acquisition of qualifications. Approximately two-thirds of funding and three-quarter of new participants in ALMP take part in training-related measures (Bösch et al., 2013[18]). The increased funding translated in more participants – the number of participants has doubled since the early 2000s and now stands at over 200 000 participants per year – as well as in higher spend per participant.

Initiative for Adult Education. In 2012, Austria introduced a coordinated programme to enable adults to obtain basic competences and educational qualifications free of charge. Between 2012 and 2017 approximately 50 000 individuals participated in the measure.

Paid Educational Leave. Although paid statutory education and training leave has existed in Austria since the late 1990s, the measure has undergone several changes since then. Reforms made it easier to access the benefit and increased the levels of benefit paid, raising attractiveness. In 2013, paid educational leave was opened to those training on a part-time basis.

Estonia

Expansion of ALMPs. Over the past decades, Estonia has rapidly expanded the training offer available in the context of ALMPs. Founded in 2002, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) was initially responsible for passive labour market policy only and assumed responsibility for ALMPs in 2009. Since then, the provision of training-related ALMP has been continuously improved, modernised and expanded (Leetmaa, 2015[19]). For example, in 2009, training vouchers for the unemployed were introduced. Since 2017, the EUIF has expanded its services to the employed.

Lifelong-Learning Strategy. In 2014, Estonia launched its *Lifelong Learning Strategy*, a comprehensive strategy to set priorities and guide funding decisions. It sets strategic priorities for adult learning, such as increasing adult learning participation and raising adult qualification levels. The strategy is being implemented through nine programmes. The adult learning programme aims to: i) help adults return to formal education; ii) strengthen on-the-job training and retraining; and iii) improve the labour market relevance of training.

State-Commissioned Short Courses. Following a pilot in 2008/2009, Estonia has been funding short vocational courses for adults since 2009. The courses are free of charge for individuals and aim to engage those who typically do not take part in adult education. In the past 10 years, around 75 000 individuals took part in these courses. It should be noted that an entitlement to paid study leave for taking part in non-formal courses was also made available from 2009, supporting take-up of the programme.

Hungary

Free Second Vocational Degree. In 2015, a law change enabled adults to obtain a second vocational education degree free of charge at any age. Vocational training is frequently used by adults for upskilling and reskilling purposes. Training has to be pursued at one of 44 public training centres across the country.

Basic Skill Courses. Between 2012 and 2015, the *I am learning again programme* offered education opportunities for low-skilled adults. From 2013, the programme was primarily delivered to 'public workers' over the winter months. Participation was a condition for receiving the monthly allowance for public workers. Over the course of the programme, 188 000 adults took part.

Open Learning Centres. In 2009, an alliance of NGOs established learning centres that provide free-of-charge short courses for low-skilled adults. Between 2013 and 2015, the network expanded substantially and now encompasses 52 centres. Courses are tailored to adult learners and focus on local needs. Training activities aim to build basic self-management and occupational skills, as well as to create a positive attitude towards learning. Centres cover communities that traditionally have limited adult learning opportunities.

Italy

Adult Education Centres. In 1997, Italy established learning centres that provided basic education courses and led to primary or lower-secondary degrees. Following extensive consultation with stakeholders, the centres were reformed starting from 2012, to align them with several aspects of the European *Upskilling Pathways Recommendation* (Council of the European Union, 2016[5]). The new *Provincial Centres for Adult Education (CPIAs)* enjoy greater didactical and organisational autonomy to better tailor courses to the adult population, offer personalised learning paths that also recognise students' prior learning, including of informal nature, and certify learning according to the National Qualification Framework.

Training Funds. In 2004, training levies were introduced, which employers can use to subsidise their own training costs. Through special procedures, the Funds collecting the levy can allocate resources to specific kinds of training which are considered of importance for a broader set of companies. In 2015, the Funds

covered on average 62.5% of the total cost of training across sector and firm size classes. From 2004 to 2017, the number of firms enrolled in a Training Fund tripled, reaching 1 million firms in 2017, and the number of workers covered by the scheme doubled, reaching 10 million workers.

The Netherlands

Action Plan 50+ Works. Between 2013 and 2016/2017, several policies to help older (50+) unemployed back to work were introduced. Initially, the policies focused on the 55+ year-old population, but this was expanded to 50+ in 2014. Training-related policies in this plan include the introduction of mandatory free-of-charge job-search training (**Network Training**), and the introduction of **training vouchers** of EUR 750. The revision of the policy in 2014 increased the amount of the vouchers to EUR 1 000, and expanded the eligibility of the vouchers for a wider variety of training and to the recognition of prior learning.

Sector Plans. Between 2013 and 2016, sectoral or regional social partners were able to request co-funding from the government for initiatives to improve the sectoral or regional labour market. The sector plans addressed several themes, one of which was to retrain and upskill adults. Between 2013 and early 2017, more than 155 000 adults had participated in retraining and upskilling activities under the plans.

Singapore

SkillsFuture Singapore. In 2015, Singapore introduced a comprehensive adult learning reform, which included a wide variety of activities. The most important of these activities are: the introduction of training vouchers to all Singaporeans aged 25 and above (in 2016**; SkillsFuture Credit**); the introduction of training subsidies for 40+ year-old Singaporeans (in 2015; **SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy**); and the establishment of new training courses for emerging skills (**SkillsFuture Series**).

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Note

[1] Training here refers to continuing vocational training (CVT). The primary objective of CVT is the acquisition of new competences or the development and improvement of existing competences. The CVT activity must be the result of a decision in the enterprise and be financed in total or at least partly by the enterprise (directly or indirectly). Persons employed holding an apprenticeship or training contract should are not considered as taking part in CV.

2 Lessons from successful reforms

While much has been written about the need for reform, it is less clear how adult learning participation can be increased in practice. Many good ideas struggle to translate into real change on the ground, as they get stuck in the reality of policy implementation. To understand what makes a successful adult learning reform, this chapter synthesises lessons from countries that have increased learning participation in the past 15 years and the reforms they implemented. It investigates what other countries can learn from the nature of the reforms, how they were designed, funded and implemented, as well as how policy learning took place.

Introduction

Perfect policies do not exist, yet some policies are more successful than others in achieving desired outcomes. These policies are often characterised by a common set of good practices throughout the policy cycle. This includes a well-conceived policy design with the involvement of key stakeholders and strong implementation mechanisms that are subject to robust quality assurance. It also includes the set-up of regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, insights of which are used to improve the policy over time. These guiding principles hold true for policies seeking to increase participation in adult learning.

This chapter presents results of a comparative analysis of the seventeen adult learning reforms in Austria, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Singapore, selected based on the process outlined in Chapter 1. It draws out cross-country patterns relating to: i) the content of reforms; ii) funding of reforms, iii) reform implementation; and iv) policy learning. Based on the analyses it highlights lessons for other countries seeking to increase adult learning participation.

Learning from the content of reforms

As discussed in Chapter 1, the reforms included in this study cover a wide variety of measures, with diverse aims and objectives. At the most general level, they include measures that could reasonably have contributed to the observed increase in adult learning participation in the six countries. Some patterns can be identified with regards to the type of training each reform focuses on, i.e. formal, non-formal and or informal, its target group, and the mechanisms by which it aims to increase learning participation.

Type of training

As discussed in Box 1.1 of Chapter 1, learning activities are generally classified in three types, i.e. formal, non-formal or informal learning. This section discusses to which extent the selected policies address the different types of training.

As a set, the reforms selected in each country typically address both formal and non-formal education and training. No country focuses on one type of training across all selected reforms. For example, *SkillsFuture Credit* (Singapore) can be used for any type of training, whether formal (basic education, VET, or higher education) or non-formal (e.g. *SkillsFuture Series*). In Austria, the focus of the *Expansion of Training-related ALMPs* lies on training provided by the PES, which is both formal and non-formal in nature, whereas much of the *Initiative for Adult Education* focuses specifically on formal second-chance education. In Hungary, the reform to obtain a *Free Second Vocational Degree* focuses on increasing participation in formal VET, while the *Basic Skill Courses* are non-formal.

In the vast majority of selected countries, none of the policies under review directly target informal learning. The Hungarian *Open Learning Centres* are an exception, in the sense that the reform stimulates informal learning by allowing people to use computers freely in the centres to surf the net, or practice and learn on their own (even when there are no classes). Some other reforms under review indirectly incentivise participation in informal learning by formally recognising it. For instance, the *Adult Education Centres* in Italy provide a system for the recognition of informal learning that is then counted towards the acquisition of formal (basic) qualifications. The Dutch *Training Vouchers* and *Sector Plans* can be used to finance formal recognition of prior learning (including, but not limited to, informal learning) through 'experience certificates', which were introduced in 2005 as a way to obtain formal recognition of prior learning.

There are two reasons that may explain why the reforms under review typically focus on non-formal and formal learning, but not informal learning. First, the policies were selected based on their potential contribution to the *observed* increase in participation, i.e. formal/non-formal education and training. Second, participation in (non-)formal learning is better documented than informal learning, for example

through existing surveys on adult learning, which makes it easier for policy makers to target and monitor these types of learning. This notwithstanding, it is important to stress the importance of informal learning and its recognition, as it constitutes the vast part of learning in adult age and in the workplace in particular (Fialho, Quintini and Vandeweyer, 2019[1]).

Target groups

Policy-makers seeking to increase adult participation in education and training must consider if this is best achieved by targeting the entire adult population, or by focusing on more specific under-represented groups. Table 2.1 provides an overview of which groups are targeted by the selected reforms, namely all adults, the employed, unemployed, the low skilled or low qualified, or other more specific target groups.

Table 2.1. Target groups of the reforms under review

Country	Reform	Target groups				
		All adults*	Employed adults	Unemployed adults	Low-skilled / low qualified	Other
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs					
	Initiative for Adult Education					
	Paid Educational Leave					
EST	Expansion of ALMPs		from 2017		.	
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy				from 2014	Adults with outdated skills and qualifications
	State-Commissioned Short Courses			from 2010	from 2011	
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree					
	Basic Skill Courses					Public workers (2013-2015)
	Open Learning Centres				2009-2015	Disadvantaged adults (incl. those at risk of losing job, young or older adults, Roma)
ITA	Adult Education Centres					
	Training Funds					
NLD	Network Training					Unemployed aged 55-63 (2013)
	Training Vouchers					Unemployed aged 50-63 (2014-2017)
	Sector Plans					
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	(incl. retirees)				Singaporeans aged 25 and above
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy					Singaporeans aged 40+
	SkillsFuture Series	(incl. retirees)				Singaporeans

Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review.
Note: * Includes those who are inactive on the labour market (e.g. homemakers or students). Target groups do not include retirees, unless stated otherwise.

The target groups of the selected reforms vary from very specific to very broad. While the *Sector Plans* in the Netherlands, for example, focus on 50+ year-old unemployed workers which represent about 1% of the 25-64 year-old population (see Chapter 3), other measures aim to engage the entire adult population including retirees (e.g. *SkillsFuture Credit* in Singapore).

However, the majority of reforms have a relatively broad target group, at least when they are first introduced, which includes either the entire (working) population, or adults with low skills or low qualification

levels (see Chapter 3 for a discussion on the target group sizes in each country). However, these programmes often remain open to anyone who is willing to participate, irrespective of skills or educational level. For example, although the Hungarian *Open Learning Centres* target adults in disadvantaged situations (e.g. adults with low skills or the unemployed), in practice, they are open to anyone.

Where reforms target specific sub-groups of the population, they typically focus on the unemployed. It should be noted that targeting the unemployed implies that the size of the target group fluctuates with the business cycle. Several policies introduced a focus on a more specific target group at a later stage of the policy implementation.

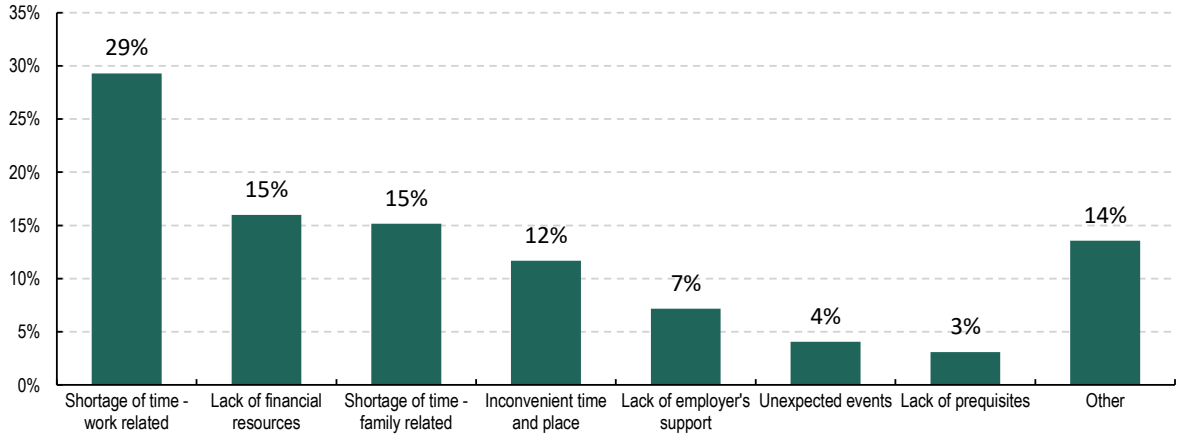
Mechanisms that increase learning participation

There are many reasons why adults do not participate in education and training, including shortage of time (either work- or family-related), lack of financial resources, lack of prerequisites, lack of employer support, and that the training is provided at an inconvenient time or place (OECD, 2019[2]). Data from the 2016 Adult Education Survey show that people may face multiple participation barriers at the same time. Shortage of time, a lack of financial resources, or family reasons are *the most important reason* for non-participation, according to AES data. Using data from the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), Figure 2.1 shows that these three reasons are also the most important reasons for non-participation in OECD countries. On average in the six countries under review, the share of individuals who did not participate in training due to a work-related shortage of time is slightly higher compared to the OECD average (34% vs. 29%).

Analysing the barriers to training participation the policies address, i.e. the mechanism by which the policy aims to increase adult learning participation, is an important step in understanding how the selected policies may affect education and training participation.

Figure 2.1. Barriers to participation in adult learning

Most important reasons for non-participation (% of adults who wanted to participate but did not)



Note: Average of OECD countries participating in PIAAC.
Source: PIAAC data (2012, 2015, 2018).

Table 2.2 shows which of these participation barriers are addressed by the policies under review. It is interesting to note that, within each of the selected countries, the combination of the selected reforms address several participation barriers at the same time. For example, the Dutch *Training Vouchers* directly target the barrier of a lack of financial resources by covering 100% of the training costs up to EUR 1 000. Additionally, they indirectly address the barriers of shortage of time and lack of prerequisites, because the

vouchers are intended to be used for relatively short courses and can be used to fund the recognition of prior learning since 2014.

This stresses the need for comprehensive approaches when tackling adult learning participation, because it may be the combination of reforms, rather than each reform in isolation, that contributed to the increase of adult learning participation in a country.

Table 2.2. Participation barriers addressed by the reforms under review

Country	Reform	Shortage of time*	Lack of financial resources	Lack of prerequisites	Lack of employer support	Other barriers addressed
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	■	■	■		Not being part of the target group
	Initiative for Adult Education		■	■		
	Paid Educational Leave	■	■			
EST	Expansion of ALMPs		■	■	■	Not being part of the target group
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	■	■	■	■	Not knowing which training to follow; Could not find any training of interest
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	■	■			Not being part of the target group; could not find any training of interest
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree		■			Not being part of the target group; could not find any training of interest
	Basic Skill Courses	■	■	■		Could not find any training of interest
	Open Learning Centres	■	■	■		Could not find any training of interest
ITA	Adult Education Centres	■	■	■		
	Training Funds	■	■		■	
NLD	Network Training	■	■			Not being part of the target group; Could not find any training of interest
	Training Vouchers	■	■	■		Not being part of the target group
	Sector Plans	■	■	■	■	
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	■	■	■		Not being part of the target group
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	■	■	■		
	SkillsFuture Series	■				Could not find any training of interest

Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review. * This category also includes the barrier of an inconvenient time or place.

Shortage of time

Not having enough time to participate in training (either due to work or family reasons) is the most frequently named reason for non-participation in learning; in total 44% of the adult population gives this as the most important reason for non-participation (Figure 2.1). Reforms that can address this barrier are the introduction or expansion of statutory training leave, short/modular courses or part-time education, as well as flexible study options, such as online and evening classes. Although “shortage of time” and

"inconvenient time or place" are independent barriers to training participation, the policies that address them can be similar. For example, by providing paid education and training leave, the barrier of lack of time is addressed directly. Yet, this also improves the opportunities for people to participate in training that takes place during working hours or further away, i.e. a training which might otherwise be considered to be given at an inconvenient time or place.

Almost all successful reforms included in this review address the issue of shortage of time in one way or another. Austria's *Paid Educational Leave* reform is the only policy included in this review where paid educational leave was expanded substantially. On the other hand, many of the policies under review introduced new short-time courses, while others expanded existing policies (typically funding of training costs) to include short courses. For instance, Austria's *Training-Related ALMPs* expanded the training and subsistence subsidies to cover short courses, whereas Estonia's *State-Commissioned Short Courses* introduced new short vocational courses, as did Hungary's *Open Learning Centres* (with a focus on low-skilled adults) and Singapore's *SkillsFuture Series* (focussing on emerging skills). For some other reforms, introducing or expanding short/modular courses, part-time education, or online and evening classes were a secondary policy objective. The Austrian *Paid Educational Leave*, the Dutch *Training Vouchers* and *Sector Plans*, as well as many of the *SkillsFuture* initiatives can be used for any type of training, including short, part-time or online courses.

Lack of financial resources

Besides a shortage of time, lack of financial resources can be an important barrier to participation, particularly for low-wage or low-skilled workers (OECD, 2019[3]). This barrier can be tackled by covering the direct and indirect costs of training participation, partly or in full.

Almost every reform under review addresses the barrier of lack of financial resources. Estonia (*ALMPs*), the Netherlands (*Training Vouchers*) and Singapore (*SkillsFuture Credit*) introduced training vouchers to reduce the financial burden of participation. Austria (*Expansion of training-related ALMPs*), Hungary (*Basic Skill Courses*) and Singapore (*SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy*) introduced and expanded subsidies for training, as well as subsidies to cover sustenance costs or travel costs.

In addition to individuals, employers may also face financial barriers in providing training to their workers. They face direct costs, either to organise training provision in house or paying (part of) training costs for their employees to attend training outside the workplace. Employers also face indirect costs due to decreased productivity during the training and the risk that workers leave their job after the training. Employers' financial barriers may be addressed through subsidies to cover training costs, which is the case in the Dutch *Sector Plans*. Training levies, such as the Italian *Training Funds*, are a funding mechanism by which employers pay a (compulsory or voluntary) contribution to a pooled fund out of which training is financed. This can have a redistributive effect since most funds allow redistributing funding from larger to smaller enterprises.

Lack of prerequisites

Adults are sometimes not able to access certain training programmes because they either lack the minimum required skills or lack the qualification to show that they possess those skills. For those adults who actually lack basic (native) language skills or numeracy skills to follow the course, providing opportunities to participate in basic skill courses (particularly at the primary and lower secondary level) can address this barrier. Examples of selected policies that explicitly address the barrier of a lack of prerequisites are Austria's *Initiative for Adult Education*, Hungary's *Basic Skill Courses*, and Italy's *Adult Education Centres*.

For adults who lack formal qualifications, but have acquired relevant skills non- or informally, skill recognition is an important policy. Estonia's *Life Long Learning Strategy*, Italy's *Adult Education Centres*

(since the adjustments in 2011), the Dutch *Training Vouchers* (since the adjustments in 2014), and the Dutch *Sector Plans* explicitly address this by allowing adults to use training vouchers, for example, to take part in a formal recognition process.

Lack of employer support

According to the 2016 Adult Education Survey, a lack of employer support is a common barrier to participation for working adults, although rarely the most important barrier. Only two of the reforms under review explicitly address this barrier. In Italy, employers are incentivised to engage in training activities by earmarking future training costs through training levies (*Training Funds*). In the Netherlands, employers are actively engaged in the development of *Sector Plans* to enhance their local labour market, e.g. through retraining and upskilling their current or future employees.

Other barriers

Individuals may be willing to participate in learning activities, yet they do not register for training because they do not know which training they can or should follow in order to change job or adapt to new requirements in their own job. It is therefore important to provide people with sufficient and easily accessible information about training opportunities, to actively bring this information to the attention of particularly vulnerable groups that are unlikely to participate, and provide them with quality guidance and support (OECD, 2019[2]). The Estonian *Lifelong-Learning Strategy*, for example, highlights guidance and support to adults who would like to return to formal education, and introduces a national qualifications framework that provides insight into which skills and qualifications are relevant for which occupations.

Some groups will not participate in training due to the fact that they are not eligible to participate in it. Expanding the target group for training programmes is therefore a mechanism to increase participation. Several of the selected reforms expanded the target group in the time period under observation, but the expansion itself is typically not the primary aim of the policy. Exceptions are the *Expansions of Training-Related ALMPs* in Austria and Estonia, and the *Free Second Vocational Degree* in Hungary, which expanded the eligibility to obtain a free second VET degree to all adults. Examples of policies for which expansion of the target group happened without it being the primary policy aim are the *Network training* and *Training vouchers* (the Netherlands), for which the target group was adjusted from 55+ year-old to 50+ year-old unemployed workers.

Finally, some people may not participate because there is currently no training on offer that fits their needs and preferences. Introducing entirely new training programmes, or revising existing ones to tailor them to emerging needs, may therefore increase participation. The Estonian *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* and the Singaporean *SkillsFuture Series* introduced new training programmes for in-demand skills. New basic skill programmes aimed at adults with low skills (typically without a primary or lower-secondary degree) were introduced in Hungary (*Basic Skill Courses, Open Learning Centres*). Finally, the *Network Training* in the Netherlands introduced a new job-search training programme for unemployed older workers.

Lessons learnt – content

- There is **no magic bullet** for increasing adults' participation in education or training. There is significant variation across countries when it comes to the types of reforms implemented.
- Most reforms are **addressed to individuals** by expanding their training options, or by improving incentives to participate in existing training programmes. Far fewer reforms are aimed at increasing training provision by employers.
- Most countries adopt a **comprehensive approach** to increasing learning participation; combining policies that address multiple barriers to training participation, cover several types of training and engage multiple target groups. Most countries introduced both untargeted measures aimed at increasing the participation of large shares of the adult population, as well as policies with a more specific and narrow target group, such as the low-skilled or older unemployed individuals.

Learning from the policy development process

Reforms often occur under the influence of urgency, pressed by events. Careful and considered reform design, however, is key for reform effectiveness. This section describes aspects of this design process, which led to the deployment of successful reforms in the countries included in this study. It analyses the existence of ex-ante needs assessments and the actors involved in the conceptualisation of the reform.

Assessing the need for reform

All reform processes are designed to meet a policy target. Each country, however, can follow a different path in the definition of its adult learning policy objectives and priorities. Countries can motivate their action by political priorities, to amend a previous policy, or as the necessary consequence of an analysis of the skill system in their country. The latter can take the form of ad-hoc exercises to assess the existing skill gaps in the population, or rely on more broad-scoped analysis of the labour market and education trends in the country.

Policy- and political priorities

Some of the reforms considered in this study were motivated by the political conviction that adult learning would support competitiveness and growth, without an ad-hoc empirical analysis of individuals' skill needs. In the Netherlands, *Sector Plans* were conceived to sustain employability of workers during the financial crisis, and therefore make regional and sectoral labour markets more resilient to economic shocks. Similarly, the *expansion of ALMPs* in Estonia did not leverage any precise assessment of skill needs. Instead, it targeted unemployed individuals who did not meet the labour market demands in terms of qualifications and skills, as well as employed individuals who stood to benefit from retraining to stay employed or to change jobs.

Among the reforms that fall under the scope of this analysis, some were motivated by the need to fill a policy vacuum, or remedy inconsistencies in the adult learning policy landscape. Such is the case, for instance, for the Italian *Training Funds*. Before their introduction, the main instrument to support training for employed workers in the country was a voucher for individual training activities, the take-up of which was limited and conditional on employers' agreement. In Hungary, making the *second (and first) vocational degree free* irrespective of age, eliminated disparities in access to secondary VET education above or below a certain age, and avoided the automatic transfer of those above the age limit to a different

educational offer (*Evening Schools*). In Austria, the features of *Initiative for Adult Education* have been continuously adapted to reflect changes in other laws that could be of relevance for education and training. For example, the programme content was adapted when the law introduced new requirements to obtain a lower secondary degree.

Leveraging the analysis of labour market features

The policy impetus for adult learning reforms relied, in many cases, on an analysis of labour market trends, the level of skills in the adult population or other empirical considerations. The design of the Italian *Adult Education Centres* stemmed from two key insights: the high proportions of the population lacking a secondary education degree[2], and the low literacy and numeracy levels emerging from the results of PIAAC. Similarly, in the Netherlands, a 2011 report (Raad voor Werk en Inkomen, 2011[4]) found that one of the reasons why older individuals stayed longer in unemployment was their disadvantage in job searching, and in particular their lack of network of relations or willingness to activate it. Based on this report and an analysis of the dynamics of unemployment by age category, the country developed the *Network Training* program, which requires individuals older than 50 years of age to take 20 hours of training to enhance their employability. The training enables individuals to get to know their abilities and interests, learn how to use their network to find jobs and ultimately improve their job search skills. The same applies for the *Training Voucher* program, which provides older and unemployed individuals with a monetary incentive to take job-oriented training, thus raising their probability of finding a job.

In Estonia, the development of the *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* was based on previous analysis conducted by the Ministry of Education and Research, i.e. the Estonian Education Strategy 2012-2020 (Ministry of Education Estonia, 2012[5]). The analysis included research evidence on education trends in Estonia and international comparisons. Also in Estonia, evidence of low learning participation, including from PIAAC analysis, supported the introduction of *State-Commissioned Short Courses*. In Hungary, the introduction of *Open Learning Centres* and *the Basic Skill Courses* leveraged evidence suggesting that the labour market was characterised by: i) a large share of the population not in the condition to succeed in the labour market, due to low education achievement and low skills; and ii) significant labour shortages. Both domestic and international recommendations, including the OECD Economic Survey for Hungary, urged the country to improve skills levels as a top priority. The *Open Learning Centres* leveraged information accumulated by NGOs working in direct contact with individuals in need of retraining.

Skill anticipation and assessment exercises

Among the policies considered in this study, few perform an economic needs analysis ahead of the policy design. An exception is the *Initiative for Adult Education* in Austria, which conducted an analysis of the supply and potential demand for upskilling and reskilling opportunities. In Estonia, each round of *State Commissioned Short Courses* follows the conclusions of a needs analysis performed by the Ministry of Education and Research, based on OSKA, the system for analysis and skills prognosis of future labour market skills. The focus of the analysis changed from competences to sectoral employment demands, after the evaluation of the European Social Fund 2009-2014 programming period concluded that the development process of the provided courses did not sufficiently rely on evidence (Haaristo and Nestor, 2014[6]). In Singapore, SkillsFuture policies were informed by the desire to stimulate economic and productivity growth, but also informed by an assessment of the demand for skills through Industry Transformation Mappings (ITMs). This translated into strong support for lifelong learning in multiple fields, based on the recognition that a more educated workforce makes companies more productive and competitive.[1]

Some of the examined policies and programmes continuously incorporate new skill anticipation and assessment information *to keep the policy up to date*. This is particularly important in the context of changing skill demand in the labour market and the resulting need to update the training offers. Some of

the policies considered internalise the skill anticipation exercise, while others “outsource” it to an external body.

Policies that internalise skill anticipation set out who is responsible for incorporating the information and how that is linked to decision-making. For example, in the Netherlands skills assessment and anticipation has to be included in the *Sector Plans* prepared by the stakeholders. Based on such information, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment decides which sectoral plan to co-fund. In Italy, *Training Funds* both have to incorporate skill information and make training decisions. There is some evidence that this setup was not entirely successful as the Funds have devoted resources to developing skills which were not in demand (e.g. manufacturing and production), while failing to support training in skills in severe shortage (e.g. computer and electronics) (OECD, 2019[7]).

In Estonia, conversely, counsellors can only approve *ALMP training* in fields that are in line with the skill anticipation and assessment exercises. These fields are identified by OSKA. This is an example of policy where information on skills is produced by a different institution than the one which takes decisions, although conditional on a well-defined set of rules.

Piloting

Lastly, in few selected cases the initial design of the policy was tested in a dedicated pilot, or a trial period during which the new policy was implemented in a limited geographical area or for a number of recipients. This offered the opportunity to assess the potential outcomes of the reform, without major disbursements, and eventually amend the policy design, if deemed necessary. In Hungary, a first phase of the *Open Learning Centres* involved 10 centres and 1 000 learners, and was funded by the EEA and Norway grants. In Estonia, different aspects of *Training-Related ALMPs* reforms were first experimented with using funds from the European Structural Funds, then made permanent and financed through EUIF when deemed successful. In Italy, a pilot was carried out in 2014/15, whereby nine *Adult Education Centres* were created and monitored in their functioning for a year. The results of this experimental year are not publicly available, but the pilot was considered successful, according to stakeholders.

Stakeholder involvement

Adult learning policies are typically not the purview of one level of the administration or one particular ministry. On the one hand, this reflects the complex nature of this policy area, which lies at the crossing of educational, labour and industrial policies; on the other hand, it follows from the specificities of the governance system in the country, which can attribute competency over skill policies at the central government only or to a broader set of stakeholders. Therefore, several levels of government participate in the design of the policies of interest for the present study. Other stakeholders regularly involved include social partners, representatives of teachers and school administrators, or experts in the civil society. Table 2.3 provides a summary of the stakeholders involved in the conceptualisation of the policies selected for this study.

Table 2.3. Stakeholder involvement in the design of reforms under review

Country	Reform	Actors involved							
		National public admin	Regional public admin	PES	Social partners	Learning providers	NGOs	Individual employers	Civil society
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	■	▒	■	■				
	Initiative for Adult Education	■	■	■	▒	■			■
	Paid Educational Leave	■	▒	■	■				
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	■		■	■			■	
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	■			■	■	■		■
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	■		■					
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	■			▒				
	Basic Skill Courses	■							
	Open Learning Centres						■	■	■
ITA	Adult Education Centres	■	■		■	■			
	Training Funds	■	▒		▒				
NLD	Network Training	■		■	■				
	Training Vouchers	■		■	■				
	Sector Plans	■	■		■				
SGP	Skillsfuture Credit	■			■	■		■	
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	■			■	■		■	
	SkillsFuture Series	■			■	■		■	

Note: Lighter coloured boxes indicate stakeholders, which only had a marginal involvement in the design phase.
Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review.

The central role of the national government in the design of learning policies emerges clearly from Table 2.3: in all policies considered was the central government the key player, even where regional or local governments were also involved (*Initiative for Adult Education* in Austria; *Adult Education Centres* in Italy; the Dutch *Sector Plans*). Only in the case of the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education* did representatives of the federal states have a stronger role to play, as they outnumbered representatives from the federation 9 to 4 in the reform's Steering Committee. This likely reflects the sharing of competences in a federal state.[1]

The centralised administration is usually represented by the Ministry of Education (*Initiative for Adult Education* in Austria, the *Lifelong-learning Strategy* in Estonia, *Adult Education Centres* in Italy, *SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy* in Singapore), of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (the *Expansion of ALMPs* in Austria, the *Training Funds* in Italy, the *Network Training, Training Vouchers* and *Sector Plans* in the Netherlands), of Innovation and Technology (*Free Second Vocational Degrees* in Hungary) or of Finance and/or Economic Activities (Estonian *State-commissioned Short Courses*), and by the central branches of the PES (several policies in Austria, Estonia, and the Netherlands).

As far as other stakeholders are concerned, Table 2.3 highlights that employers' and workers' associations were frequently engaged in the reform design. They are often directly involved in the provision of training, which enables them to understand reform needs in the country**.** In the case of the Dutch *Sector Plans* and the Italian *Training Funds*, such involvement extended to co-funding of training by employers and/or

unions. At the very least, they are likely to be the first to understand how changes in production affect skills demand, and therefore the new training needs of employed workers.

In a few of the analysed reforms, training providers and representatives from teachers and administrators of education institutions were also consulted in the design of the policy. These reforms most frequently focused on second-chance education opportunities (the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education*, the Italian *Adult Education Centres*) or the design of a *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* (for Estonia). Similar reforms in Hungary, instead, did not consult learning providers in the policy design.

Forms of coordination among stakeholders

In most analysed cases, the initiative to reform adult learning policies is taken at the central level. In all policies considered, however, the central government did not conceive the details of the reforms on its own, but rather sought to coordinate with other stakeholders affected by the policy. Reforms in Hungary represented exceptions in this respect: The reform of *Free Second Vocational Degrees* and the establishment of the *Basic Skill Courses* were carried out by the government with very limited stakeholder involvement, according to the experts interviewed. Further, the design of the *Open Learning Centres* did not involve the national government, but rather an alliance of ten non-profit civil sector organisations. In a similar bottom-up way, social partners initiated the creation of the Dutch *Sector Plans* in the majority of cases.

A coordinated approach ensures that key players in the adult learning space can provide advice and feedback on the reform design, which in turn can further translate into greater buy-in in the policy. In some of the reforms considered, establishing a cooperation among key players was a goal in itself, such as in the case of the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education*, or a key value added, as for the Dutch *Sector Programs*. The downsides of such approach are related to the costs of coordinating parties with different and sometimes competing interests, which can reduce the efficiency of the decision-making process. To a certain extent, embedding cooperation among stakeholders not only in the design but also in the implementation phase of the reform can limit strategic considerations, insofar as stakeholders have to repeatedly interact, and can be “punished” by others for uncooperative behaviours. Some form of cooperation in the implementation phase takes place in several of the analysed policies (e.g. Austrian and Estonian *reforms of ALMPs*, the Singaporean *SkillsFuture* initiatives, see the implementation section of this chapter below).

Another possible strategy to minimise the downsides of cooperation is to differentiate the tasks attributed to different stakeholders in a multi-stage process**.** In most analysed cases, for instance, decision-making power broadly stayed with the central or regional administration, while other stakeholders mostly had an advisory role. Coordination could take the form of a direct exchange between central government and other stakeholder organisations (e.g. the Dutch *Sector Plans*), or the creation of a body congregating and giving a precise role to stakeholders (usually, a Steering or Supervisory Committee). The mission and scope of authority of these bodies varied broadly. They could imply the first-hand design of the policy (e.g. the *SkillsFuture* initiatives in Singapore, or the Dutch *Training Vouchers*), an advisory role (e.g. the Estonian Adult Education Council, or the Technical Inter-institutional Committee for the Italian *Adult Education Centres*), or a supervisory role (e.g. the Supervisory Board for the Estonian EUIF). The tasks of these congregating bodies in some cases further extend to implementation and monitoring (see the implementation section of this chapter below).

Good practice would also consider monitoring stakeholders’ satisfaction in the governance of the policy design, as in the case of the Dutch *Sector Plans*. Lastly, efficiency should not be achieved at the cost of a merely formal co-optation process. A mechanism of stakeholder involvement should be formalised only if there exists a political space to follow-up on the consultation of stakeholders, or to engage in the ensuing negotiations.

Lessons learnt – development

- Many of the reforms included in this review were motivated by the **political will to support and regulate** adult learning overall, no matter what individuals' geographical, occupational or demographic characteristics were. In a few cases, reforms filled a policy vacuum, or remedied inconsistencies in the adult learning policy landscape.
- In the majority of cases, the reform design **relied on an analysis of skill, education or labour market trends** and the status of the education and training systems. Many policies stayed relevant in a context of changing skill needs by establishing mechanisms to regularly incorporate updated skill anticipation and assessment information. There is some evidence that separating skill information generation from the decision-making leads to better outcomes
- **The reform impetus mostly came from the central administration, but other stakeholders were usually involved** in the policy design. Social partners were most frequently involved, in light of their proximity to the demand of training.
- Most reforms under review take a coordinated approach to policy design. Stakeholders were involved in the co-creation of the policy, or were consulted in the form of advisory or supervisory groups. A coordinated approach requires reflection on the **mechanisms applied to ensure the effectiveness** of the decision-making process.

Learning from the financing of reforms

Sufficient funding for the implementation of adult education and training measures is a necessary condition for their successful implementation. Yet, there is surprisingly little knowledge about funding sources and funding levels in different countries. The latest comprehensive cross-country evidence of funding for adult learning dates back to 2013, with some of the data within the study as old as 2008 (FiBS/DIE, 2013[8]). More recent data is available for specific subsections of the adult learning system, such as Active Labour Market Policies (OECD, 2019[2]). The vast majority of research in this area has focused on financial incentives or instruments to pay for adult learning, rather than the funding itself (Andriescu et al., 2019[9]; OECD, 2017[10]; OECD, 2019[11]).

This sub-chapter summarises how the reforms in this review were funded and at what levels of overall, as well as per participant, investments were made in the context of the reforms. It contributes to a better understanding of the type and amount of funding needed to increase adult learning participation.

Sources of funding

The adult education and training policies included in this study are financed through four key sources of revenue: i) taxes; ii) social insurance contributions; iii) earmarked training levies; and iv) the European Social Fund (ESF). Countries typically use two or more funding sources to implement measures. Funding sources used for different measures very much reflect the institutional set-up in each country.

Table 2.4. Funding sources of reforms under review

Country	Reform	Funding source				
		Tax funding	Social insurance funding	Training levy funding	ESF funding	Other
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	■	■		■	
	Initiative for Adult Education	■			■	
	Paid Educational Leave		■			
EST	Expansion of ALMPs		■		■	
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	■	■		■	
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	■			■	
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	■				
	Basic Skill Courses	■			■	
	Open Learning Centres	■			■	■
ITA	Adult Education Centres	■				■
	Training Funds			■		■
NLD	Network Training	■				
	Training Vouchers	■				
	Sector Plans	■		■		
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	■		■		■
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	■		■		■
	SkillsFuture Series	■		■		■

Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review.

Tax-financed adult learning policies make use of the revenue generated by the general taxation regime of a country. As tax payment is mandatory for most, this funding source has the advantage of being available for general use – unlike social security contributions (see below). Governments can allocate tax revenues freely to adult learning policies, depending on the needs of the labour market, even on an ad-hoc basis. Of the reforms included in this study, only the Dutch Network Training and Training Vouchers are exclusively funded through tax revenues, in this case allocated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. The vast majority of reforms are partly funded by tax revenues. In Singapore, for example, all SkillsFuture initiatives are financed by government funds (i.e. funds of the Ministry of Education, the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund, the National Productivity Fund), as well as by funds raised through a Skill Development Levy on employers, and the tripartite SkillsFuture Jubilee Fund, which is financed through donations from employers and unions that are matched by the government. Several reforms are funded through tax revenues at different levels of government. Between 2012 and 2014, the Austrian Initiative for Adult Education was 50% funded by funds of the Federal Ministry of Education and 50% by funds of the Federal States. From 2015 onwards, it has also made use of ESF funding. Along the same lines, the Italian Provincial Centres for Adult Education are co-founded by the Ministry of Education, University of Research, which funds staff costs, while municipalities and providers are responsible for funding school infrastructure.

Social insurance contributions, more precisely contributions to the unemployment insurance, are used to finance education and training in the area of Active Labour Market Policies. Using social security contributions pools individual risk and channels resources towards those most in need of support. On the downside, the use of social insurance contributions for education and training typically comes with eligibility rules, i.e. training is only available to individuals who have contributed to the unemployment insurance fund for a specific time. This limits the flexibility of use for this funding. The expansion of ALMPs in Austria and Estonia included in this study has primarily been financed through an increased use of social insurance contributions. In Austria, biggest source of funding for ALMP in quantitative terms are contributions from

the unemployment insurance, with smaller amounts of tax- and ESF-funds (Bock-Schappelwein et al., 2014[12]). Social insurance contributions are charged at a rate of 3% of gross wage to employees and 3% of payroll to employers. In Estonia, ALMPs are exclusively funded through the employers' share of the unemployment insurance premium, which amounts to 1.4% of gross payroll, as well as ESF funding (Cedefop, 2019[13]).

Training levies are collected from employers as a share of payroll and – in contrast to general social security contributions – are earmarked for training measures. Levy contributions are then pooled across companies and/or sectors and can be accessed by individual companies to finance training. Mandated by law or collective agreements, they are an effective way to encourage firms to set-aside resources for future training (OECD, 2019[2]). Italian companies, for example, pay up to 0.3% of payroll to one of nineteen Training Funds. Companies can then request funding from Funds to finance training plans in line with the strategic priorities of the Funds. Some of the revenue generated through training levies is attributed to other government provision, for example to support welfare measures for redundant workers (*Cassa Integrazione*). The Singaporean Skills Development Levy deducts a similarly high amount of payroll than in Italy (0.25%), with a minimum of SGD 2.0 and a maximum of SGD 11.25 per employee and month. The levy covers around 1/3 of the costs of all *SkillsFuture* Initiatives. These payroll levies are small compared to training levies in the Netherlands earmark up to 2% of payroll for training purposes, depending on the sector. The revenue generated is used to finance 50% of the Sector Plans.

Funding from the European Social Fund is a key funding source for some of the reforms included in this study, most importantly Estonia and Hungary. Both countries benefit from a low ESF co-financing rate of 15%. It is notable that both countries joined the EU in the time-period of observation in this study (1 May 2004) and that investment into adult learning has exponentially increased since then – with the help of ESF funding. While the availability of these resources can act as a catalyst for investment, it is questionable if investments will be sustainable in the longer run, when ESF-related support phase out. Models that take-over the investment into regular tax or social security-based funding are essential for sustainability. Promising practice can be observed in Estonia, which has strategically used project-based ESF funding to pilot adult learning initiatives. Once proven successful, these were funded by national funding sources.

Levels of funding

While information on funding levels is available for the majority of policies included in this review, data is not available in a unified format across countries. Table 2.5 presents data on the estimated yearly funding for the reforms between 2002 and 2017, or the time-period relevant to the specific policy. In cases where there is substantial variation in funding over time, the information is presented in bands. In Austria, for example, *training-related ALMPs* were funded with EUR 160 million per year in 2002, but increased regularly to reach 510 million per year in 2016. To improve comparability of the data, per participant expenditure of the reforms are calculated. The figures need to be interpreted with care, as they are based on back-of-the-envelope calculations designed to give a general idea of the generosity of the funding.

Table 2.5. Estimated yearly total funding and estimated per participant funding of reforms under review

Country	Reform	Annual funding 2002-2017	Annual number of participants	Average annual funding per participant
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	EUR 160 million (2002) – 510 million (2016)	120 500 (2002) – 219 000 (2014)	EUR 1400 – 2600
	Initiative for Adult Education	EUR 17 million (2012-2014) – 25 million (2015-2017)	7 000 (2012-2014) – 10 000 (2015-2017)	EUR 2400-2600
	Paid Educational Leave	EUR 6 million (2002) – 185 million (2016)	1 500 (2002) – 18 000 (2016)	EUR 4 000 – 12 000 (full-time) EUR 3 500 – 5 500 (part-time)
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	EUR 3 million (2003) – 16 million (2017)	7 000 (2008) – 55 000 (2012)	EUR 320 - 760
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	n/a	n/a	n/a
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	EUR 1 million (2007-2009) – 2 million (2009-2014)	8 000 (2007-2014)	EUR 160 (2007-2009) – 240 (2009-2014)
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	EUR 20-25 million	20 000	EUR 1130
	Basic Skill Courses	EUR 36 million	46 000	EUR 780
	Open Learning Centres	EUR 1.5 million	2 000	EUR 720
ITA	Adult Education Centres	n/a	183 000 (2015) – 229 000 (2016)	n/a
	Training Funds	EUR 469 million (2016)	1 560 000	EUR 301 (2016)
NLD	Network Training	EUR 12.3 million	41 000	EUR 300
	Training Vouchers	EUR 5.5 million	6 000	EUR 880
	Sector Plans	EUR 52 million	39 000	EUR 1 256
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	n/a	143 000	SGD 125 (EUR 83)
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	n/a	42 500	n/a
	SkillsFuture Series	n/a	7 500	n/a

Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review.

The level of financial investment in the policies under review varies substantially. Based on the data available, the largest amounts of funding per year are dedicated to the Italian *Training Funds* (EUR 470 million) and *Training-Related ALMP* in Austria (EUR 510 million in 2016). These two reforms are also attracting the largest number of participants. By contrast, the smallest overall funding is received by the S*tate-Commissioned Short Courses* in Estonia (EUR 1-2 million per year, depending on funding period) and the *Open Learning Centres* in Hungary (EUR 1.5 million per year). Both involve less than 10 000 individuals in training measures per year.

Looking at per-participant investments paints a slightly different picture. The Austrian *Paid Educational Leave* had the highest cost per participant at around EUR 12 000 in 2016. These high costs can be explained by the fact that the measure covers (part of) individual wages while the worker is in full-time training. Programmes that only cover direct costs of education and training are much less expensive. They range from around EUR 200 per participant for *State-Commissioned Short Courses* in Estonia to EUR 2 500 per participant in *Training-related ALMPs* in Austria. Differences in per participant funding likely reflect differences in the duration and intensity of adult learning provision, as well as differences in purchasing power between countries. Per-participant expenditure can also vary over time, particularly when linked to cyclical factors such as the incidence of unemployment and the duration of unemployment spells. For example, per participant expenditure on training-related ALMPs in Estonia was the highest during the height of the crisis, reaching a height of EUR 800, compared to an average of EUR 400 previously.

Lessons learnt – funding

- **The vast majority of reforms are at least partially tax-funded,** while only some reforms are funded through social security contributions or levies. This may be because general taxation provides greatest possible flexibility for government stakeholders and can benefit all, not only those paying into social security or levy schemes.
- **The ESF is a significant funding source for many reforms,** most notably those implemented in Estonia and Hungary. Both countries joined the European Union during the time covered by this study and benefited from a favourable co-financing rate of 15%. The increase in learning participation in both countries can be partially attributed to the availability of this additional funding. This reliance on ESF-funding can have important implications for the sustainability of the reforms beyond the ESF funding cycle. Estonia has established good practice by trialling new measures using ESF-funding and transferring them to tax or social security based funding, when proven successful.
- **Successful adult learning reforms do not have to come with a high price tag**. Per-participant investment ranges from EUR 200 to 2 500 for policies that only cover the direct cost of delivering some kind of education and training course for adults. The sole measure compensating individuals for foregone wages comes with a higher price tag: per participant costs of the Austrian paid education leave amount up to EUR 12 000.

Learning from the implementation of reforms

Even when well designed, many adult learning policies struggle to translate into real change on the ground. Reasons for this vary, including a lack of capacity of the state bureaucracy, weak governance mechanisms, limited buy-in from key stakeholders and inadequate delivery structures. To avoid these issues, there is increasing interest by governments on how to strengthen and support implementation in the area of adult learning.

This subchapter reviews how the successful reforms included in this study have addressed implementation issues, namely the governance and delivery of the policies, and lessons to be learnt from the issues encountered.

Governance

Effective decision-making structures and processes are the basis for successful implementation of adult learning policies. One can distinguish between three basic types of governance: i) top-down governance led by the responsible levels of government; ii) network governance, which also involves non-government actors such as social partners or civil society organisations; and iii) governance through market mechanisms.

Top-down approaches can be an efficient way to govern adult learning policies, but may lack buy-in from relevant non-state actors. There are few policies included in this review that are exclusively governed in this way. Examples include the *Adult Education Centres (CPIAs)* in Italy, which fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). Local administrative levels (Italian regions) have limited input into the operation of the Centres and only get involved in rare cases when they want Centres to deliver courses that respond to local needs. The 2012 law creating CPIAs mandated the creation of 'Lifelong learning territorial networks' that bring together other local stakeholders involved in lifelong learning, yet this has not yet been implemented. Similarly, the Hungarian introduction of a *Free Second Vocational Degree* has been implemented under the exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology.

Box 2.1. Governance case study – SkillsFuture in Singapore

In Singapore, the *Future Economy Council* (formerly SkillsFuture Council) has the mission to make Singapore's economy ready for the future and drive growth. The Council oversees the implementation of all SkillsFuture measures, including *SkillsFuture Credit*, *SkillsFuture Mid-career Enhanced Subsidy* and *SkillsFuture Series*. It is currently chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister who is also the Minister of Finance, and brings together high-level stakeholders from across the skill development system. The council encompasses different government ministers (Trade and Industry, Communication and Information, Social and Family Development, Education, Manpower, National Development), representatives of the National Trades Union Congress, the Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the Singaporean Business Federation and the National Employers Federation. Unusually by international comparison, it also includes education providers (Universities, Polytechnics, Technology Institutes) and a large number of individual employers (e.g. McKinsey & Company, Straits Construction) in the governance of its skill development system.

Source: www.skillsfuture.sg, https://www.futureeconomy.sg/about/the-future-economy-council/, Ministry of Finance Singapore (n.d.[14]), *Scope of Future Economy Council. Answer to parliamentary question*, https://www.mof.gov.sg/Newsroom/Parliamentary-Replies/Scope-of-Future-Economy-Council.

Network approaches to governance ensure that the views of stakeholders affected by a policy are represented and to get their buy-in for implementation. On the downside, they increase coordination costs and may decrease efficiency of decision-making. In the case of adult learning policies, key stakeholders include trade unions, employer organisations, individual employers, learning providers, civil society organisations and learners themselves (or their representatives). Most policies included in this study are governed through some kind of networked approach, most often in the form of supervisory boards composed of key actors. In Estonia, for example, representatives of ministries, social partners, universities and individual employers make up the Steering Group of the *Lifelong-Learning Strategy*.

Social partners play a key role in networked approaches, while other stakeholders are less frequently involved in governance in practice (Table 2.3). Learning providers in particular, who are responsible for the implementation of policies, are frequently not included in decision-making processes. Notable exceptions are the Estonian *Lifelong-Learning Strategy*, the Steering Group of which includes a university representative, and the *SkillsFuture* Singapore measures, which include representatives of different educational institutions (see Box 2.1). Similarly, governance structures involving multiple levels of government are rare amongst the policies under review, which is relevant as regional administrations are often key players in the adult learning policy area. Only the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education* is governed with the strong involvement of Austrian federal states. Its steering group includes nine representatives of the Austrian federal states and only four representatives of the federal government. There is limited involvement of NGOs and no involvement of civil society organisations in the governance of policies included in this review.

National level research highlights that the lack of involvement of all relevant stakeholders hinders the effective implementation of policies. In Estonia, for example, the evaluation of *State-Commissioned Short Courses* 2009-2014 finds the lack of involvement of some relevant bodies a challenge and recommends that: i) government partners should be involved in funding decisions to achieve greater buy-in; and ii) training providers should be involved in priority setting to harness their knowledge on regional labour market needs and on the target group (Haaristo and Nestor, 2014[6]).

Market mechanisms make use of competition between learning providers to drive supply and demand, within the bounds of government regulation. In theory, this governance approach has the advantage of producing efficient solutions. However, education and training markets may have limited effects in practice

(Waslander, Pater and van der Weide, 2010[15]). Few policies included in this review rely on market-mechanisms to governance. These include voucher-based adult learning provision, namely the *Dutch Training Vouchers,* Training Vouchers implemented in the context of *Estonian ALMPs* and the Singaporean *SkillsFuture Credit.*

Table 2.6. Governance of reforms under review

Country	Reform	Type of governance	Actors involved						
			National ministries	Regional govern.	PES	Social partners	Learning providers	NGOs	Individual employers
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	Network	■		■	■			
	Initiative for Adult Education	Network	■	■		▒			
	Paid Educational Leave	Network	■		■	■			
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	Network / Market	■		■	■			
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	Network	■			■	■		■
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	Network	■		■				
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	Top-down	■						
	Basic Skill Courses	Top-down	■		■				
	Open Learning Centres	Network		■				■	
ITA	Adult Education Centres	Top-down	■						
	Training Funds	Network	■			■			■
NLD	Network Training	Network	■		■	■			
	Training Vouchers	Market	■		■	■			
	Sector Plans	Network	■	■		■			■
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	Market	■			■	■		■
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	Network	■			■	■		■
	SkillsFuture Series	Network	■			■	■		■

Note: In Hungary, national ministries have only been a governance partner of the learning centres since the latest ESF funding cycle, lighter coloured box indicates limited role.
Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review.

Delivery structures

Adult learning policies need robust delivery structures to reach potential learners. Some of the policies included in this review are directly 'delivered' to learners, e.g. the Dutch *Network Training*, and hence have more straightforward delivery structures. Other implementation mechanisms are more complex. The *Paid Educational Leave Policy* in Austria, for example, is solely a means of funding participation in learning rather than delivering provision itself. While the measure itself is 'delivered' by the Austrian PES, the training that individuals take-part in using the *Paid Educational Leave* is 'delivered' by public and private learning providers.

Type of providers

Government or quasi-governmental learning providers are involved in the delivery of many of the policies under review. Often these are learning providers who are already delivering education and training programmes, but who receive additional funding to implement the reforms. They are perceived as reliable providers, with limited incentives to 'game the system', according to some of the stakeholders interviewed. In Hungary, for example, the reform that made the pursuit of a *second vocational degree* free is

implemented through publicly-funded 44 VET centres (Szakképzési Centrum). Similarly, in Estonia, *State-Commissioned Short Courses* are implemented by public vocational and higher professional education institutions. In Italy, the *Adult Education Centres* that started delivering adult education courses in 2014/2015 are public institutions under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

Private learning providers are involved in the delivery of policies in all countries, with the exception of Hungary. This includes cases where delivery chains are more complex, for example where the PES implement the policy by providing funding, which can then be used towards courses at private learning providers. Examples include the *Paid Educational Leave* in Austria and the Dutch *Training Vouchers*. In most cases where private learning providers are involved, these undergo a registration, certification, accreditation or licensing process. Providers of Estonian *Training-Related ALMPs,* for example, must be registered in the Estonian Education information system EHIS, deliver courses in line with specified curricula and engage in monthly reporting to the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund. A notable exception is training delivered in the context of the Italian *Training Funds*. Interviewed stakeholders raised concern about the lack of quality assurance of training measures implemented by providers of non-formal learning.

Table 2.7. Providers of reforms under review

Country	Reform	Implementing actors					Details
		State actors	Social partners	NGOs	Companies	Private providers	
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs		■	■		■	Accredited learning providers
	Initiative for Adult Education			■		■	Accredited learning providers
	Paid Educational Leave	■	■	■		■	PES; final delivery through public and private learning providers
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	▒				■	Licensed learning providers
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	■	■	■	■	■	Final delivery through public and private learning providers
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	■					Vocational + higher professional education institutions
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	■					Publicly-funded VET centres
	Basic Skill Courses	■				■	Türr István Training and Research Centres (public)
	Open Learning Centres			■		■	Network of NGOs
ITA	Adult Education Centres	■				■	Publicly-run CPIA centres
	Training Funds				■	▒	
NLD	Network Training	■					Delivery through PES
	Training Vouchers	■				■	PES; final delivery through private training providers
	Sector Plans		■		■	■	Final delivery through private training providers
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	■				■	Accredited public and private learning providers
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	■				■	
	SkillsFuture Series	■				■	

Note: lighter coloured box indicates a limited role
Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review

Social partners have limited involvement in the delivery of the reforms under review, despite their significant involvement in governance issues. An exception is Austria, where social-partner-run training institutions are one of many providers delivering training-related *ALMPs.* The Estonian *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* is also implemented with the involvement of social partners, yet, being a strategy, it is not delivered to learners directly. **NGOs** are sometimes entrusted with the delivery of adult learning, especially when the policy aims to engage adults with low skills or other specific target groups. The Hungarian *Open Learning Centres* are run by an alliance of ten non-profit civil sector organisations (Szövetség az Életen Át Tartó Tanulásért), which deliver low-threshold learning opportunities in around 50 locations across the country. Similarly, accredited NGOs deliver parts of the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education*, which enables adults with low skills to obtain basic competences.

In the policies under review, **individual companies** are rarely involved in the direct delivery of adult learning. An exception is the training delivered through the Italian *Training Funds*, 60% of which is implemented directly by contributing employers.

Procurement and contracting

Providers are tasked with the delivery of adult education and training through a process of public procurement and contracting. This process can take part in three key ways: governments either: i) directly approach providers to negotiate the scope of provision; ii) draw on calls for proposals to gauge provider interests and select providers to be funded; or iii) give individuals the opportunity to directly purchase education and training with the help of training vouchers and similar funding mechanisms.

Direct negotiations about the scope of the provision take place in settings where there is a single obvious provider or provider network that is already delivering similar education and training services. Providers in these settings typically receive a negotiated lump-sum payment for the provision of education and training services and have to observe compliance and reporting requirements. This process has the advantage of having a high degree of administrative efficiency, due to the absence of complicated procurement rules (see below). However, it leaves the public administration with limited control over provider selection and can be fiscally inefficient. Only few of the reforms under review rely on this kind of arrangement. Publicly funded VET centres in Hungary, for example, obtain increased funding as part of their regular grant funding to deliver *Free Second Vocational Degrees*. The same is true for *Adult Education Centres* in Italy that deliver basic adult education courses.

Calls for proposals are the most common approach to procuring education and training services in the reforms under review. The process involves providers writing proposals according to specified criteria to apply for the delivery of education and training services. The degree of competitiveness of calls for proposals can vary across countries. In many cases, only accredited or certified providers are invited to apply. From a public administration perspective, calls for proposals increase competition between providers, which can lead to higher quality provision and more efficient allocation of resources. On the downside, calls for proposals are often associated with high administrative costs, both for the public administration and providers. They also lead to planning uncertainty, when providers receive short-term funding and need to reapply at regular intervals to sustain operations. In Estonia, for example, the Ministry of Education launched bi-yearly calls for proposals for its state-commissioned courses between 2009 and 2014. This has since then been reduced to yearly calls, due to the high administrative burden. The PES and relevant ministries draft calls for proposals according to priorities informed by SAA information and data on the performance of courses in the previous funding period. Applications by learning providers are reviewed by a panel of experts. While in most cases, calls are launched to select learning providers, *Training Funds* in Italy also use public calls to engage enterprises. Enterprises can submit a training plan in line with specified criteria to access funding from collective accounts. After an evaluation by the Fund, they can be awarded funding that covers 60-65% of the costs outlined in the training plan. The remainder is co-financed by companies.

Box 2.2. Procurement case study – Initiative for Adult Education Austria

The Austrian Initiative for Adult Education (*Initiative Erwachsenenbildung*) procures basic skills provision and second-chance education from a large variety of public, private and third-sector learning providers. Providers are selected following regular calls for proposals by the Federal Ministry of Education or direct application to the regional education authorities.

Only accredited providers can apply for funding. Accreditation can be obtained by providing evidence that minimum requirements in three key dimensions are met: i) **Institutional framework conditions**, e.g. organisational structure, infrastructure, application processes; ii) **Quality of the course offer**, including pedagogic concept, counselling offer and existence of tailored outreach activities; iii) **Qualifications of teachers, trainers and counselling staff**, including a concept for their continuing professional development.

The most recent evaluation of the initiative attests the high quality of the course offer. However, it also highlights issues resulting from the high standards for the adult learning workforce: recruitment and retention of qualified staff proves challenging given the limited availability of individuals meeting the high standards

Source: Steuerungsgruppe Initiative Erwachsenenbildung (2019[16]), Programmplanungsdokument Initiative Erwachsenenbildung. Länder-Bund-Initiative zur Förderung, www.initiative-erwachsenenbildung.at; Länder-Bund-ExpertInnengruppe and „Initiative Erwachsenenbildung“ (2011[17]), Programmplanungsdokument "Initiative Erwachsenenbildung"; Steiner et al. (2017[18]), Evaluation der Initiative Erwachsenenbildung.

Market-based mechanisms tie funding for learning providers to the decisions of individual learners. They are often implemented using individual training vouchers or credits to purchase training from education and training providers. Funding for learning providers follows the individual. This procurement method has the advantage of increasing individual choice, competition between providers and hence quality and fiscal efficiency in theory. In practice, it needs strong support structures that help individuals make informed choices about their training to function well. From a provider perspective, it should be implemented in combination with a level of core funding to ensure planning certainty. Three of the reforms under review make use of these market-based mechanisms. This includes the Dutch *Training Vouchers*, which are available to individuals above the age of 50+ (previously 55+) and can be used to part-fund job-oriented education and training of at most one-year duration. The vouchers initially had a value of EUR 750, which was later increased to EUR 1 000. Similarly, *SkillsFuture Credit* in Singapore gives every Singaporean aged 25 and above a training credit of SGD 500. This credit can be used to part-fund participation in education and training courses delivered by government agencies. In practice, individuals pay net fees of training participation (after deduction of the credit), while credit payments are directly disbursed to training providers. The credit is currently a one-time subsidy, but the credit may be topped up at regular intervals. Finally, Estonia introduced training vouchers (*Training card*) for the unemployed in 2009 and later expanded the scheme to the employed population in 2017. Individuals can receive training vouchers to pay for training delivered by certified training institutions. Voucher-funded training has a maximum duration (2 years for the unemployed, 3 years for the employed) and funding is capped at EUR 2 500 per person.

Lessons learnt – implementation

- **The vast majority ofreforms under review are governed by networks** of different adult learning stakeholders. These include social partners and public employment services in many cases. Individual employers, learning providers and regional ministries are less frequently involved in the reforms under review.
- **A wide range of public and private providers deliver adult learning reforms on the round.** They typically have to meet specific quality standards or criteria to be eligible for funding.
- **Procurement of providers often takes place through calls for proposals**, although there are some examples of more market-based mechanisms where individuals make choices about their own training through training vouchers.

Learning from the further adaptation of reforms

A key pattern emerging from the analysed policies is that almost all of them went though some changes over time compared to the initial design. These alterations ranged from changing the target group, through adapting features of the programme, to altering the delivery process. Given that such adjustments were made to almost all policies under review, their continuous adaptation may have contributed to their success in increasing adult learning participation.

Policy changes

Adapting policies based on lessons learnt from implementation or due to changing circumstances can be an important success factor. Adjustments can help overcome low take-up by identifying bottlenecks or improving effectiveness. Changes ranged from shifting the target group through changing features of the programme (eligibility criteria, benefit/subsidy generosity, provision), to changing the implementation processes. For example, the target group of the Hungarian *Basic Skill Courses* were adapted after the first year of operation. Due to the low voluntary take-up of adults with low qualifications, it was linked to the public work programme, where such adults are overrepresented. Similarly, in the Netherlands, the value of *Training Vouchers* was increased one year after the launch of the programme to increase their attractiveness as the initial amount seemed insufficient.

Some reforms were themselves intended to correct shortcomings of previous policies. In Estonia, for example, the development of the *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* was based on a comprehensive stakeholder consultation because a previous attempt to design a strategy lacked broad political support. The introduction of the Italian *Adult Education Centres* was the result of extensive ex-ante consultation with stakeholders to amend the shortcomings of the previous policy setting and improve alignment with the "Upskilling Pathways" recommendation (European Council, 2016[19]). Similarly, one of the reasons behind modifying the VET legislation in Hungary and making a *Second Vocational Degree Free of Charge* was to correct some inconsistencies of the former regulation.

Policy learning

Policy learning took place based on information generated through three different approaches; monitoring progress, evaluating results and sharing experience (Table 2.8). **Monitoring** is defined as the regular collection of data with the purpose of understanding if policy delivery is going according to the plan. **Evaluations** go further than monitoring activities in that they draw conclusions about the relevance, effectiveness and sometimes efficiency of a particular policy. They ensure that the outcomes of the

programmes and policies are in line with its theoretical aims and objectives. Data collected during the monitoring phase can be the basis of evaluations. Another way of accumulating learning is by bringing together providers of adult learning to **exchange practices.** This is possible only in set-ups with decentralised delivery.

Table 2.8. Different ways of policy learning in reforms under review

Country	Reform	Monitoring progress	Evaluating results	Sharing experiences
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	■	■	
	Initiative for Adult Education	■	■	■
	Paid Educational Leave	■	■	
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	■	■	
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	■	■	
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	■	■	
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	■		
	Basic Skill Courses	■		
	Open Learning Centres	■		■
ITA	Adult Education Centres	■	■	■
	Training Funds	■	*	
NLD	Network Training	■	■	
	Training Vouchers	■		
	Sector Plans	■	■	■
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	■		
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	■		
	SkillsFuture Series	■		

Note * Evaluation if target group was reached is planned, but not implemented yet.
Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review.

Monitoring progress

Almost all of the examined initiatives are monitored, however the frequency and extent of reporting varies substantially. Monitoring plays an essential role in verifying if implementation is going according to plan and can provide the basis for adjusting policy. In the Netherlands, for example, take-up of the *Network Training* was lower than expected in the first year after initiation, so the eligibility criteria was reduced from 55+ to 50+ one year after the introduction of the policy.

Looking across countries, monitoring activities are weaker in the Hungarian and Italian policies, while the Estonia practices seem the most developed. Regarding the *Basic Skill Courses* in Hungary, monitoring was limited to reporting the number of participants once a year. In Italy, monitoring reports of the *Adult Education Centres* were produced twice over the examined period, due to ad-hoc requests by the Ministry of Labour (MIUR). In Estonia, on the other hand, the monitoring activities are more regular for the *Lifelong-Learning Strategy*; a steering committee was formed to continuously follow the implementation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014[20]).

The monitoring activity is typically carried out by the main implementing agency of the reform such as the head office of the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education* or the PES (EUIF) in Estonia. In Italy, the *Training Funds* are required to monitor part of their own activities (financed through collective accounts) in a more decentralised way. There are two exceptions, where an independent body carries out the monitoring activity. In the Netherlands a research institute (SEO Economisch Onderzoek) monitors the progress of the *Sector Plans* in the form of six 'Quick Scans', and the outcomes are evaluated as well, in a final

evaluation. In Italy, the *Adult Education Centres* are monitored on an ad-hoc basis by the National Agency for the Development of Schools Autonomy.

Due to EU guidelines, programmes using ESF funds were typically monitored more closely. Domestic bodies responsible for distributing the ESF funds were also often involved. In Hungary, for example, the Finance Ministry monitors training delivery and the finances of the *Open Learning Centres* in addition to activities of the head office. Related to the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education* extra questions were added regarding childcare and benefits to the data collection forms to comply with data collection requirements. However, ESF monitoring requirements were met to different extents across countries. For example, a data is scarce related to Hungarian ESF funded projects, data quality is often unreliable and monitoring is very limited according to the official report on ESF funded projects (Századvég and E&Y, 2016[21]).

In some cases, the data collection is not done by the same organisation that carried out the monitoring activities. This is the case, when multiple providers are involved in delivery. In Italy, monitoring information regarding the *Adult Education Centres* is collected through territorial institutions. In Hungary, coordinators of the *Open Learning Centres* are responsible for providing data, while the overall monitoring activities are carried out by regional hubs and the head office. Similarly Singaporean Continuous Education and Training (CET) Centres offering courses in the *SkillsFuture Series* are required to record their trainees' training and placement activities, while SkillsFuture Singapore conducts the overall monitoring.

Take-up was always monitored and, in many cases, additional data was collected regarding demographic characteristics or labour market status of the participants. For example, the *Initiative for Adult Education* in Austria requires participants to fill out a form and provide socio-economic information (regarding their age, citizenship, native language, highest educational attainment level) and current situation (employment status and benefits received). Fewer monitoring activities focus on the delivery or the process. In Italy, monitoring of *Training Funds* focuses on whether the commissioned courses have actually taken place. In the Netherlands, the SEO periodically asked about the satisfaction of the different stakeholders involved with the *Sector Plans*, i.e. employers, regional government, trade unions.

Evaluating results

Incorporating learning from evaluations can ensure that policies remain or become increasingly successful over time. For example, in the case of the *Paid Education Leave* in Austria, a part-time option was introduced in 2013 as evaluation evidence suggested that long, full-time absences of employees are more likely to have negative effects on labour market outcomes (more details in Chapter 4).

More than half of the selected policies were evaluated. Some countries seem to have stronger evaluation cultures than others: In Austria and Estonia, all of the selected successful reforms were thoroughly evaluated. In the Netherlands and Italy, some of the policies were evaluated, although a systematic approach was missing. Meanwhile there are no (publicly available) evaluations of the *SkillsFuture* initiatives in Singapore, or the Hungarian initiatives apart from a non-representative academic study focusing on subjective outcomes. As some policies were implemented relatively recently, this could change over time.

A variety of actors commission evaluations, including national or regional governments, social partners or the implementing organisations themselves. For example, the Evaluation of the Estonian *LLL strategy* was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research. Social partners were active in this regard especially in Austria. The Austrian Social partners and the Trade Unions Federation in Tirol commissioned two evaluations related to the *Paid Education Leave*. Evaluations of individual Sector Plans in the Netherlands and certain *Training Funds* in Italy were initiated in a more bottom-up way by the stakeholders involved. The body that commissions the evaluation is not always the one paying for it. For example, although not typical practice in Austria, one assessment of the *Paid Education Leave* in Austria was funded by the Austrian National Bank and employers amongst others.

The organisation that conducts the evaluation is often different from the implementing or commissioning entities. In Estonia, independent research consultancies carry out a large share of the evaluation work. Previously, evaluations have also been conducted in-house, e.g. by EUIF research staff. In Austria, evaluations are often implemented by non-profit independent research institutes, while in the Netherlands by universities.

Since conducting evaluations is a demanding task, they are often carried out only for a specific aspect of the reform, for example certain regions, time-periods or providers. In the Netherlands and Italy, only some of the *Sector Plans* and *Training Funds* have been evaluated. A 2006 evaluation of the *Paid Education Leave* in Austria only examined the measure in the Federal State of Tirol. Evaluations are typically ad-hoc, only in Estonia were selected ALMP measures analysed on a yearly basis.

Evaluations can be categorised into outcome, impact and process evaluations. Outcome evaluations typically look at changes in the outcomes or participants, compared to their position prior to participation in the measure. Impact evaluations construct a counterfactual to compare outcomes to what would have happened in the absence of the measure. Meanwhile process evaluations assess how far the policy was implemented in line with the initial plan and why there were deviations. Cost-benefit analysis is a useful complement to evaluations as it allows for efficiency considerations. It compares the outcomes of a programme to its costs by expressing both in monetary terms and discounting them to a present value. (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9. Types of evaluations conducted of reforms under review

Country	Reform	Type of evaluation			
		Outcome	Impact	Process	Cost-benefit
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	■	■	■	■
	Initiative for Adult Education	■	■	■	
	Paid Educational Leave	■	■	■	
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	■	■	■	■
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	■		■	
	State-Commissioned Short Courses			■	
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree				
	Basic Skill Courses				
	Open Learning Centres				
ITA	Adult Education Centres			■	
	Training Funds	▒			
NLD	Network Training		■	■	
	Training Vouchers				
	Sector Plans	■		■	
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit				
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy				
	SkillsFuture Series				

Note: Lighter coloured box if evaluation if target group was reached is planned, but not implemented yet.
Source: OECD elaboration based on expert interviews and literature review.

Outcome evaluations typically examine change in employment status or earnings after taking part in training or self-reported satisfaction data. For example to evaluate one of the Austrian *training-related ALMPs*, former participants were asked during telephone interviews about their employment status and job quality a certain time after finishing the programme (e.g. 3 months or one year).

A wide range of methods are used to evaluate the **impact** of adult learning programmes. According to international good practice, the most rigorous evaluation method would be to conduct a randomised experiment. The impact evaluation of the *Network Training* in the Netherlands was based on a randomised control trial that assessed the probability of exiting from unemployment as well as job quality in the new job (Groot and Klaauw, 2016[22]). However, this type of research is often not possible due to data limitations and because it can be costly to build in a rigorous research set-up from the outset. Instead, quasi-experimental methods were used to evaluate the *expansion of training-related ALMP measures* in both Estonia and Austria. These included propensity score matching (Lauringson et al., 2011[23]; Lutz, 2005[24]), instrumental variable estimation (Winter-Ebmer, 2001[25]) and difference-in-difference analysis (Hausegger, 2005[26]).

Process evaluations are carried out to improve or increase efficiency of the delivery. These are based mostly on qualitative research methods - in contrast to the two previous types - due to the questions they intend to answer. In Estonia, the evaluation of the *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* currently examines whether appropriate measures have been introduced to achieve the strategy's objectives (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014[20]). Certain evaluations uncover issues with the project design. For example evaluations related to the *Paid Education Leave* in Austria analysed reasons for low take-up from both the employee and the employer perspective (see Box 2.3) (Bock-Schappelwein, Huemer and Pöschl, 2006[27]; Kernbeiß, Lehner and Wagner-Pinter, 2006[28]).

Box 2.3. Learning from evaluations case study – Paid Educational Leave in Austria

Since its introduction in 1998, the Paid Educational Leave (*Bildungskarenz*) has gone through several changes based on evidence from evaluations. Due to identifying and addressing bottlenecks, the measure has developed from attracting less than 2 000 participants to reaching over 15 000 people every year.

Evaluations uncovered that the benefit amount was insufficient and the minimum duration of the training was too long. Employees found that the low financial benefits did not appropriately compensate for the loss of income and they worried about the impact of a taking time out on their career opportunities. In January 2008, the financial support was increased from a flat-rate tariff to the level of the unemployment benefit.

Introduction of the part-time leave was also a response to evidence that long, full-time absences of employees are more likely to have negative effects on their labour market outcomes. A 2011 evaluation of the measure across Austria drew attention to the need for introducing a measure supporting individuals taking part in part-time learning. Based on this, in July 2013 the part-time Bildungsteilzeit was introduced.

Source: Bock-Schappelwein, Huemer and Pöschl (2006[27]), WIFO-Weißbuch: Mehr Beschäftigung durch Wachstum auf Basis von Innovation und Qualifikation. Teilstudie 9: Aus- und Weiterbildung als Voraussetzung für Innovation; Kernbeiß, Lehner and Wagner-Pinter (2006[28]), Bildungskarenz in Tirol. Inanspruchnahme, Zielgruppe und die Auswirkungen auf die Berufslaufbahn, http://www.ak-tirol.com/pictures/d40/Endbericht20060330.pdf; Lassnigg et al. (2011[29]), Evaluierung der Bildungskarenz.

Cost-benefit analysis was only conducted for certain ALMP measures. In Estonia, this type of analysis was used to assess whether money spent on labour market training had positive returns for the society. The study found that every EUR 1 invested in training lead to EUR 4 benefit for society after two years (Lauringson et al., 2011[23]). In Austria, the method was used to assess if longer or shorter programmes were more effective. Holl et al. (2013[30]) estimated that in the eleven years following the training the net benefit of long training measures (lasting from six months to one year) was seven times higher than that of shorter training courses. Although no cost-benefit analysis was performed related to the Austrian *Paid Educational Leave*, interviewed experts suggest that this would have not yielded a positive outcome, as cost per participant was high and evidence of positive wage and employment effects of the policy scarce.

Box 2.4. Cost-benefit analyses in the broader context

Cost-benefit analysis can be an important instrument to evaluate training policies, decide on the best allocation of public resources, or facilitate the choice between different alternative policy designs. However, they require extensive sensitivity checks due to the assumptions made during the estimation and calculation of monetary values.

In many cost-benefit analyses, the magnitude and sometimes the sign of the net present value of benefits relies on the assumptions researchers are asked to make. Scant information is typically available about the **costs** of a given program, although less so for its direct component (i.e. the cost of running it) than its indirect one. The indirect ones include the costs associated with the use of distortionary taxes, and the cost of collecting the extra dollar in tax revenues as it is generated by an individual switching from unemployment to employment. The opportunity cost of wages foregone by the participant because of training could be accounted for, too.

The estimation of the **benefits** of training is also non-trivial, even conditional on finding a statistically significant impact of the program on participants' wages and probability of employment. The timing of impact (short- vs long-term) is an important factor, for instance (Andersson et al., 2018[31]). The out-of-sample estimation of long-term gains of the policy further requires assumptions on the individual's potential career path and wage evolution. Moreover, the participants' employment choices and future earning can be affected by other labour-market or societal outcomes of training programs, that were not measured or were impossible to measure: health, crime, child care, or even the value of leisure Lastly, cost-benefit analyses hardly account for the general equilibrium effects of the training program, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

Source: Barnow and Smith (2015[32]), Employment and Training Programs, https://doi.org/10.3386/w21659; Greenberg and Robins (2008[33]), Incorporating nonmarket time into benefit-cost analyses of social programs: An application to the self-sufficiency project, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2007.09.011.

Experience sharing

Bringing together education providers to share their experiences related to implementation can improve delivery. When there are multiple providers local differences can contribute to identifying best practices that can be mainstreamed. Problems can also be overcome more effectively when building on previous experiences.

Experience sharing is not observed frequently in the policies under review. There is some degree of experience sharing regarding the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education* and the Italian *Adult Education centres*. For example, the head office of the *Initiative for Adult Education* organises all-day events for training providers at three different locations across the country (Wien, Graz, Salzburg). Representatives answer in depth questions regarding training delivery, data collection and even accounting. In Italy,

teachers and administrators of the *Adult Education Centres* can participate in similar sessions. During these events informal peer-learning also takes place as the providers meet and interact with each other.

Other setups allow for more active and decentralised peer learning. In the Dutch *Sector Plans*, the parties involved in implementation participate in ad-hoc meetings, with the explicit aim of learning through sharing experiences. In Hungary, meetings are organised for the coordinators of the learning centres multiple times a year to raise issues and network (see Box 2.4). The 2012 law creating the *Adult Education Centres* in Italy mandated the creation of "lifelong learning territorial networks" to create linkages among all stakeholders involved in lifelong learning, including local administrations, social partners, universities and the non-profit sector, but this is not yet operational.

Box 2.5. Learning from experience sharing case study – Open Learning Centres in Hungary

As the programme is delivered at 52 different locations across the country, information flow and coordination is a challenge. To avoid it becoming an issue, the head office (founding NGO) of the programme decided to adapt the organisational structure and to establish a management information system at the time of up-scaling the programme.

A number of regional hubs were introduced, each of which are in daily contact with 6-8 individual centres. These hubs support the centres and feed information back to the head office. Additionally, there are periodical meetings with the presence of education experts for both local and regional coordinators. During these meetings issues and experiences are shared and good practices are recorded. For example coordinators of the centres did not feel that they are competent to advise and guide individuals towards the appropriate learning opportunities. To overcome this problem, the head office decided to organise training courses on interviewing techniques for all of the coordinators.

Establishing a management information system was part of the ESF funding proposal. The aim was to increase transparency and accumulate information and experiences. For example if a coordinator wants to organise a training in a certain topic, s/he can research if someone else had organised a similar event, who held it and how it went. The coordinators of the learning centres are responsible for feeding timely data in the system related their own learning activities.

A few of the policies or programmes use digital tools to improve information flow between different providers. An online Q&A is available regarding the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education*, prepared by the head office. In Hungary, the *Open Learning Centres* have an online information system that intends to collect, store and make accessible knowledge accumulated by the training centres.

Information generated through these mechanisms does not only benefit providers, but also the policy makers or the head office. According to stakeholders interviewed, this was the case in the *Open Learning Centres* in Hungary and the *Sector Plans* in the Netherlands, which led to an improved overall policy design by overcoming barriers and bottlenecks. For example, in the Netherlands, the project manager of the *Sector Plans* was present at the stakeholder meetings. The Ministry of Social Affairs learned that the application procedure for the sectoral plans was too bureaucratic and time consuming. Following this, the procedures was modified to decrease administrative burden and increase take-up.

Lessons learnt – policy learning

- The **vast majority of reforms under review were altered compared to their initial design**. Adapting policies based on lessons learnt from implementation or due to changing circumstances can be an important factor for the success of policies. It can lead to addressing barriers to take-up, removing bottlenecks or improving effectiveness.
- **Policy learning took place based on information generated through monitoring progress, evaluating results or sharing experience**. It is worth incorporating such mechanisms into the design of policies or programmes early on.
- **Cost-benefit analyses are rare among the selected successful policies**. Although they can be extremely helpful, for example, in deciding between policy alternatives, their results depend largely on a number of methodological assumptions.

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Note

[1] Austria is the only federal state included in this study.

3 Coverage and impact of reforms

This chapter analyses the coverage of the selected reforms and the participation increase that could be attributed to them. It discusses the extent to which the observed increase in adult learning participation in the six countries might be attributed to the introduction of these reforms and highlights the importance of impact evaluations to identify causal effects and ensure cost-effectiveness of adult learning investments.

Introduction

The policies included in this review were selected based on their potential link to increased participation in adult learning. Yet, there remain the open questions of if and how much of the increase in learning participation can actually be attributed to the introduction of the reforms analysed. This chapter analyses the coverage of the selected reforms and the participation increase that could be attributed to them. It discusses the extent to which the observed increase in adult learning participation in the six countries might be attributed to the introduction of these reforms and highlights the importance of impact evaluations to identify causal effects and ensure cost-effectiveness of adult learning investments.

Coverage of reforms

The number of participants reached by the policies under review varies widely, from less than 2 000 in the early years of the Austrian *Paid Educational Leave* reform, to more than 1 million per year in the Italian *Training Funds* (see Table 3.1). These numbers vary between countries and reforms and need to be contextualised to account for the country's adult population size and the size of each reform's target group.

Comparing participants to overall increase in adult learning

For each country included in this study, Table 3.1 shows the increase in the estimated number of adults who participated in formal and non-formal learning activities in the past four weeks between 2006 and 2017. These numbers relate back to Figure 1.3 in Chapter 1, and provide an indication of the size of the observed increase in participation in each country. It shows that the increase in the number of adult learners varies from more than 76 000 in Estonia to over 600 000 in Italy, which is in large part related to differences in population size.

To understand to what extent the reforms under review might have contributed to the observed increase in adult learning, one must compare the number of participants in the reforms with the numbers of 'additional learners' between 2006 and 2017 (please see below for a reflection on causal interpretation of the results in this report). For example, the average annual number of participants in Hungary's *Open Learning Centres* (2 000), the Dutch *Training Vouchers (*6 000) and Singapore's *SkillsFuture Series* (7 500) is relatively small compared to the observed increase in adults' training participation in these countries (HUN: 110 000, NLD: 296 000, SGP: 518 000). The yearly number of participants in the *Expansion of ALMPs* in Austria (max. 219 000) and the Italian *Training Funds* (1.56 million), on the other hand, is larger than the observed increase in participation (AUT: 167 000, ITA: 617 000). This may indicate that some participants substituted participation in a different type of training with a training delivered in the context of one of the analysed reforms.

Another way of benchmarking the number of policy participants is to compare them to the size of the entire adult population aged 25 to 64. This provides a more general overview of the size or coverage of the reforms in the adult population. The Italian *Training Funds* have reached by far the largest share of adults, at about 15% of the adult population in any given year. Other reforms attaining relatively high participation rates are the Singaporean *SkillsFuture Credit*, the Estonian *Expansion of ALMPs*, and the Austrian *Expansion of ALMPs*. Nevertheless, these policies engage at most around 5% of the adult population in any given year. The smallest reforms in this respect are the Dutch *Training Vouchers* (0.06% of the adult population), the Hungarian *Free Second Vocational Degree* and *Open Learning Centres* (around 0.04%) and the Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education* (max. around 0.2%).

The results in Table 3.1 suggest that it is unlikely that one particular reform is solely responsible for the observed increase in education and training participation in any country (Italy's *Training Funds* perhaps being an exception). This highlights the need to evaluate the reforms within their context. It is possible that as a

policy package, these reforms had a larger contribution to the observed increase in participation than they would have if implemented in isolation.

Table 3.1. Number and share of participants in the reforms under review

Country	Reform	Annual number of policy participants	Change in the estimated number of adult learners (2006-2017)†	Policy participation as % of the adult population
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs	120 500 (2002) – 219 000 (2014)	+ 167 000	3% – 5%
	Initiative for Adult Education	7 000 (2012-2014) – 10 000 (2015-2017)		0.1% – 0.2%**
	Paid Educational Leave	1 500 (2006) – 18 000 (2016)		0.03% – 0.4%
EST	Expansion of ALMPs	7 000 (2008) – 55 000 (2012)	+ 77 000	1% – 8%
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	n/a		n/a
	State-Commissioned Short Courses	8 000		1%
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	20 000	+ 111 000 ***	0.4%**
	Basic Skill Courses	46 000		0.8%
	Open Learning Centres	2 000		0.04%**
ITA	Adult Education Centres	183 000 (2015) – 229 000 (2016)	+ 617 000	2%
	Training Funds	1 560 000		15%
NLD	Network Training	41 000	+296 000	0.5%
	Training Vouchers	6 000		0.06%
	Sector Plans	41 000		0.5%
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit	143 500	+518 000‡	5%**
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy	42 500		1.5%**
	SkillsFuture Series	7 500		0.3%**

Note: * The target group increased from 55+ year-old unemployed to 50+ year-old unemployed, but only data for 55+ year-old unemployed are available. **People younger than 25 and/or older than 64 can participate in these reforms as well. *** Time series break for Hungary in 2015. † Calculated based on the share of the 25-to-64 year-old population who participated in education or training in the past 4 weeks and the number of 25-to-64 year-olds in the population, except for Singapore, where the numbers are calculated based on the number of 15-to-64 year-old Singapore residents who participated in education or training in the past 12 months and the number of 15-to-64 year old Singapore residents.‡ Difference between 2008-2018.
Source: OECD elaboration based on literature and data review, and OECD calculations based on Eurostat, LFS

Comparing participants to increase of learning in the target populations

Relative to the average target group size, the Italian *Training Funds* remain one of the reforms with the largest coverage relative to the target group: around 31% of the target group (i.e. employed adults) is reached each year. The table shows that the Austrian and Estonian *Expansion of ALMPs* also have a relatively high participation rate among the target group (i.e. reaching 75% and 26% of employed and unemployed adults at the highest point, respectively). However, these numbers are less precise, because the target group varies across measures that fall under the reforms. The Dutch *Network Training* (reaching more than 38% of unemployed older workers) and the Hungarian *Basic Skill Courses* (maximum 23% of unemployed and low-skilled adults, depending on the definition of 'low-skilled') also have relatively large participation rates compared to their target group. Reforms with the smallest target group coverage include the Singaporean *SkillsFuture Series* (around 0.3% of Singapore citizens and permanent residents), the Austrian *Paid Educational Leave* (between 0.05 and 0.5% of employed adults), and the Dutch *Sector Plans* (around 0.6% of employed adults). It should be noted that the main reason for reaching relatively small

shares of the target group could be that the policies are universal, i.e. they are targeted at the entire (working) population, instead of a very specific sub-group.

Table 3.2. Share of the target group reached by the reforms under review

Country	Reform	Target groups					
		All adults*	Employed adults	Unemployed adults	Low-skilled / low qualified	Other	
AUT	Expansion of ALMPs		4%-75%***				
	Initiative for Adult Education				2% – 21%		
	Paid Educational Leave		0.05% – 0.5%				
EST	Expansion of ALMPs		1% – 26%***		.		
	Lifelong-Learning Strategy	n/a			n/a		
	State-Commissioned Short Courses		1% – 10%				
HUN	Free Second Vocational Degree	0.4%					
	Basic Skill Courses			5% – 23%		Public workers (2013-2015)	n/a
	Open Learning Centres			0.25%-1.15%		Disadvantaged adults (incl. those at risk of losing job, young or older adults, Roma)	n/a
ITA	Adult Education Centres				4% – 6%		
	Training Funds		31%				
NLD	Network Training					Unemployed aged 55-63 (2013), or 50-63 (2014-2017)	38%*
	Training Vouchers						6%*
	Sector Plans		0.6%				
SGP	SkillsFuture Credit					Singaporeans aged 25+	5%
	SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy					Singaporeans aged 40+	2%
	SkillsFuture Series					Singaporeans	0.3%

Note: * The target group increased from 55+ year-old unemployed to 50+ year-old unemployed, but only data for 55+ year-old unemployed are available. **People younger than 25 and/or older than 64 can participate in these reforms as well. *** Not all measures that fall under this reform are available for the employed at all points in time. The percentages are based on varying the target group from the unemployed only to the unemployed and employed combined.
Source: OECD elaboration based on literature and data review.

When reforms are targeted to specific groups, it is easier to check whether these groups are driving the increase in participation, suggesting a key role played by the reforms. This is the case in a number of countries, where the observed increase in adults' participation in learning activities is largely driven by the target group of one of the selected reforms. For instance, the observed increase in adults' training participation in the Netherlands is mostly driven by older individuals, whose participation rates have increased much faster than for younger workers (see Table A A.3 in the Annex). This suggests that the Dutch *Training Vouchers,* and in particular the *Network Training* (considering the relatively large target group coverage), which specifically target older individuals, may have contributed to the observed steeper increase in older individuals' participation rates. Another example is Austria, where the *Initiative for Adult Education* specifically targets low-skilled adults, and where the data indeed show that the difference in participation between low- and high-educated adults has become smaller in the past decade (see Table A A.3 in the Annex). Low-educated adults in Italy, on the other hand, show a smaller increase in

their participation rate compared to higher-educated adults, despite the specific focus of the *Adult Education Centres* on this group of individuals.

Impact of reforms

Although participation numbers provide interesting insights into the outreach of the reforms, they need to be interpreted with caution. While most of the reforms have been monitored and evaluated (see Chapter 2), there is only little research evidence available about their *causal effect* on education and training participation. The lack of causal evidence means that what would have happened to adults' education and training participation in the absence of the reforms is uncertain. For instance, participation may have increased in the absence of the reforms under review, due to other adult learning reforms that are not included in this study. Other examples of potential reasons for increases in training participation in the absence of the reforms under review include the implementation of other reforms that affect adult learning indirectly, business cycle fluctuations, and, more generally, an increased awareness of the importance of lifelong learning.

It is unlikely that the selected reforms are the only policy drivers of the observed increase in education and training participation. The **broader policy context** may entail several minor adult learning reforms, which did not come up in the exploratory expert interviews as potentially successful reforms, because of relatively low participation rates in the individual reforms. Nevertheless, in combination, these minor reforms may have increased participation at the margin. Further, the broader policy context may include policies that are not directly related to adult learning, but which do affect education and training participation. For instance, changes in social security benefits can impact the propensity of adults to train. Another example are reforms that increase the legal retirement age, which may increase training participation through increased need to keep skills up-to-date throughout a longer working life. However, these policies were excluded from the analysis because they do not directly target adult learning.

Economic downturns can have two important – and contradictory – effects on training participation: On the one hand, training participation may be pro-cyclical. Employers may be less likely to invest in the training of their staff, due to heightened uncertainty and financial constraints, and training participation can decline amongst the employed. On the other hand, training participation may be counter-cyclical, either because employers are more likely to fund training in these times of creation/destruction of jobs, individual focus on updating their skills or because there are more unemployed individuals that participate in training measures through the public employment services. There is evidence for both effects and there may be variation between countries, see e.g. (Brunello, 2009[1]; Bassanini et al., 2005[2]; UKCES, 2013[3]).

One must also take into account that the **awareness of the importance of adult learning** more generally has increased over the period under observation, which may have contributed to increased take-up of learning opportunities. As outlined in Chapter 1, increasing attention to the topic has been paid internationally in particular since the early 2000s, both at the OECD and EU level (OECD, 1996[4]; OECD, 2009[5]; Council of the European Union, 2008[6]; Council of the European Union, 2011[7]). At the same time, the economic imperative of taking part in training to stay employable has become stronger in the context of technological change, integration of global value chains and demographic changes (OECD, 2019[8]). It is reasonable to assume that these developments have increased the propensity of individuals to train independent of the reforms analysed.

Lessons learnt – coverage and impact

- **Most reforms have a relatively limited coverage** of the adult population as a whole. The reach of the policies under review varies widely, engaging between more than 15% of the adult population to less than 0.5% in many cases.
- This indicates that **it is unlikely that one particular reform is solely responsible for the observed increases in education and training participation**
- The reforms need to be evaluated within their **broader policy context**, including business cycle fluctuations, reforms that are excluded from this study because they are not directly related to adult learning or an increased awareness of the importance of lifelong learning.

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UKCES (2013), *Training in recession: The impact of the 2008-2009 recession on training at work*. [3]

4 Beyond increasing participation

High participation in adult learning is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for a well-functioning and future-ready adult learning system. While this study has primarily focused on an increase in participation in adult learning, this is simply not enough. To enable more adults to reskill and upskill, policy-makers must also focus their attention to issues of quality and labour market impact of their reform efforts on the intended targets. This chapter reviews indicators of success of adult learning reforms beyond overall participation, including increases in training quality, labour market outcomes, alignment with individual and labour market needs, as well as increased inclusiveness.

Introduction

High participation in adult learning is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for a well-functioning and future-ready adult learning system. This study has so far focused on the features of reforms, which were successful in raising participation in adult learning. However, focusing on the increase in the overall quantity of adult learning is simply not enough. To enable more adults to reap the benefits of participating in learning activities, policy-makers must not only focus on participation rates, but also on training quality, participants' labour market outcomes, inclusiveness of the policies and the alignment of programmes with individual and labour market needs.

Training quality

The number of individuals involved in training will not translate into better labour market or society-wide outcomes if the learning activities are not of good quality. Training quality is therefore fundamental for the reforms to reach desired outcomes beyond training participation, e.g. the increased employability of participants. However, quality is also a multi-dimensional concept, touching upon the content of training, the competencies of the providers and teachers, and eventually the effectiveness of training in changing the labour market or societal condition of participants. This feature, as well as the largely subjective nature of quality assessments, makes measurement and implementation of quality a relevant challenge of adult learning systems.

Quality assurance

Countries may need to set up minimum quality criteria and standards, and certification mechanisms to ensure that these are respected. In some countries, publicly funded training programmes can only be delivered by certified providers as a way to ensure quality. Monitoring and evaluation systems should also be in place, as well as mechanisms that enable the sharing of information about the quality of different providers. Capacity-building activities for staff in adult training institutions would ensure that they acquire a better understanding of what quality is and how to monitor and assess it. Special provisions should be made to adapt curricula, course organisation and teachers' mindset and methods to working with adults, as opposed to youth (Box 4.1).

Interviewed experts highlighted that a mechanism of quality assurance is clearly missing for the Dutch *Training Vouchers* and for the Italian *Training Funds*. In the latter case, most of training activities are delivered by non-formal training providers, and in 60% of the cases (2016) by the company itself, and hence they escape a framework of quality monitoring. Each Fund has its own mechanism to assess the quality of the training proposed by a provider. The latter is usually accredited by the regional accreditation system, but some Funds also developed their own accreditation system. The training activity can lead to a certification, but here again, there is no uniform mechanism across Funds or Regions. Many training activities supported by the Funds do not yield a certification, in any case.

Teaching quality

Considering the policies in this study, provisions for quality of teaching and providers are made for one type of learning provision, namely basic education courses, which are very similar to courses provided in initial education. The *Life-Long Learning Strategy* in Estonia stressed motivation and quality of teachers and school management as one of five key objectives of the strategy. The Austrian *Initiative for Adult Education* sets strong quality criteria, be it on providers, courses, instructors or counsellors.

Counselling services and infrastructure

Education courses are also accompanied by a professional counselling and introduction phase. In the Hungarian *Open Learning Centres*, participants receive advice at the beginning of their learning path, and a certification for every completed course at the end – although these certifications are not necessarily recognised throughout the country.[1] In a similar vein, the Italian *Adult Education Centres* provide guidance to participants, at least in the first phase of the learning activity, and aim at certifying the skills acquired in it, based on the National Qualification Framework.

That said, training quality in the Italian *Adult Education Centres* may be affected negatively by the relatively old infrastructure in which courses often take place. Moreover, although one of the Centres' missions is to foster advancements in the methodology and didactics for adult learners, instructors were most often trained to work with children and not with adults, according to the interviewed stakeholders. This was also mentioned by experts as an important complaint of participants to the Hungarian *Basic Skill Courses*. The same shortcoming (instructors' quality and age) seem to affect provision of the *Free Second Vocational Degrees* in Hungary.

Box 4.1. Training quality case study – Programmes targeted at disadvantaged adults in Hungary

Two Hungarian programmes were very similar in terms of goals, target groups (disadvantaged adults) and even funding per person, however they had very different outcomes due to differences in quality:

Both teachers and participants pointed out issues related to the **Basic Skill Courses,** mainly because the learning material and the methods were not adapted to adults. Most of the recruited teachers did not have any experience in teaching and none of them received help in how to teach adults. Much of the teaching materials were based on exercises designed for children, and the courses took place in a classroom setting. As a result, the programme reinforced participant's negative views of education. One participant noted: "I am 40, even if I did not finish school they should not give me the tasks of a 5 year old. This really made me angry".

On the other hand, courses delivered at **Open Learning Centres** are tailored to adults. Teaching content relates to their everyday lives, teachers are experienced in working with adults and classes are delivered in a relaxed atmosphere surrounded by modern technology. As a result, centres contribute to a positive learning culture. As noted by one participant: "I am very thankful for this opportunity! I would like to continue to learn with this teacher and the group". 70% of participants enrol in another course at the Centres.

Source: Kerülő and Nyilas (2014[1]), A közfoglalkoztatásban résztvevők képzésének andragógiai konzekvenciái; NYITOK (2019[2]), NYITOK Project, http://www.nyitok.hu/rolunk3.0.

Labour market outcomes of training programmes

Good policies that increase participation in adult learning can still fail translate into better working or living conditions for participants. This section therefore explores the labour market outcomes of individuals participating in a training programme, both looking into the specific reforms considered so far, and in the broader literature.

The assessment of the "true" effect of reforming training policies on selected individual outcomes necessarily relies on counterfactual impact evaluation analyses. The established micro-economic literature has estimated the impacts of ALMPs, including training policies, on different labour market outcomes, but

not that of learning policies outside of ALMPs, e.g. of support to basic education. For the former case, Kluve (2010[3]) and Card et al. (2018[4]) perform meta-analyses of existing studies since the late '90s, and find that training programmes in developed countries have been generally effective in moving people from unemployment to employment, or raising workers' salaries. These effects are usually positive but negligible in the short term, and larger in the medium to long term. They set training policies apart from other ALMPs such as job-search assistance programmes, whose effects are positive and approximately constant over time, and public sector employment subsidies, which tend to have small or even negative average impacts at all horizons.

The economic rationale is clear: participants in learning activities do not usually work (full time) while in training, which translates into worse labour market outcomes in the initial period than for an untrained comparison group. If the training is valuable, however, trained individuals slowly catch up and outperform the untrained comparison group over time. A larger effect in the long run, while true on average, seems to be mostly driven by the subgroup of young participants (Card, Kluve and Weber, 2018[4]). More recent evidence across country (Bown et al., 2019[5]) and for Germany only (Dauth, 2019[6]) confirms these results. McKenzie (2017[7]) analyses ALMPs in developing countries, and finds small positive effects of VET programmes on employment, much larger ones on formal employment, and rather insignificant ones on wages relative to wages of the control group. Training programmes can also influence other labour-market or social outcomes, such as civic participation or political involvement, mental and physical health, criminal activity, or choices regarding schooling and work for other members of the trainee's household (Barnow and Smith, 2015[8]). These outcomes, however, have been investigated less often and less consistently across country, often due to lack of available data on them, especially in the longer run.

A number of the policies considered for the present study performed an evaluation of the reform's impacts on outcomes of participants, as highlighted in Table 2.9 in Chapter 2. That section described the evaluations' goals, methods, involved stakeholders, and consequences for changes in the policy design. This section focuses instead on the results of the evaluation. When available, inference is mostly based on experimental or quasi-experimental settings and on qualitative information in some cases (e.g. the *Initiative for Adult Education* in Austria). Broadly speaking, the existing evaluations suggest that reforms included in this study positively affected participants' probability of employment and, though to a lesser extent, earnings.

This is certainly the case for the *State-Commissioned Training Courses* in Estonia, which increased the probability of participants to be employed, time in employment, and earnings, although by a different extent depending on the used estimation techniques (Leetma et al., 2015[9]). Effects were also larger for participants who were in employment, those with low education levels, younger and older age. Higher earnings and a higher probability of employment compared to the control group characterised participants in occupational training in the framework of the reformed Estonian *ALMPs* - see case study box and (Lauringson et al., 2011[10]).

In the Netherlands, De Groot and Van der Klaauw (2017[11]) and Van Hoof and Van den Hee (2017[12]) evaluated the effectiveness of *Network Training* based on a randomised experiment on unemployed individuals. They found that the policy increased participants' chances of finding a job relative to the control group, but not their salary. Results for the Austrian *ALMP* reform and *Paid Educational Leave* are less encouraging instead. Multiple evaluations focused on different aspects of the Austrian *ALMP* reform, but retrieved negligible macro-level effects at the federal or regional level, and only small positive effects for selected subgroups of participants (Aumayr et al., 2009[13]). Lassnigg et al. (2011[14]) find that changes in the eligibility criteria to the *Paid Educational Leave* did not lead to any important economic effects on employment and wages of participants. Effects were indeed mixed: the policy positively affected labour market mobility of employed participants, and males engaging in VET. Over the entire sample, real wages seven years after participation were only marginally higher, and tenure was fewer days shorter than for the control group.

Box 4.2. Impact of training case study – ALMP reform in Estonia

A 2011 evaluation using quasi-experimental methods (propensity-score matching) found that unemployed people who had participated in labour market training in 2009 and 2010 experienced a positive effect on employment outcomes and wages. For one programme in particular, which was focused on occupational training:

- Participants who completed their training in 2009 (respectively, 2010) experienced a wage increase of EUR 50 (resp. EUR 90) per month on average, one year after participation. This was a 1/3 (respectively 1/2) larger increase than the control group. The requirement for greater labour market relevance of training from 2010 onwards likely explains the larger effect in 2010 relative to 2009.
- 36% of participants who finished training in 2009 were employed one year later, compared to 26% of individuals in the control group. For the 2010 cohort, figures reach 46% vs 34% respectively.
- Participants in the 2010 cohort had 10 fewer days of benefits than the cohort group (-13%) and for a lower amount (-12%), but differences were not statistically significant.

Some groups saw greater returns from training, including women, older participants and those that had been unemployed for shorter periods of time.

Source: Lauringson et al. (2011[15]), Impact Evaluation of Labour Market Training: the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund.

A number of reasons may contribute to the limited effects of training programmes on participants' employability and earnings. Card, Kluve and Weber (2018[4]) stress the importance of considering both the short term and the medium- and long term impacts. Taking a longer perspective may be challenging, if individuals cannot be followed over time (attrition) or enter the informal sector (McKenzie, 2017[7]). Access to administrative data is scarce or fragmented across different institutions, information is self-reported and unreliable, or not collected altogether. The same authors also propose that a policy's estimated effect may be affected by too much aggregation over groups of participants with heterogeneous outcomes (in their analysis: young vs older individuals, but also high- vs low-educated individuals), over different moments of the business cycle, or over programmes of heterogeneous duration or intensity. Inference can also change if training participants are enrolling in a learning activity for the first time, and are compared to other individuals which have already participated in training before, or never did so at all (Hidalgo, Oosterbeek and Webbink, 2014[16]).

While labour market institutions are found to play no role in Card, Kluve and Weber (2018[4]), Escudero (2018[17]) shows that ALMPs are more effective in improving labour market outcomes if they are better managed and implemented, and in particular if resources are congruous to the tasks and there is continuity in the policy. Training programmes are found to improve participants' labour market outcomes overall, and those of the low skilled in particular through the interaction with implementation variables. Once again, evidence is scarce about the impact of the same features in learning activities which do not fall within the spectrum of ALMPs. Lastly, Bown et al. (2019[5]) highlight that training programmes are most successful when they target a specific job. This point will be further developed in the next section.

Alignment with individual and labour market needs

An individual's skill set is fundamental for their success in the labour market. Adult learning policies aiming to strengthen individual career progression should therefore enhance the acquisition of skills that are job-relevant and aligned with labour market needs. Training programmes should therefore: ii) especially target individuals whose skill set is becoming obsolete; ii) tailor content to current as well as future skill requirements in the market, while also considering how much these overlap with the needs of the individual's employer; and iii) guide the provision and take-up of training through a system of incentives (OECD, 2019[18]). This in turn asks for a sound understanding of changing skill needs, often acquired through Skill Assessment and Anticipation exercises (see also Chapter 2). That knowledge can then be used to design incentives and assistance to workers' re-skilling.

Personalised training

The relevance of an adult learning activity is pinned down in the assessment of an individual's existing skill set, needs, work- and learning history. This allows adults to focus on developing the skills they actually miss, make the most of the time spent in training and facilitate the combination of work and training. It also ensures that barriers to training are minimised, and in particular those that relate to lack of time and limited flexibility of training provision. Personal trajectories in training, however, require the **ability to recognise prior learning**, which must be transparent, streamlined and ensure the buy-in of all relevant stakeholders, including employers and education and training providers. To reduce misallocation of resources, personalised training should also be **well aligned with market needs**, as developed here further below.

Initiative for Adult Education in Austria sets a remarkable example in this case, too: it provides individualised learning, as well as complementary counselling which looks holistically at the life situation of the individuals before making a recommendation for further learning. The *Open Learning Centres* in Hungary advise individuals on the learning activity that best fits their needs, too. They can also tailor courses to local needs, which can therefore differ from country-wide programmes. The Italian *Adult Education Centres* target courses to the (adult) student's needs, too. Students' skills, even if of informally acquired, are screened at the beginning of the learning period, and the resulting information factored in when establishing the students' workload. A greater focus on individualised learning is another of the five strategic objectives of the Estonian *Lifelong-Learning Strategy*. *State-Commissioned Short Courses* in the same country allow individuals to choose a course of their choice, or a choice that has been screened by counsellors in the case of employed workers. This feature has not always produced positive outcomes, as training content can be of limited labour market relevance.

Alignment to market needs

Reforms in some of the countries considered in the present analysis were **successful in aligning** training to labour market needs. The Estonian *Lifelong-Learning Strategy* sets greater "accordance of lifelong learning opportunities with the demands of the labour market" as one of its five key objectives (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014[19]). This was combined with measures that aimed to improve the labour market relevance of training, including a skill assessment and anticipation system. Singapore's *SkillsFuture* series introduced short, industry-relevant training programmes that focus on emerging skills such as data analytics, cyber security or advanced manufacturing skills. The Dutch *Training Vouchers* for older unemployed people could be spent only if a future employer was expressing interest for it in written form, or for training that would improve the person's probability of finding employment in an occupation in demand in a given region. The *Sector Plans* in the same country aimed at helping people find work or stay employable throughout the working life, by making regional and sectoral labour markets "future-ready". In practice, the *Sector Plans* supported training through a crisis period. Indeed learning systems may be understood as fostering the alignment of training to market needs if they contribute to smooth the **business**

cycle's consequences on the labour market impacts of recessions. This was also the goal of the Estonian EUIF in the context of the *ALMP reforms*. Finally, the Austrian *Paid Educational Leave* was used to keep workers on a company's payroll at the peak of the 2009 crisis (Lassnigg et al., 2011[14]).

Rather than responding to current or future skill needs, some policies are leveraged to provide **compulsory training opportunities**, such as health and safety training. While this type of training is certainly useful, it should not substitute for market-relevant training. The *Italian Training Funds* would be perfectly designed to target market-relevant skills, as employers can largely choose the type of training a Fund would support. In practice, in too many instances (16% of workers, 11% of plans in 2016), they co-sponsor training in areas that are already compulsory by law – hence training that would have taken place even in the absence of the *Training Funds* – such as in the area of health and safety at the workplace.

Many other reforms, instead, aimed at raising the competencies of adults with low skills or low qualification, **irrespective of specific market needs**. This is the case for *Initiative for Adult Education* in Austria, the *Basic Skill Courses* in Hungary, and the *Adult Education Centres* in Italy, where courses aimed to develop basic literacy, ICT and national language skills, rather than job-specific skills. While this is not what is typically understood with alignment of training with market skill requirements, it can still lead to positive labour market outcomes of participants, if it is the case that lack of basic skills is limiting employment perspectives. In Estonia, however, *State-Commissioned short courses* targeted those with low or obsolete skills, yet there is evidence that they do not fully reach the target, as low-skilled and other disadvantaged individuals were underrepresented amongst participants (Leetma et al., 2015[9]).

Box 4.3. Alignment case study – the Dutch Training Vouchers

Between 2013 and 2017, all unemployed people aged 50 and older could get a voucher from the Public Employment Service, which covered 100% of the cost of education and training not exceeding EUR 1 000. The learning activity had to increase their employment opportunities, i.e. be required by a prospective employer or leading to employment in a high-demand occupation in the region.

In order to access the voucher, adults could submit an agreement between themselves and their employer, where the latter committed to hiring the former after the training activity. Alternatively, the trainee could argue that a given training activity would enhance their prospects of finding a job in an occupation currently in shortage in the region. Each region produced its own list of occupations with "good employment perspectives", itself based on the number of open vacancies in that region.

Other market considerations

Better alignment of training with employers' skill demand should translate into better matches of workers with firms. While some degree of misalignment between the supply and demand for skills is inevitable, especially in a short-run perspective, mismatches in OECD countries are widespread. More than 40% of workers in Europe, Japan, Korea and Mexico feel their skill levels do not correspond to those required by the job, either because they think they could cope with more demanding work or because they cannot meet the demands of their present job (OECD, 2019[18]). Misallocation of labour can reduce firms' productivity and individuals' likelihood of employment, wages, or job satisfaction.

Training policies, however, do not always lead to improved allocation of resources for the whole economy. As mentioned in Chapter 3, support to learning may be given to individuals who would have trained in any case, even in the absence of the policy, generating deadweight losses. One such point was raised for the Dutch *Training Vouchers*, which subsidised training for older unemployed individuals, although this target group are usually less financially constrained than youth. Moreover, training may allow the participant to

take a job that would have otherwise gone to someone else, so that the value of this match relative to its counterfactual remains unobservable. This may also lead to an overestimation of the benefits associated to the training programme, if the non-participant does not enter the policy's comparison group (Andersson et al., 2018[20]). In the case of the Italian *Training Funds*, targeting of certain categories of workers was judged to generate an unjustified substitution between subsidised- and non-subsidised training participants (OECD, 2019[21]).[2]

The latter point highlights that the reform can give origin to a number of general equilibrium effects, i.e. affect economic agents other than those directly participating to the programme. The salary of non-participants, for example, can be affected by the policy if this: i) strengthens competition for jobs in the occupation or geographical market where non-participants are employed; ii) increases the supply of certain skills in the local labour market (Barnow and Smith, 2015[8]); or iii) raises the productivity requirements for all workers in the company where participants are employed. Furthermore, adult learning reforms can publicise adult learning and improve the culture of learning in the country as a whole, thus convincing non-participants to engage in adult learning and raising the net benefits of the programme.

Lastly, adult learning reforms can have important consequences for the (quasi-) market of training provision in a country. Several interviewees mentioned that the provision of *State-Commissioned Short Courses* essentially destroyed the market for short non-formal training courses in Estonia. Similarly, the reform of the *Free Second Vocational Degree* in Hungary made them free and reportedly displaced private providers of VET courses as a consequence. One final observation deals with the opportunity cost of public resources invested in adult learning. It cannot be excluded that tax receipts would be higher if the programme resources were invested in a different policy. This consideration, however, remains mostly theoretical, because of the inherent difficulty to estimate the actual opportunity cost of public expenditure under a vast array of alternative policies.

Inclusiveness considerations

While policy should facilitate access to adult learning for every individual interested in or in need of upskilling, some groups receive additional support to engage in training activities because of their disadvantaged position in learning (low-skilled adults), specific socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, nationality or ethnicity), or employment situation (length in unemployment, low income, contract type). Support to these groups may be motivated by policy-makers desire to improve social- and labour-market outcomes of these categories. Moreover, the society-wide spill overs of these improved outcomes are not necessarily factored-in in the decision to train, either by the prospective trainee or by employers. This provides further justification to public support to training participation for selected target groups.

Based on data from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), older and lower-skilled adults, as well as low-wage workers, are the socio-demographic categories displaying the lowest participation rates in every country (OECD, 2019[18]). Chapter 2 described how the reforms in this study pay special attention to the unemployed and to adults with low skills, and how some of the analysed policies did not consider any specific target group in the reform design (the Estonian *Life-Long Learning Strategy* or the *Free Second Vocational Degrees* in Hungary). Chapter 2 also discussed barriers to training, and how financial support is provided to participants, either by subsidising the firm- or individual- cost of training (e.g. *Training Vouchers* in the Netherlands, the Estonia *ALMPs*, and Singapore *SkillsFuture Credit*), or by providing altogether free access to it (e.g. Hungary's *Free Second Vocational Degrees* or *Open Learning Centres*, Italy's *Adult Education Centres*, Austria's *Initiative for Adult Education*).

Policies targeting the unemployed or the low-skilled, who often have low income or fewer employment opportunities, can be leveraged to target low-income adults, too. Special provisions for low-income adults specifically are much rarer among the policies considered. By design, only the Estonian labour market

training for the employed, in the context of the expansion of *training-related ALMP* reform, supports workers seeking occupational development but earning less than EUR 15 492 per year.

Conversely, many of the considered policies distinguish adults by age, for instance. A long literature recognises that older adults engage less frequently in training, as their shorter time to retirement decrease the cumulated returns to the investment in training (Cunha et al., 2006[22]). Moreover, older adults are on average less acquainted with digital technologies, making them more susceptible to skills obsolescence. Lastly, motivation, the way training is provided and the degree to which training addresses relevant problems at work have a direct impact on the effectiveness of training for older workers (Callahan, Kiker and Cross, 2003[23]; Zwick, 2015[24]). Special provisions for older workers characterise two of the considered reforms in the Netherlands. Furthermore, employed workers of age 50 and above are eligible for assistance under the reformed *ALMPs* in Estonia, while workers of age 40 and above see 90% of their training costs reimbursed in Singapore under the *SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy* programme. Conversely, the Hungarian *Open Learning Centres* targeted – among others – older workers as well as young ones entering the world of work.

Some of the policies in this study provide special conditions for migrants and minorities, too. Migrants, in particular when newly arrived, benefit from targeted adult learning support, be it to improve their proficiency in the host language or to validate and adapt their skills to the requirements of the host country's labour market. The participation of migrants in the adult learning system was mentioned by many interviewees as one of the key factors driving demand for courses under the *Initiative for Adult Education* in Austria, and in the *Adult Education Centres* in Italy. Lastly, the only policy considered in this study which explicitly addresses a minority group is the *Open Learning Centres* in Hungary. Roma also represented a relatively large share of participants in the *Basic Skill Courses*.

Other dimensions of inclusiveness did not figure prominently in the interviews carried out for the present study. Gaps in participation to training of women and men are possibly less stark than between the opposites in other categorisations, which may explain why the design of reforms has not featured gender prominently. Conversely, take-up of learning activities is usually less frequent in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) than large firms (OECD, 2019[18]). SMEs tend to underinvest in human capital, likely because they are more resource- and capacity-constrained, less informed about existing training- or support opportunities, or simply less aware of the potential benefits of training for their workforce. Only one interviewed expert mentioned that the current design of the policy – the Italian *Training Funds* – was preferred to alternative forms and in particular to a tax credit scheme, because it was believed to favour take-up in SMEs.

Lessons learnt – going beyond participation

- **Minimum quality criteria and standards**, as well as certification mechanisms to ensure that these are respected, are needed to make sure that participants benefit from training in terms of societal or labour market outcomes. Special provisions should be made to adapt curricula, course organisation and teachers' mind-sets and methods to working with adults, as opposed to children.
- **Training programmes are found to impact an individual's employment perspectives and, to a lesser extent, their earnings,** but more so in the medium- to long-term than in the short term. Evaluations of the policies considered in this study are broadly in line with these results from the relevant economic literature.
- **Skill Assessment and Anticipation exercises** can help design adult learning policies, which align training to labour market requirements, including over the business cycle.
- While extremely useful to reduce the pervasiveness of mismatches in the labour market, **adult learning programmes can also create misallocation of resources in the economy.** These considerations did not emerge very frequently from the analysis of the policies covered by the present study.
- **Special provisions exists in many countries** for the participation of vulnerable groups in adult learning, and in particular for migrants, elderly workers and low-skilled workers.

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Annex A. Country case studies

Austria

Table A A.1. Key data on adult learning in Austria

Adult learning participation	2007	2016
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months of 25-64 year-olds[1]	41.9	59.9
Training participation in formal or non-formal training in the past 4 weeks of 25-64 year-olds[2]	12.9	14.9
Inclusiveness: Age	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 35-54 year-olds[1]	45.7	63.8
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 55-64 year-olds[1]	25.4	41.3
Inclusiveness: Education	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 0-2[1]	19.1	31.3
Training participation formal and non-formal education training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 5-8[1]	68.1	77.6
Alignment	**2010**	**2015**
% of total training hours of current staff spent on non-health/safety courses[3]	88.4	82.3
Usual reaction to future skill needs: Continuing vocational training of current staff (% of enterprises)[3]	86.4	87.6

Source: [1]Adult Education Survey; [2]Labour Force Survey; [3]Continuing Vocational Training Survey.

Reform context

Institutional context: Adult learning provision in Austria is diverse. It covers public provision, i.e. evening schools, schools offering higher qualifications for skilled workers, universities, universities of applied sciences, as well as commercial and non-profit provision. There is a strong learning culture in companies, according to stakeholders interviewed, and the majority of adult learning takes place there.

Austria is a federal state. Responsibility for adult learning is shared between the federation and nine federal states, with the need to coordinate. Most generally, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research holds the responsibility for promoting adult learning and the award of funds. Legally regulated qualifications also lie in the responsibility of the federal *Ministry of Education, Science and Research*, non-regulated qualifications are handled in a decentral manner by providers. The Federal *Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection* is in charge for labour-market related qualifications through the *Public Employment Service Austria*.

In the period under observation, there has been a flurry of initiatives to professionalise, as well as increase transparency and quality in adult education. In 2011, legal foundations were laid for the cooperation and co-funding of adult education by the federation and the federal states. Any reform measures should be seen in this wider context. Many stakeholder interviewed emphasised that not one single measure was responsible for the increase in adult learning participation, the combination of multiple measures in this time.

Economic context: Growth in adult learning participation in Austria is relatively consistent over time and seemingly independent of the economic context. Stakeholders interviewed suggested that adult learning

policy in the past 15 years in Austria must be seen as taking place in three distinct economic phases: a pre-crisis period, a crisis period and recovery and stabilisation. Between 2000 and 2008, the Austrian economy grew by an average of 2.3% per year. Growth was relatively stable, apart from a slow-down in 2002/2003, when it dropped to 0.9% due to low domestic demand and geopolitical instabilities. The country feel intro recession in 2009, when the economy contracted by -3.8%. After a period of brief recovery in 2010-2012, economic growth dropped to 0% in 2012. Since then, it has slowly returned to successively increasing growth (all data OECD.stat).

Unemployment and employment rates are seemingly decoupled from these economic developments. The lowest employment rate in the time under observation was observed in 2004, when it sharply dropped to 66.5%. It then rose to 70.8% in 2008 and registered only a small drop during the time of the deepest recession in 2009 to 70.3%. It has since then hovered around the 71% mark, but from 2016 grown again to 73%. Unemployment rates are traditionally low in Austria. In the past 18 years, peaks were recorded in 2005 (5.6%), 2009 (5.3%) and 2016 (6%). Latest data from 2017 sees the unemployment rate at 5.5%.

Austria has seen relatively limited structural change in the past 10 years, according to the PAL dashboard (http://www.oecd.org/employment/skills-and-work/adult-learning/dashboard.htm) (Lilien index). In 2001, 28% of people were employed in manufacturing, which decreased to 22% in 2015. By contrast, the employment share in the service industry increased from 68% to 74%. Employment in agriculture remained stable at 4%, according to data from Statistics Austria.

Austrian reforms included in this review

Table A A.2. Expansion of education and training measures in ALMPs

Key features of the reform	
Short description	A series of reforms have expanded active labour market policies (ALMPs) in the past decades. ALMPs in Austria have a strong focus on skill development and the acquisition of qualifications. Approximately two-thirds of funding and three-quarters of new participants in ALMP take part in training-related measures (Bösch et al., 2013[1]).
Aims and objectives	The overall aims of Austrian labour market policy are to reach full employment and to support the functioning of the labour market. The goals of the specific education and training measures described here are to support job placement or to prevent job-loss (AMS, 2019[2]).
Instruments	Career and training orientation measures; initial or further vocational qualification measures; basic qualification measures for non-job specific skills such as literacy or IT courses; training measures for adults with social or health problems, active job search measures and work trials. In reality, most specific measures include a mix of these instruments. ALMPs frequently cover the direct and indirect cost of courses, subsistence and other related costs.
Implementation period	Initially conceived 1968/69, continuous reform since then.
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Unemployed individuals, employed individuals
Number of participants (annual)	Minimum: 120 500 (2002) Maximum: 219 000 (2014)
Governance	
Key stakeholders	The Austrian Ministry of Labour defines the broad goals of labour market policy yearly. The 2019 version, for example, sets out specific target groups for intervention and highlights the importance to address the challenges of digitalisation and the increased need of health and care staff (BMASGK, 2019[3]). The Austrian PES (*Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*) is then responsible for implementing labour market policy. The organisation is highly decentralised and divided in one federal, nine federal state and 98 regional divisions. The national AMS board decides which ALMPs will be implemented and how. It defines countrywide guidelines, which are to ensure standardised implementation (Bock-Schappelwein et al., 2014[4]). The national organisation also sets targets for the federal state organisations, which themselves set targets for regional organisations. Social partners are involved in decision-making and controlling at all levels.
Delivery	Individuals can access ALMP training measures after consultation with their job counsellors at the AMS. The measures itself are implemented by external education providers on behalf of the regional AMS. The process of purchasing such measures from private providers are regulated in the federal act on public tenders (Nationalrat, 2019[5]). Rules for the procurement of such measures have changed over the period under observation.

Funding	
Annual funding	Minimum: EUR 160 Mio (2002); Maximum EUR 510 Mio. (2016) (Nagl et al., 2018[6]; Bösch et al., 2013[1])
Estimated funding per participant	Minimum: EUR 1 400 (2002); Maximum: EUR 2 600 (2015, 2016) (Nagl et al., 2018[6]; Bösch et al., 2013[1])
Funding source	Tax funding, social insurance funding, ESF funding
Results	
Reception	n/a
Effectiveness	The vast majority of ALMPs have been evaluated repeatedly (Nagl et al., 2018[6]; Bösch et al., 2013[1]) . In sum, the impact of the measures at the micro-level is small, but positive effects exist for some groups in some measures. Most evaluations point to lock-in effects of the measures (i.e. initial negative employment effect due to participants spending less time and effort on job search), at least for some target groups. This may be due to data limitations. Work is underway that will provide more detailed assessments of measures and effects on different target groups. The effect on the macro-level is negligible. The impact of education and training measures and the subsidies to course costs have no measurable impact on indicators of success at a regional level. High participation rates in active job search and orientation measures have a negative effect on 'matches', i.e. transitions into non-supported employment, in the following quarter (Aumayr et al., 2009[7]).
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Continuous renewal and further development of the programmes; - Extensive evaluation of measures and use of results for decision-making; - Use of ALMPs as an instrument to manage structural change; - Decentralised delivery and local adaptation of programmes; - Clear regulatory and legal basis.
Enabling factors	- Strong commitment of AMS to qualification measures in the context of ALMPs. - Availability of accompanying financial support measures that enable individuals to take-up training, such as unpaid educational leave, a stipend for skilled workers, a stipend to take-up higher education amongst others

Table A A.3. Initiative for Adult Education *(Initiative Erwachsenenbildung)*

Key features of the reform	
Short description	In 2012, Austria introduced a coordinated programme to enable adults to obtain basic competences and basic educational qualifications free of charge. It is based on cooperation between the federation (*Bund*) and the federal states (*Bundesländer*). At the time of writing, the measure is in its third programming period and has engaged approximately 50 000 individuals between 2012 and 2017, equivalent to 1% of the Austrian working age population aged 20-64.
Aims and objectives	The initiative aims to enable as many people as possible to: a) gain basic skills and/or b) obtain a lower secondary degree (*Pflichtschule*), with the view to empower individuals to take part in social, cultural, technological and economic development. On an institutional level, it aims to improve the ability of the federation and the federal states to streamline the offer across the country, including having uniform levels of financial support and scope of services, independent of an individual's place of habitation (Länder-Bund-ExpertInnengruppe and „Initiative Erwachsenenbildung", 2011[8]).
Instruments	Learning opportunities that are free of charge and regulated by law following a common quality framework. There are two programme strands: i) Basic skill courses conveying at least three of the following competences (German, mathematics, digital skills, language/English, learning skills) and encompass 100 to 400 teaching hours; ii) Second-chance education courses to obtain the lower secondary certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*), which encompass 1 160 teaching hours.
Implementation period	From 2012, ongoing
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Broad target group, generally including adults who would benefit from participation, namely those with low basic skills and qualifications. The second-chance education strand also aims to engage young adults looking to obtain or improve their lower secondary qualification. (Steuerungsgruppe Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, 2019[9]).
Number of participants (annual)	7 000 (2012-2014 programming period) – 10 400 (2015-2017 programming period). There is strong demand for the measure, which is not met.
Governance	
Key stakeholders	A wide group of stakeholders was involved in the development of the initiative: the federation, federal states, social partners, public employment services, academics and representatives of education providers. Implementation of the initiative is overseen by a steering group encompassing nine representatives from the federal states and four representatives of the federation. Social partners have an advisory role (Länder-Bund-ExpertInnengruppe and „Initiative Erwachsenenbildung", 2011[8]) The initiative also has an administrative head office, which liaises with the education providers, ensures quality and monitors the initiative.

Delivery	Accredited education providers implement the courses. Accreditation takes place by an accreditation group involving six independent education experts, which evaluate the applications of education providers against a set of criteria. Following accreditation, education providers can respond to calls for proposals by the federation and federal states.
Funding	
Total funding committed	2012-2014 funding period: EUR 55 Mio.; 2015-2017: EUR 76 Mio; 2018-2021: EUR 112 Mio. (Nationalrat Österreich, 2011[10]; Nationalrat Österreich, 2015[11]; Nationalrat Österreich, 2017[12])
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 2 400 (2012-2014); EUR 2 600 (2015-2017)
Funding source	Tax funding, ESF funding
Results	
Reception	According to the evaluation of the first programming period, 83% of participants were satisfied with the training offer. 93% stated that their expectations had been fulfilled and that they had reached their goals (Stoppacher and Edler, 2014[13]). Interviewed stakeholders experienced the measure as a 'jump forward' and see the initiative as an improvement of the existing offer, albeit many criticise the low coverage of the measure compared to the actual need of the population.
Effectiveness	Evaluations of the two first programming periods show that the measure has exceeded its quantitative targets (Stoppacher and Edler, 2014[13]; Steiner et al., 2017[14]). The 2017 evaluation finds that: i) Drop-out rates are around 22% for both programme strands; ii) transitions to further education or employment is difficult for older individuals and asylum seekers and easier for employed people (based on qualitative evidence) (Steiner et al., 2017[14]).
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Cooperation between the federation and federal states in development and implementation; - Early involvement of all stakeholders in the design of measure; - Use of thorough needs assessment before designing the measure; - Highly developed quality standards and quality assurance mechanisms; - Individualised learning plans, built-in support and counselling services.
Enabling factors	Since the refugee crisis in 2015/2016, the programme has increasingly attracted individuals with a migrant background and asylum seekers. High take-up of the measure may have been more difficult to achieve otherwise, as large parts of the native Austrian population would have to be activated. This group is more difficult to identify and often faces additional attitudinal barriers to participation.

Table A A.4. Paid Educational Leave *(Bildungskarenz, Bildungsteilzeit, Weiterbildungs- und Bildungsteilzeitgeld)*

Key features of the reform	
Short description	Paid full-time education leave has existed in Austria since 1998. In the 2000s, the measured was systematically reformed, making it easier to access and increasing the level of benefits paid during the leave period. From 2013, Austria also made available the *Bildungsteilzeit,* which now provides the opportunity to take part-time educational leave.
Aims and objectives	The measure aims to increase participation in adult learning by giving people paid time-off from work to pursue job-related education and training.
Instruments	The measure replaces foregone earnings during training periods for eligible individuals. Any job-related training (e.g. foreign languages or vocational courses), as well as the pursuit of school or university education is eligible for funding. In the case of full-time paid leave individuals are compensated at the level of the unemployment benefit (55% of net income, minimum EUR 14.53 per day) for a period of two to twelve months. In the case of part-time paid leave, individuals are compensated at EUR 0.82 for every hour of the number of reduced working hours, up to a maximum of EUR 492 for between four and 24 months of part-time training. On average, individuals take-up funding for approximately 230 days (Nagl et al., 2018[6]).
Implementation period	From 1998, ongoing
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	All adults in need of upskilling and reskilling. Adults must be eligible for unemployment benefit. Analysis finds that women, people with Austrian citizenship, younger and higher educated people are more likely to take-up the measure (Bock-Schappelwein, Famira-Mühlberger and Huemer, 2017[15]).
Number of participants (annual)	Full-time leave: 1 500 (2002)-14 000 (2016) *refers to new entrants Part-time leave: 4 000 *refers to new entrants (Nagl et al., 2018[6]; Bösch et al., 2013[1])
Governance	
Key stakeholders	The Austrian Ministry of Labour defines the broad goals of labour market policy yearly. The Austrian PES (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) is then responsible for implementing passive and active labour market policy, including the paid educational leave policy. The organisation is highly decentralised and organised in one federal, nine federal state and 98 regional organisations. Social partners are involved in decision-making and controlling at all levels.
Delivery	The measure is implemented via the AMS (public employment services). Individuals apply for the measure directly to the AMS, either online or in person. The application includes a request form, as well as the written agreement between employee and employer on taking part in the measure (AMS, 2019[16]). Once the application is accepted, the financial support is paid directly to the individual.
Funding	
Annual funding	Full-time leave: EUR 6 Mio. (2002) – 165 Mio. (2016) Part-time leave: EUR 13.5 Mio (2013) – EUR 20 Mio (2016) (Nagl et al., 2018[6]; Bösch et al., 2013[1])
Estimated funding per participant	Full-time leave: EUR 4 000 (2002)- 12 000 (2016) Part-time leave: EUR 3 500 (2014) – 5 500 (2016) (Nagl et al., 2018[6]; Bösch et al., 2013[1])
Funding source	Social insurance funding
Results	
Reception	An evaluation from 2011 suggests that approximately 90% of participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the results following participation. Around 60% stated that they would participate in the measure again, while 20-30% stated that they would not participate in the measure again (Lassnigg et al., 2011[17]).
Effectiveness	An evaluation of measure from 2011 found that the measure does not lead to any important economic effects on employment and wages of participants. This is in contrast to the subjective experience of participants, who feel that their personal circumstances have improved. The measure was used by many companies as a means to keep people 'in employment' during the crisis of 2009 often in combination with short-term working (Lassnigg et al., 2011[17]). There is no updated evaluation, which would reflect the changes to generosity of and access to the measure since then.
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Continuous adaptation of the measure to changing circumstances and responsiveness to research evidence; - Gained popularity during the economic crisis, but managed to stabilise take-up at high levels
Enabling factors	-The measure is frequently used to take-up upskilling opportunities specific to the Austrian system, such as Master Craftsmen Qualifications (*Meisterpruefung* -The right to take-up training and the wage replacement benefit go hand in hand. - As employer agreement is needed, employers' positive attitudes towards training facilitate success

Estonia

Table A A.5. Key data on adult learning in Estonia

Adult learning participation	2007	2016
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months of 25-64 year-olds[1]	42.1	44.0
Training participation in formal or non-formal training in the past 4 weeks of 25-64 year-olds[2]	7.0	15.7
Inclusiveness: Age	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 35-54 year-olds[1]	42.6	45.6
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 55-64 year-olds[1]	27.5	30.4
Inclusiveness: Education	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 0-2[1]	19.7	23.5
Training participation formal and non-formal education training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 5-8[1]	60.6	60.6
Alignment	**2010**	**2015**
% of total training hours of current staff spent on non-health/safety courses[3]	89.5	85.1
Usual reaction to future skill needs: Continuing vocational training of current staff (% of enterprises)[3]	64.9	

Source: [1]Adult Education Survey; [2]Labour Force Survey; [3]Continuing Vocational Training Survey.

Reform context

Institutional context: In Estonia, the responsibility for adult learning is split between different ministries. The *Ministry of Education and Research* is responsible for planning adult learning policy (including skill anticipation and assessment), law making and ensuring that adult education policy is purposeful and sustainable (Eurydice[18]). According to the Adult Education Act, the Adult Education Council advises the Ministry on issues of adult learning. It is composed of representatives of ministries, education institutions, social partners and other relevant stakeholders (State Chancellery and Ministry of Justice, 2015[19]).

The *Ministry of Social Affairs* defines the legal framework for education and training, as well as advice and guidance services to the unemployed and at risk groups. *Eesti Töötukassa* (the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund, EUIF) implements activities. When it comes to workplace training, the *Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications* takes responsibility for creating the framework for employee training in companies. Finally, other ministries, such as the *Ministry of Rural Affairs and Ministry of Environment*, fund education and training initiatives in its area of responsibility.

Providers for adult education include: i) upper secondary schools for adults and departments of non-stationary studies in general education schools: provide basic and general secondary education; ii) VET institutions that are state, local government or company run: provide different levels of VET qualifications; iii) higher education institutions that provide specific and non-specific training for adult learners; iv) a variety of public educational institutions, private provider and local government institutions provide non-formal learning opportunities.

Estonia joined the EU in 2004, the OECD in 2010 and the Eurozone in 2011.

Economic context: Between 2000 and 2007, the Estonian economy grew steadily and strongly by an average of 7.9%. However, the financial crisis in 2008 had a strong impact on the Estonian economy, sending the country intro recession in 2008 and 2009, with a 14.2% GDP decrease in 2009 alone. The economy recovered quickly, returned to growth in 2010, and has since then grown at rates between 7.5% and 2.0% (all data OECD.stat).

In line with this, unemployment and employment rates in Estonia have fluctuated. Starting from a high unemployment rate of 14.5% in 2000, this dropped to a low of 4.6% in 2007, before shooting back up to 16.7% in 2010. Since then, the rate has slowly, but steadily recovered to 5.8% in 2017. Likewise, the

employment rate increase from 60.3% in 2000 to 70.1% in 2008, before dropping sharply to 61.3% in 2010. Since 2015, it has exceeded its pre-crisis values and stands at 74.8% in 2018.

In the same period, Estonia underwent a profound change of its industrial structure. Employment shares in the primary sector and secondary sector shrank from 6.7% to 3.3% and 33.0% to 29.7% respectively between 2000 and 2018. Employment in the tertiary sector increased from 60.2% to 67.2%. According to the PAL dashboard (http://www.oecd.org/employment/skills-and-work/adult-learning/dashboard.htm) (Lilien index), Estonia is within the top 10 of countries having experienced the largest transformation of their economic structure between 2005 and 2015 (OECD, 2019[20]). Interviewees highlighted that Estonia underwent an even more radical restructuring prior to this in the 1990s and early 2000s, given that in the early 1990s approximately 20% of Estonians still worked in the primary sector and around 37% in the secondary sector. This implies that there are large shares of the labour force that were trained for a very differently structured economy.

It is notable that the growth rate of adult learning participation has been particularly high in times of economic certainty in Estonia. According to interviewed stakeholders, this is due to the fact that secure employment and a positive economic outlook, allows Estonians to retrain for 'passion projects' or to follow long-hedged dreams. Other stakeholders provided an alternative explanation by suggesting that government spending was drastically reduced in recession times, leading to a stagnation in training participation.

Estonian reforms included in this review

Table A A.6. Expansion of education and training measures in ALMPs

Key features of the reform	
Short description	Over the past decades, Estonia has rapidly expanded the training offer available in the context of ALMPs. Founded in 2002, the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund (EUIF) was initially responsible for passive labour market policy only and assumed responsibility for ALMPs in 2009. Since then, the provision of training-related ALMPs has been continuously improved, modernised and expanded, including in the context of the 2015 Work Ability Reform (Leetmaa, 2015[21]).
Aims and objectives	The aim of the measure is to improve the skills of people whose skills and qualifications do not meet the demand of the labour market. For employed people, it aims to prevent unemployment and acts as a transition support in changing jobs or help them to stay employed.
Instruments	EUIF offers a wide variety of training-related active labour market services for different target groups, including employment measures, disability employment measures and, since 2017, unemployment prevention measures. This includes amongst others labour market training for the employed and unemployed; work practice; job clubs to gain job application skills; support for obtaining specific qualifications; training grants for individuals and employers.
Implementation period	From 2002, ongoing
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Training measures are available both for the unemployed and – since 2017 – for the employed. To be eligible for training, those in employment must meet certain criteria, such as the inability to continue their current position due to health issues; being above 50 years of age; low income; lacking professional or vocational education and/ or having insufficient language skills for further occupational development.
Number of participants (annual)	Minimum: 7 000 (2008); Maximum: 55 000 (2012) *includes individuals in the following measures: labour market training, job search training, work practice, job club, training for employed, support for obtaining qualifications, degree study allowance, training grant.
Governance	
Key stakeholders	The EUIF is a public-private entity, governed by a tripartite Supervisory Board including representatives of the government, employers (Estonian Employers' Confederation) and employees (The Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions, the Estonian Employees' Unions' Federation). Stakeholders interviewed emphasised that the EUIF runs working group to develop different measures, which include individual employers.

Delivery	All training is delivered by providers who hold a schooling licence from the Ministry of Education and Science, who deliver trainings according to specified guidelines and who participate in monthly reporting to the EUIF. The majority of providers are private, with vocational training institutions only playing a small role (Leetmaa, 2015[21]). All training delivered has to provide in-demand skills according to OSKA, or provide ICT or Estonian language skills. Training is purchased by the EUIF in two ways: i) On the open market via a procurement process. Training providers are paid directly by the EUIF; ii) Individuals use training vouchers to pay for training organised by certified training institutions. There are some limitations on the use of the vouchers, namely training duration (2 years for the unemployed, 3 years for the employed) and the maximum amount covered (EUR 2 500).
Funding	
Annual funding	EUR 3 million (2003, 2004) - 16 million (2016) *data provided by EUIF, includes individuals in the following measures: labour market training, job search training, work practice, job club, training for employed, support for obtaining qualifications, degree study allowance, training grant for employers and other grants.
Estimated funding per participant	Minimum: EUR 320 (2004) Maximum: EUR 760 (2009)
Funding source	Social insurance funding, ESF funding
Results	
Reception	Data on participant feedback is only available for the services of the EUIF overall, not for training activities separately. In 2016, for example, EUIF achieved 82 on their satisfaction index of job seekers, against a target of 80, and 96 on their satisfaction index of employed people, against a target of 85 (Eesti Töötukassa, 2017[22]).
Effectiveness	Evaluation evidence is available for selected training-focused ALMPs: - **Labour market training**: A 2011 evaluation using quasi-experimental methods (propensity-score matching) found that people who had participated in labour market training 2009 and 2010 experienced a positive effect on employment outcomes and wages. Some groups saw greater returns from training, including women, older participants and those that had been unemployed for shorter periods (Lauringson et al., 2011[23]). - **Work practice**: A 2010 evaluation found that there was a lack of monitoring information to assess if the measure had an impact. Qualitative information pointed to the fact that where the practice was high quality and individuals were often able to find a job following participation. However, it highlighted shortcomings including lack of clarity on aims and objectives; under-regulated supervision and the lack of certification of acquired skills (Jürgenson, Kirss and Nurmela, 2010[24]).
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Strong links between active and passive labour market policies; - Continuous diversification of measures and expansion to new target groups; - SAA- informed training offer, cooperation with employers; - Evidence-based policy making, learning from other countries experiences; - Use of ESF funding to trial measures, which were later transferred into main budget.
Enabling factors	Estonia is a small country, which allows its PES to be more agile than the PES of larger countries. The fact that Estonia's PES and unemployment insurance system is quite new overall, also allows the PES to react to the needs of the labour market in a more agile way than in other countries with greater institutional path dependencies.

Table A A.7. Lifelong Learning Strategy

Key features of the reform	
Short description	In 2014, Estonia launched its *Lifelong Learning strategy*, a comprehensive strategy to set priorities and guide funding decisions. It sets strategic priorities for the development of adult education, such as increasing adult learning participation and raising adult qualification levels. The strategy is implemented through nine different programmes, one of the related to adult education development.
Aims and objectives	The goal of the strategy is to provide all people in Estonia with tailored learning opportunities throughout their lives, to enable them to self-actualise in society, work and family life (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014[25]). According to stakeholders interviewed, there is some tension around the issue if the strategy aims to solely increase participation in learning or the competitiveness of the labour force at the same time.
Instruments	The strategy sets out quantitative targets, strategic goals and measures, by which it aims to achieve this increase in participation. The strategy is being implemented through nine programmes. The adult learning programme aims to: i) help adults return to formal education; ii) strengthen on-the job training and retraining; and iii) improve the labour market relevance of training.
Implementation period	2014-2020
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Target group of the strategy are all stakeholders in the policy realm, which must take guidance from the strategy. Indirectly, the strategy affects all people in Estonia.
Number of participants (annual)	Not relevant

Governance	
Key stakeholders	The strategy was developed by the Ministry of Education and Research, the Estonian Cooperation Assembly (a network of non-governmental organisations) and the Estonian Education Forum (network of education interest groups, educational organisations, social partners, political parties). The strategy also mentions that the task force responsible for the development of the strategy included experts from the field of education, but who was involved specifically remains unspecified (Ministry of Education and Research, 2014[25]).
Delivery	The strategy is implemented through nine sector specific programmes that set their own quantitative targets and actions.
Funding	
Annual funding	n.a.
Estimated funding per participant	n.a.
Funding source	Tax funding, social insurance funding, ESF funding
Results	
Reception	There is limited information on the reception of the strategy to date. Stakeholders interviewed were generally satisfied with the strategy and its implementation.
Effectiveness	A mid-term evaluation was completed by the consultancies Centar and Praxis in 2019 (Centar and Praxis, 2019[26]). One of the key findings is that effectiveness of the overall strategy could be improved if there was greater alignment between: i) the strategy and its implementation plans, as well as; ii) between measures funded by different funding sources, namely the state budget and ESF-funded measures. It was also noted that more sophisticated performance indicators were needed to monitor the success of the reform.
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- The strategy sets quantitative targets and specifies implementation programmes; - Certain elements of the strategy are highly valued by the interviewed stakeholders, e.g. the skill anticipation system OSKA, and second-chance education opportunities.
Enabling factors	- Strong stakeholder cooperation and political buy-in.

Table A A.8. State-Commissioned Short Courses

Key features of the reform	
Short description	Following a pilot in 2008/2009, the Ministry of Education has been funding state-commissioned training courses for adults since 2009. The short-term vocational courses are free of charge for individuals and aim to target those who typically do not take part in adult education. Since 2015, the programme has had an explicit focus on groups with low learning participation, including the low-skilled, older adults and migrants.
Aims and objectives	In 2009-2014, the programme had the dual objective of increasing participation in adult learning and raising the labour market competitiveness of the adult population across Estonia. Interviewed stakeholders now describe the objective as being supporting adults in gaining new skills or updating the skills, with the view to decrease the risk of them losing their job due to a lack of skills.
Instruments	The offered training courses are short vocational or general training courses aimed at improving key competences, delivered by vocational or applied higher education institutions. Training time comprises an average of 50 academic hours, yet ranges from 20 to 100 academic hours depending on the training programme. 50% of the training time can be provided as independent study. Given the short-term nature of these trainings, they are not complete retraining courses, but rather give individuals the opportunity to develop specific job-relevant skills or competences. The labour market relevance of the courses is ensured through the yearly (formally biannually) priority setting by the Ministry of Education under consultation of labour market and SAA information.
Implementation period	From 2009, ongoing
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	The target group of the programme has changed over time (Leetma et al., 2015[27]). At inception the programme targeted employed adults and from 2010 also the unemployed. From 2011, the programme started to shift its focus to adults with low or outdated skills, who may be at risk of skill obsolescence and job-loss. In the 2015-2023 funding period, the operational programme specifies that the provision focuses on people without professional education, individuals with low or outdated skills and those who need specific skills to increase their value-added at work (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Estonia, 2014[28]).
Number of participants (annual)	8 000 (2007-2014) *based on numbers provided by the Ministry of Education and Research

Governance	
Key stakeholders	The Ministry of Finance, as the ESF Managing Authority, and the Ministry of Education and Science were involved in the design of the measure. The Ministry of Education and its partners, namely the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Ministry of Economics and Communication set priority areas for funding yearly. Priorities are informed by labour market developments, OSKA information and the performance of training courses in the previous funding period. Innove is the implementing agency of the ESF, which processes project applications, monitors progress and fulfils an overall administrative role.
Delivery	Courses are delivered by vocational and applied higher education institutions. Currently a trial is ongoing, which involves higher education institutions in the delivery. Between 2009 and 2014, the Ministry of Education ordered state-commissioned study places twice a year, which was subsequently changed to once per year. Schools are asked to prepare applications in line with identified priority areas. A panel of experts with subject knowledge and teaching experience evaluates the proposals.
Funding	
Total funding	EUR 4 Mio. (2007-2009); EUR 8 Mio (2009-2014); EUR 20 Mio. (2015-2023)
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 160 (2007-2009); EUR 240 (2009-2014)
Funding source	Tax funding, ESF funding
Results	
Reception	Since 2010, regular feedback surveys of participants show that they are generally satisfied with the courses. According to an evaluation from 2015, participants emphasise the positive impact course participation had on their general knowledge, skills and networks, however to a lesser extent on work-related skills and opportunities. Participants were generally critical of the short duration of the courses (Leetma et al., 2015[27]).
Effectiveness	Looking at the objective of increasing competitiveness in the labour market, an 2015 evaluation showed that participants in the 2009-2014 funding periods experienced positive employment outcomes and wage returns compared to a matched comparison group (Leetma et al., 2015[27]). It should be noted that results were sensitive to different estimation methods. Results were best for those who attended between 40 and 59 hours of training. Longer courses seemed to have a negative relationship with future earnings. Effects were also larger for participants, who were in employment, those with low education levels, younger and older age groups (50+).
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Introducing a new funding source for non-formal training courses, as well as massively increasing provision of non-formal training courses; - Identifying priority areas of training provision in line with labour market needs.
Enabling factors	- A strong and well-established national learning culture; - A strong network of training providers; accompanying activities to further strengthen providers, e.g. train the trainer activities; - The existence of 30 days study leave/year, which allows individuals to arrange for time to take-part in non-formal learning activities with their employer.

Hungary

Table A A.9. Key data on adult learning in Hungary

Adult learning participation	2007	2016
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months of 25-64 year-olds[1]	9.0	55.7
Training participation in formal or non-formal training in the past 4 weeks of 25-64 year-olds[2]	3.9	6.3
Inclusiveness: Age	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 35-54 year-olds[1]	9.0	60.6
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 55-64 year-olds[1]	2.5	38.2
Inclusiveness: Education	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 0-2[1]	2.6	41.6
Training participation formal and non-formal education training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 5-8[1]	19.4	67.3
Alignment	**2010**	**2015**
% of total training hours of current staff spent on non-health/safety courses[3]	86.8	81.4
Usual reaction to future skill needs: Continuing vocational training of current staff (% of enterprises)[3]	49.7	46.7

Source: [1]Adult Education Survey; [2]Labour Force Survey; [3]Continuing Vocational Training Survey.

Reform context

Institutional context: Adult learning in Hungary is typically understood in a two-fold way: adult education (adults in the initial education system) and adult training (can be formal or non-formal). Provision of adult education is entirely public, while adult training is provided by a variety of public, commercial and non-profit organisations. Legal, institutional and financing conditions of the adult education system were developed from 2001 and the following decade was characterised by convergence to EU norms and recommendations. (Farkas, 2013[29])

Over the past 10 years, the government has strongly focused on vocational education. The responsible Ministry for adult education and training activities has been changed four times and the number of people working on the topic have been reduced. However, due to the EU accession vast amounts of ESF funds were available for strengthening lifelong learning. According to interviewees, the availability of these funds is behind the significant increase in participation in adult education. Just between 2013 and 2015 three different ESF funded adult education programmes delivered training each to more than 100 000 individuals (around 2% of the adult population). However the financial sustainability of these large programmes is questionable, while their impact on employability is limited (Századvég and E&Y, 2016[30]).

Economic context: Transition to a market economy, which caused strong structural change solidified during the 2000s. The financial crisis hit the country hard due to its openness and the high share of debt denominated in foreign currencies. GDP contracted by 6.6% in 2009 and unemployment rose to 12%, particularly among youth. The economy rebounded in 2013, GDP as well as inward foreign direct investment steadily increased. This expansion led to labour shortages across all skill-levels, and specially the high skilled, as emigration trends to other EU countries also accelerated over the past decade. The development was also characterised by strong regional inequality.

Since the transition, the country had high levels of inactivity and long-term unemployment. In the disadvantaged regions low growth traps emerged with low skill levels of the population paired with few employment opportunities. The government introduced the Public Work Programme in 2011 to decrease unemployment and inactivity of the population. It provides a monthly allowance for low skilled individuals in exchange for 6-8 hours of work daily mostly for the local municipality. (Farkas, 2014[31])

Hungarian reforms included in this review

Table A A.10. Open Learning Centres

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The programme established learning centres across the country and introduced short courses for disadvantaged adults who typically have very limited learning opportunities.
Aims and objectives	To develop basic skills and competences of disadvantaged adults through a complex and innovative adult education model to improve their employability as well as getting by in everyday life. Additional aims are to create local learning communities and a lifelong learning mind-set for those who had bad experiences with initial education.
Instruments	**Learning centres**, which are equipped with modern digital devices (digital boards, tablets, smartphones and laptops) and are open flexibly to provide informal learning opportunities to 8-15 adults at a time. Free, short (20-30 hours) **courses** adapted to how adults learn effectively and to the needs of the target group. Topics cover foreign languages, everyday finances, effective self-management, getting by as a women in the 21st century, with the possibility to organise additional courses based on local needs. All centres are managed by **learning coordinators**, who are responsible for the learning activities, to advise individuals and to incorporate local needs. The coordinators also manage relations with other learning centres and the head office of the project. (ProgressConsult, 2014[32])
Implementation period	Preparations started in 2006, a pilot project was run in 2009 and the scaling up of the Network took place between 2012-2015. Activities of the network are ongoing with a new wave of ESF funding received for the 2017-2021 period.
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Disadvantaged adults, whose social or labour-market cohesion is at risk due to their low level of basic skills and key competences and have limited access to adult learning opportunities (unemployed, low qualified, older workers, those at risk of skill obsolescence etc.)
Total number of participants	Minimum 21 000 participants including those engaged in informal learning at the learning centres (2012-2015) and minimum 1000 during the pilot period (ProgressConsult, 2014[32]).
Governance	
Key stakeholders	The network was initiated by an alliance of 10 Hungarian non-profit civil sector organisations. The concept was co-designed by experts who had insights into the issues and difficulties of the Hungarian context and the international good practices. The pilot phase was funded by EEA and Norway Grants and the implementation was aided by the Norwegian Adult Education Institution (former VOX, currently Skills Norway). The scale-up was funded by the European Social Fund. The governance of the network is run by the founding association, an alliance of 10 non-profit organisations, which a member organisation of the European Basic Skills Network. Locations were selected after consultation with the local government and the organisations that run the centres locally were selected through tenders. (SZÖVET, 2013[33])
Delivery	Individuals can access training by getting in touch with the learning coordinators of the centres. Local learning coordinators advise individuals, manage the centres and organise the learning opportunities (taking into account), which are delivered by external education providers. The coordinators also consult employers and local government and take their needs into account when deciding on learning opportunities. A pilot with 10 centres ran from 2009, after which the programme was scaled up to 52 centres that are distributed across the country including small settlements. Regional coordination hubs and a management information system helps the work of the local coordinators including in identifying competent teachers. Funding since the scale-up is provided by the ESF, which makes operations subject to the funding cycles resulting in issues of continuity (some years the centres did not deliver courses between two funding cycles).
Funding	
Total funding	EUR 6.5 billion (2012-2015) (ProgressConsult, 2014[32])
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 720 (2012-2015)
Funding source	ESF funding, previously EEA and Norway grants
Results	
Reception	The programme was showcased as a best practice both related to EEA and ESF grants (SZÖVET, 2013[33]). Participants are very satisfied with the programme highlighting competence of the teachers, usefulness of the courses and positive atmosphere in the learning groups. 70% of those, who take part in a course return to enrol in another one. In some centres, learning sessions were also organised between two funding cycles due to the proactivity and motivation of the community. The coordinators of the centres consider their work motivating and impactful on the individuals' lives.

Effectiveness	No evaluation was conducted. The programme involved at least 21 000 adults in learning activities, who traditionally have limited development opportunities. The programme equipped adults with useful knowledge and improve attitudes towards learning, according to stakeholders involved. There is anecdotal evidence of improved employment prospects of individuals after participating in courses provided by the network.
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Paying special attention to how adults learn best (methods and content) when designing learning opportunities; - Addressing all of the complex barriers faced by adults with low skills/qualifications (attitudinal, physical, material); - Providing positive learning experience; - Embeddedness in local community, taking into account local needs; - Strong focus on HR practices to ensure quality of the programme (learning coordinators and teachers); - Establishing a network of providers to share experiences and good practices (in person and through a knowledge base).
Enabling factors	- Using existing physical infrastructure to create the centres (libraries, community centres); - Building on knowledge of NGOs that worked with the target group before the programme; - ESF funds.

Table A A.11. Basic Skill Courses *("I am learning again")*

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The programme provided free learning opportunities to adults with low levels of qualifications including basic skill courses for public workers over the winter months.
Aims and objectives	The overarching aim was to improve employability of adults with low skills and low or outdated qualifications to improve their employability and enhance participation in life-long learning.
Instruments	The programme provided multiple learning pathways based on the skills and qualifications of the individuals such as developing basic competencies, finishing primary school or acquiring vocational qualifications. From 2013, the programme was adapted to primarily provide free **basic skill courses** for those in public work (Századvég and E&Y, 2016[34]). Courses followed a modular structure including team-building exercises, literacy and numeracy training as well as sessions on how to learn. Participating in the learning activities was a condition to receive a **monthly allowance** and in some cases those who finished courses successfully got a one-off payment. Additionally, participants were eligible for **transport subsidy** between their home and the location of the training (Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium, 2015[35]).
Implementation period	The programme ran between 2012 and 2015, with a particular focus on public workers from 2013.
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Adults with low skills and low levels of qualifications, with a special focus on those in the public employment programme (i.e. those receiving monthly benefit from the state in exchange for 6-8 hours of work per day mostly carried out in the municipality).
Number of participants (annual)	Minimum: 11 063 (2012) (NFSZ, 2013[36]) Maximum: 101 222 (2014) (NFSZ, 2015[37])
Governance	
Key stakeholders	The 'I am learning again programme' was initiated by the by the government as part of the National Reform Programme that attributed goals to the allocation of ESF funds. Eleven public training centres (Türr István Training and Research Centres) were appointed to implement the programme while cooperating with the PES as it was involved in running the public work programme.
Delivery	Those, who pursued **formal learning pathways** (secondary school, high school, VET courses) participated in the public formal education system. The **basic skill programmes** for public workers were delivered by the Türr Centres. The centres had two months to develop the material, recruit teachers and start the basic skill courses. The only requirement when recruiting teachers was to have tertiary qualifications; no dedicated teaching experience was required, nor were the teachers trained on how to educate adults. Learning materials were developed by external consultants hired by the centres. The basic skill training was delivered at 1 455 locations across the country with the work of 7 733 teachers. The classes were held in existing schools (initial or vocational) during 6-8 hours daily for 5 months. After the winters of 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 the programme was discontinued. Funding was provided by the ESF.
Funding	
Total funding	EUR 144 million (2012-2015) (Nemzetgazdasági Minisztérium, 2015[35])
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 780
Funding source	ESF funding

Results	
Reception	Participants expressed frustration because the exercises and the learning materials were not adapted to adults. They considered the literacy and numeracy training particularly childish. Many students expressed that they only participated and continued to turn up to receive the monthly benefits (the condition was a presence in minimum 70% of the courses). The teachers liked the modular structure, which helped them to differentiate within the groups. However, they mentioned that they had very limited time to prepare before the start of the programme and that they did not receive any training or pointers on how to teach adults. They found it difficult to maintain the attention of the participants and motivate them for studying. (Kerülő and Nyilas, 2014[38])
Effectiveness	No evaluation was conducted. The programme managed to involve 188 000 adults with low levels of qualifications, but this did not translate in improvement in their employability (Századvég and E&Y, 2016[30]). What is more there is some evidence that the programme further decreased motivation towards learning among participants (Kerülő and Nyilas, 2014[38]).
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- The whole country was covered, even the most disadvantaged regions; - Modular structure of the programme; - Income support while enrolled in the training, as well as transportation costs were covered.
Enabling factors	- The public work programme provided a convenient way to identify adults with low skills and qualifications; - ESF funding.

Table A A.12. Free Second Vocational Degree

Key features of the reform	
Short description	A law change made it free for adults to obtain two vocational degrees free of charge at public education providers.
Aims and objectives	The goal was to facilitate up-skilling of those who do not yet possess a vocational level degree and to re-skill those who do not find employment with their existing qualifications.
Instruments	Due to the 2015 modification of the 2013 adult education law, the existing public VET schools extended free provision to adults of any age (with a maximum of two free degrees). Additional funds were provided by the central budget to the VET system. No new institutions or systems were established.
Implementation period	The modification of the law took place in 2015. It is still in place.
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	All adults who want to learn a (or another) profession, especially those without vocational qualifications or those who have difficulties to find employment with their current qualifications.
Number of participants	20 000 (2016/17) *additional enrolment in adult VET after the adoption of the law. (ITM, 2019[39])
Governance	
Key stakeholders	The modification was developed and adopted by the government. To fulfil the additional tasks, funds were transferred to the public VET Centres, who are mandated to deliver the courses. Stakeholder consultation prior the law was very limited.
Delivery	In 2015, the government announced the plan to change the adult education law along with multiple VET reforms. The law was adopted and became effective from the subsequent school year. There are 44 training centres across the country, all made up of 6-8 vocational schools. They provide school-based IVET and vocational courses in around 500 professions as described in the National Training Registry (OKJ). (Karácsony, 2015[40])These courses are tailored to adults in a sense that they are outside of working hours (i.e. courses are held 3 times a week over evenings and weekends) and they focus on job-related skills without covering general knowledge subjects.
Funding	
Annual funding	No dedicated/additional funding in 2016 or 2015. (Parliament of Hungary, 2015[41]) EUR 20 million (2017) *additional funding for VET institutions to cope with increasing number of adults. (Parliament of Hungary, 2016[42]) EUR 40 million (2018) *additional funding for VET institutions to cope with increasing number of adults. (Parliament of Hungary, 2017[43])
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 950 (2017) EUR 2 000 (2018)
Funding source	Tax funding
Results	
Reception	Adults welcome the possibility of obtaining an additional vocational degree for free. The conditions favour public consumption, crowding out demand for private provision, which raised concern of public education companies.

Effectiveness	No evaluation was conducted. Some experts voiced the concern that, as the public VET system is not state of the art, channelling more funds to it might not be effective. There is also some anecdotal evidence of individuals with high educational attainment taking this new opportunity to enrol in free vocational courses for personal reasons (confectionery, photography etc.), rather than low educated individuals gaining vocational qualifications.
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Building on a well-known vocational certificate both by adults and employers (OKJ); - Making education free universally.
Enabling factors	- Possibility to learn VET courses in form of evening classes outside of working hours; - Extensive public education provision and infrastructure.

Italy

Table A A.13. Key data on adult learning in Italy

Adult learning participation	2007	2016
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months of 25-64 year-olds[1]	22.2	41.5
Training participation in formal or non-formal training in the past 4 weeks of 25-64 year-olds[2]	6.2	8.3
Inclusiveness: Age	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 35-54 year-olds[1]	23.0	42.3
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 55-64 year-olds[1]	11.8	33.0
Inclusiveness: Education	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 0-2[1]	8.2	21.6
Training participation formal and non-formal education training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 5-8[1]	51.4	72.0
Alignment	**2010**	**2015**
% of total training hours of current staff spent on non-health/safety courses[3]	74.9	67.2
Usual reaction to future skill needs: Continuing vocational training of current staff (% of enterprises)[3]	53.4	59.9

Source: [1]Adult Education Survey; [2]Labour Force Survey; [3]Continuing Vocational Training Survey.

Reform context

Institutional context: The central government in Italy has exclusive legislative authority on the general organisation of the education system including staff, quality assurance, minimum standards and general dispositions. There is, however, no national framework law on adult learning. Public policies are defined and implemented by various ministries, in particular the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) for the provision of basic skills and education to adults, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for all other forms of training. Regions have authority over the supply of adult and vocational training courses through accredited agencies, but have to operate in coordination with the two ministries above. A National Observatory on Adult Learning (*Osservatorio Nazionale sulla Formazione Continua*) was established by the Labour Ministry in 2003 to enhance cooperation among stakeholders including regional institutions, but the Observatory's mandate was not renewed after the first three years.

Significant changes to the governance of training programs were introduced in 2016, with the ratification of the labour market reform law "Jobs Act". The Law created a new National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL), designed to provide incentives for the unemployed to retrain and upskill in order to meet the needs of the labour market. The Agency was supposed to centralise the delivery of active labour market policies, but the reform was rejected by a national referendum in December 2016. The competence over active labour market policies remains therefore shared between ANPAL and the Region. As the reform took place outside the period of main interest for this study, it was not made the object of special analysis.

Economic context: Labour productivity growth has been decreasing since the beginning of the '90s and has turned negative as of 2004, mainly driven by negative growth in total factor productivity (OECD, 2017[44]). Profound regional disparities persist, with Italy displaying the highest regional dispersion in productivity among all considered OECD countries in 2018 (OECD, 2019[45]).

The proportion of 15-29 year-olds who was not in employment, education or training reached its lowest point in 2008 (20%), but always exceeded the OECD average between 2000-2015. Since the Great Recession, the same rate increased again reaching 27% in 2015, against an OECD average of 15% (OECD, 2018[46]). The unemployment rate improved considerably until 2007, but has since picked up again and attested itself to 11% in more recent years. 59% of the unemployed in 2015 were long-term, contrary to 43% in France or 15% in the United States (OECD, 2019[47]). Lastly, the population is steadily aging: the proportion of individuals of age 65 and more increased from 17% in 2000 to 24% in 2015 (OECD, 2019[45]).

Public expenditure on educational institutions in Italy declined by 14% between 2008 and 2013, contrary to a less than 2% reduction in expenditure for other public services (OECD, 2017[48]). 7.9% of public spending financed education in 2014, the lowest in the EU27 plus UK (average at 10.2%). 18% of Italian 18-24 year-olds drop out of school before completing upper-secondary school, against an EU average of 13%.

Information on consolidated public national expenditure on adult learning policies is not available, but information on selected measures can be found in the registers of the different central and regional administrations involved. The lack of consolidated information reflects the fragmentation of responsibilities across institutions, and the variety of public support instruments available.

While the participation rate of 25-64 year-olds to lifelong learning activities increased significantly in the last 15 years, regional disparities between the performing Regions of the North and the less performing ones of the South remain and have increased over time. In 2016, among those who participated to training, 16% (out of 33.3% overall) were low qualified adults (ISCED levels 0-2), compared to 4.8% in 2007.

OECD (2018[49]) highlighted how Italy is enduring a "low-skill equilibrium", where a large proportion of tertiary students graduates in fields of study which are in low demand by the market, while a high rate of job vacancies goes unmet because there are no suitable candidates on the market. Italy ranks at the top of the OECD distribution for its levels of skill- and qualification mismatch (Quintini, 2011[50]).

Italian reforms included in this review

Table A A.14. Adult Education Centres *(Centri Provinciali per l'Istruzione degli Adulti)*

	Key features of the reform
Short description	CPIAs were created by law in 2012 by aggregating pre-existing institutions called *Centri Territoriali Permanenti* (Permanent Territorial Centres). Since 2015, CPIAs provide basic education courses to adults, aimed at achieving a certification or a degree. They are organised as a network of education institutions within a given territorial unit. The reform process, which is still ongoing as of 2019, adopts several aspects of the 2016 European Council's "Upskilling Pathways" Recommendation.
Aims and objectives	The law instituting the CPIAs (263/2012) states the reform's objectives: (a) raise the level of education of unskilled people, reduce rates of school dropouts by involving young adults in the adult education system, and support adults' return to the education system; (b) taylor teaching to adults; (c) valorise the competencies adults already possess; (d) shorten the distance between the supply of courses and the students, by creating a network of teaching institutions; (e) enhance recognition and use of the released education certificates. Overall, the aims seem well linked to the identified needs, in both content and organisation of the teaching activities.

Instruments	The CPIAs offer (a) Italian language courses for foreigners and leading to a certification of language proficiency (A2 level at least); (b) Level 1 courses leading to lower-secondary degree, or to the completion of mandatory schooling; (c) Level 2 courses leading to an upper-secondary degree of VET nature; (d) basic English language and ICT classes. Ahead of the course provision, a local evaluation commission organises interviews with candidates aiming at recognise their prior formal, non-formal or informal learning. The commission certifies that the candidate is in possession of those competencies (in the form of credits), and the certificate is valid throughout the national territory. After some orientation and guidance, the candidate and CPIA personnel sign an "Individual Learning Agreement", which describes the student's forthcoming learning path and coursework.
Implementation period	Established in 2012, operational since 2015.
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	There are four main target groups: adults who had taken fewer years of education than mandated by the law; adults who attained a lower-secondary education title but want to continue with an upper secondary cycle; foreign adults who need basic literacy training and Italian language courses; 16 year-olds who cannot keep attending school during the day for a certified reason.
Number of participants (annual)	183 000 (Academic year 2015/16) to 225 000 (2017/18). Source: MLPS and MIUR (2018[51]), which assumes that one "Individual Learning Agreements" corresponds to one enrolled person.
Governance	
Key stakeholders	CPIAs are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). The 2012 law mandated the creation of Lifelong Learning Territorial Networks, which are supposed to connect stakeholders involved in lifelong learning. Through a Technical Inter-institutional Committee (*Tavolo Tecnico Inter-istituzionale*), the MIUR consulted local administrations, social partners, training providers, school administrators and teachers while designing the CPIAs. The consultations' outcomes seem to be well– albeit not fully – reflected in the current design of the Centres.
Delivery	All training is delivered by the CPIAs, who are emanations of the MIUR and deliver trainings following specified guidelines. The Centres enjoy substantial autonomy in didactics, recognition of students' learning needs, and fundraising and linkages to local administrations and social partners. Some aspects of organisational autonomy, however, could be strengthened, thus better highlighting the differences between youth schools and CPIAs. To assist with the deployment of CPIAs, MIUR produce PAIDEIAs ("Action plans for innovation in adult education"), i.e. action plans targeting personnel in CPIAs and providing them with guidance on how CPIAs can set up their didactics and administrative organisation. Capacity building linked to the plans is offered by several central and regional public institutions. PAIDEIA plans can reflect the discussions of PAIDEIA Working Groups, also organised by MIUR and gathering a large set of stakeholders. Lastly, a network of CPIAs called RIDAP (*Rete Italiana Istruzione degli Adulti* – Italian Network for Adult Education) fosters the sharing of knowledge and best practices across CPIAs.
Funding	
Annual funding	n.a.
Estimated funding per participant	n.a.
Funding source	Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR)
Results	
Reception	Data on participants' feedback is not available. However, extracts of interviews with teachers and school administrators communicate enthusiasm about CPIAs, despite the Centres' remaining shortcomings (Benedetti, 2018[52]).
Effectiveness	Preliminary results from the monitoring of CPIAs for 2015/16 and 2016/17 are contained in Benedetti (2018[52]) and INDIRE (2018[53]), but only cover part of the population of CPIAs. If further efforts were input in monitoring, the results are not yet available to the public at the moment of writing. CPIAs must fill in a form called RAV ("Rapporto di Auto-Valutazione" – self-evaluation report), which was piloted in 2018/19 for CPIAs. INVALSI, the institution in charge of the evaluation of school performance is working with CPIA personnel to develop specific tools for CPIAs, and in particular an ad-hoc RAV and list of performance indicators. Interviewed experts highlighted that limited autonomy in personnel management and infrastructure management still hamper the quality of the services. This is combined with a need for further training of teachers, whose experience is often limited to youth, and whose responsibilities and competencies have expanded considerably, including recognising prior learning and providing guidance to students.
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- The recognition of candidate students' prior learning, including of informal nature. - The certification of such learning, in the framework of the National Qualification Framework. - The personalisation of the learning path, with a possible reduction in the coursework. Students' guidance. - The enhanced flexibility in the courses scheduling, and the possibility of distance learning (up to 20% of total hours). - The substantial (albeit incomplete) organisational and didactics autonomy granted to CPIAs. - The inclusion of CPIAs in a framework of mandatory self-evaluation, one that is becoming specific to CPIAs.

Enabling factors	The content of the programme can be of interest for any country facing problems with: i) low basic skills of adults; ii) high rates of school dropouts; iii) high demand for national language courses, e.g. among migrants. The process of reform presents several aspects of potential interest for other countries: evaluation of competencies at entry into the education system and their certification; personalisation and planning of the education path, with a consequent reduction in coursework for the student; students' guidance, at least at the beginning of the learning path; involvement of teachers and school administrators in the process of designing the policy and the subsequent capacity-building activities; a number of instruments (plans, working groups) designed by MIUR to assist the activity of CPIAs.

Table A A.15. Training Funds *(Fondi paritetici interprofessionali per la formazione continua)*

Key features of the reform	
Short description	Established by law in 2000 but operational since 2004, the Funds are associations run by social partners which levy funds from companies and use them to finance the organisation of training activities for the companies themselves or, more rarely, individual workers. By law, firms are levied 0.3% of workers' payroll, and can decide to channel those resources in one of the Training Funds. The Funds then deploy these resources to support companies' training activities, usually covering only a share (approx. 60-65%) of the total training cost.
Aims and objectives	The measure forces employers to earmark resources for workforce training. In practice, since the Great Recession, the Funds also supported training for the unemployed and workers in temporary surplus (*cassa integrati*), an occurrence which has become more and more frequent ever since, despite remaining of small overall magnitude. The use of resources in the Funds to finance apprenticeship contracts is allowed but very rare.
Instruments	Resources are allocated by the Funds to "individual" or "collective accounts". "Individual accounts" support a learning activity directed to the employees of the companies from which resources are levied. "Collective accounts" can be accessed by companies after presenting a training plan, which abides to the features described by the Fund in a public call. The Fund evaluates the plan submitted by the company, and decides whether to finance the activity. The calls are the main instrument through which the Funds can support training targeted to a specific set of competencies or a specific subset of workers, when applicable. Training can be delivered directly by the involved companies (60% of the cases in 2016). Most training activities are delivered by non-formal training providers and escape quality monitoring.
Implementation period	2004 onwards
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	The policy targets all employed individuals in companies subscribing to one of the Training Funds. It does not target any particular sub-population of workers or any precise type of skills, but aims at providing job-relevant skills. 20% of workers trained through the Funds in 2016 received training mandated by law on health and safety provisions (ANPAL, 2018[54]).
Number of participants (annual)	Approx. 1.5 million employees covered by training plans approved in 2016 (ANPAL, 2018[54]).
Governance	
Key stakeholders	The funds are run by social partners with the authorisation of the Ministry of Labour. The management boards are composed by an equal number of representatives appointed by employers, employers' and workers' organisations. All training proposals must be agreed between social partner representatives, albeit this does not always apply in practice. ANPAL is tasked by the Ministry of Labour (MLPS) with verifying the Funds' compliance with the requirements set by law, and establish strategic directions and priorities for the Funds. It benefits from technical assistance by INAPP (National Institute for the Analysis of Public Policies). Social partners and representatives of the regions were involved in the design of the law instituting the Training Funds. However, the institution conceived to foster discussion among these stakeholders (the National Observatory on Adult Learning) was created in 2003 but was never fully operational. Interaction between Funds, State and Regions can involve the joint programming of grants for learning activities, but is only occasional and not regulated.
Delivery	Firms develop training plans (i.e. training proposals) and apply for funding, which are evaluated by the Training Fund issuing the call for proposals. Firms can choose the Fund they join, effectively creating competition among Funds. In practice, weak implementation of portability rules across Funds and a fuzzy legal framework still limit the effectiveness of this quasi-market. The 2018 ANPAL Guidelines on the operations of the Funds aimed at tackling this issue. Interactions across Training Funds do not have a regulated structure, they remain most often ad-hoc and based on goodwill.
Funding	
Annual funding	In 2016, the Funds approved training plans for approx. EUR 470 million, complemented by further EUR 236 million in direct companies' resources (ANPAL, 2018[54]).
Estimated funding per participant	Approx. EUR 300 (2016).
Funding source	Mandatory levy corresponding to 0.3% of companies' payroll. The 0.3% applies across sectors and regions, which does not reflect the heterogeneity in needs and costs of training across these units.
Results	
Reception	No systematic information is collected about users' satisfaction.

Effectiveness	The measure's take-up is wide, with a very large number of firms and workers being covered. Still, a large share of the Funds' resources support health and safety (20% of workers trained in 2016) and administration (13%) training, while much fewer individuals train to face new challenges on the workplace (ANPAL, 2018[54]; INAPP, 2017[55]). The diversion of resources to support other passive or active labour market policies is a source of concern for some stakeholders. The Funds' activities are subject to regular monitoring, but monitoring does not extend to the quality of the supported training. There are no homogeneous training quality standards for the Funds, and Funds make their own quality assessments. There is no formal mechanism to select training providers, and in at least 60% of cases (2016) the provider was the applying company itself. The provider is usually accredited by the regional accreditation system, but some Funds also developed their own accreditation system. The training activity can but often does not lead to a certification, and there is no uniform certification mechanism across Funds or Regions. Evaluations of the training's outcomes for workers or companies are rare and on an ad-hoc basis, depending on the Fund. A systematic approach, possibly using an independent research body, is absent (OECD, 2019[56]).
Assessment and transferability	
Success factors	In the institutional and legislative quasi-vacuum that characterised adult learning in Italy before 2004, the Training Funds are a very welcome intervention and produced a very large increase in training participation of the employed. The Funds are decentralised and can therefore be retailed to local needs. The participation of low-qualified workers is strong.
Enabling factors	The policy targets a large population of workers and companies, and allows for individual, company-level, sector- and regional-level training plants, which speaks of the policy's versatility. Similar levies exist and are successful in different European countries, although the rate is usually higher than 0.3% and the management of the levied resources not necessarily attributed to ad-hoc institutions such as the Funds (OECD, 2019[56]).

The Netherlands

Table A A.16. Key data on adult learning in the Netherlands

Adult learning participation	2007	2016
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months of 25-64 year-olds[1]	44.6	64.1
Training participation in formal or non-formal training in the past 4 weeks of 25-64 year-olds[2]	17.0	18.8
Inclusiveness: Age	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 35-54 year-olds[1]	44.9	65.8
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: 55-64 year-olds[1]	28.7	51.4
Inclusiveness: Education	**2007**	**2016**
Training participation in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 0-2[1]	25.4	38.3
Training participation formal and non-formal education training in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree ISCED 5-8[1]	65.5	81.2
Alignment	**2010**	**2015**
% of total training hours of current staff spent on non-health/safety courses[3]	83.9	79.4
Usual reaction to future skill needs: Continuing vocational training of current staff (% of enterprises)[3]	68.7	74.5

Source: [1]Adult Education Survey; [2]Labour Force Survey; [3]Continuing Vocational Training Survey.

Reform context

Institutional context: In the Netherlands, non-formal education/training provision is private; only formal or initial education is publicly funded. This means that in the context of adult learning, the Dutch government has limited power to influence non-formal education and training provision. Within formal education and training, it should be noted that the Netherlands has a strong vocational education and training (VET) system with high graduation rates and relatively good labour market outcomes (OECD, 2016[57]). Particularly the dual VET track attracts some older workers who want to upskill, retrain, or receive a certificate for their acquired knowledge and skills.

Over the past decade, the responsibility of adult learning has moved between the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, and the Ministry Education. Between 2005 and 2010, a temporary 'Project Directorate Learning and Work' was created – a collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

The Netherlands has a highly developed model of consensus-based decision-making, characterised by tripartite co-operations between employers' organisations, trade unions and the government. Trade unions and employers' organisations are united in the Labour Foundation (*Stichting van de Arbeid*), which has monthly meetings (as well as ad-hoc phone calls and drop-bys) with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, in which the Labour Foundation can execute their advisory role in policymaking.

Several national experts place the observed increase in training participation in the Netherlands in the context of the increase of the legal retirement age. In 2010, the social partners reached a pension agreement about increasing the legal retirement age, which they followed-up in 2011 with a policy agenda (*Beleidsagenda 2020*) on how to keep the older population healthy, motivated and employable until they reach their (increased) retirement age. The agenda includes several social partner agreements as well as suggestions for accompanying government policy that are related to education/training participation of current and future older workers (Stichting van de Arbeid, 2011[58]). National experts argue that the increased legal retirement age, as well as the debate that led to it, increased the awareness among trade unions, employers, the government and the population that everybody needs to re- and upskill throughout their working lives in order to remain employable until retirement. The selected reforms are directly or indirectly linked to the policy agenda.

Economic context: The Netherlands has a thriving economic climate, with a GDP that is typically higher than on average in the European Union, the OECD or in its neighbouring countries Germany and Belgium, and unemployment rates are relatively low. Although the Netherlands was slightly less severely hit by the financial crisis than on average in the EU, it took longer to recover from it. Between 2010-2013, economic growth smaller than the EU and OECD-averages, and unemployment rates increased more rapidly than in neighbouring countries (from 2.8% in 2008 to 7.4% in 2014). However, from 2014 onwards, Dutch economic growth increased again and unemployment rates decreased compared to other countries, with a GDP growth of 2% in 2018 (above the EU and OECD-averages) and 3.9% unemployment (The World Bank Group, 2019[59]) (The World Bank Group, 2019[60]) (The World Bank Group, 2019[61]).

The Dutch workforce is characterised by a large share of people in non-standard work, especially part-timers (OECD, 2018[62]). Moreover, the prevalence of part-time work is increasing (Statistics Netherlands, 2019[63]). Between 2013-2017 (the policy window of the selected reforms), 500 000 to 700 000 people were unemployed (Statistics Netherlands, 2019[64]). Since mid-2014, most unemployed or long-term unemployed people are 45 years or older. Although this must in part be due to the ageing of the population, it may to some extent also because older workers find it harder to re-enter employment. Between 2013-2017, a total of 370 040 individuals aged 50+ entered unemployment benefits (Dutch Government, n.d.[65]).

Dutch reforms included in this review

Table A A.17. Network Training (*Netwerk training "Succesvol naar werk"*)

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The reform introduced a new job-search and networking training programme for older unemployed adults (55+/50+). The training consisted of 10 group meetings of 4 hours, led by a PES employee. Participation in the training was free of charge, but mandatory for those who were at least 55/50 years old and received unemployment benefits for at least 3 months.
Aims and objectives	The overall aim was to decrease (long-term) unemployment among older individuals, through improving participants' job-search and networking skills. In order to reach these aims, the objective was that at least 120 000 people would participate in the Network training between 2013-2016 (Dutch Government, n.d.[65]).
Instruments	Training measure
Implementation period	1 July 2013 until 1 October 2016 (i.e., the last participants finished early 2017)
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Unemployed individuals who are at least 55 years old (2013) or 50 years old (2014-2016)
Number of participants (total)	123 021 participants (Dutch Government, n.d.[65])

Governance	
Key stakeholders	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, PES, social partners
Delivery	PES (*UWV*)
Funding	
Total funding	EUR 37 million (Tweede Kamer, 2014[66])
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 300
Funding source	Tax funding
Results	
Reception	Training participants are generally satisfied with the training and the trainer. Moreover, their confidence in their job-search skills increased, as well as their perception of social support in their job-search. However, after participating in the training, participants are more likely to believe that in order to get a job, one must be at the right place at the right time, and that one gets a job thanks to the influence and help of others. Also, job-search motivation did not increase significantly due to the training (Van Hoof and Van den Hee, 2017[67]).
Effectiveness	The objective that at least 120 000 people would participate in the Network training between 2013-2016 was reached. Moreover, results from a randomised field experiment shows that the overall aim was reached as well: The training was effective in increasing job-search skills and the probability to re-enter employment (De Groot and Van der Klaauw, 2017[68]) (Van Hoof and Van den Hee, 2017[67]). However, the effects are small, and to date there is no causal evidence that the introduction of the Network training increased participation in education and training. In addition, despite the fact that the training was mandatory, many people in the target group did not participate (De Groot and Van der Klaauw, 2017[68]).
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Clearly defined target group and objectives for the PES offices. - Full course (40h, 3 months) with the same group may enhance the quality of the training. - The fact that the randomised experiment were part of the policy design enhanced monitoring throughout the implementation process.
Enabling factors	- Thanks to the randomised experiment that came hand in hand with the policy implementation, the policy implementation was heavily monitored, which allowed for adjustments when necessary. - The involvement of the PES throughout the policy process may have enhanced successful implementation of the reform.

Table A A.18. Training Vouchers (*Scholingsvouchers*)

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The reform introduced a training voucher for older unemployed adults (55+/50+), to cover 100% of costs for training that will increase their employment opportunities, up to a maximum of EUR 750 per training. The revision of the policy in 2014 increased the amount of the voucher to EUR 1 000, and expanded the eligibility of the vouchers for a wider variety of training and to the recognition of prior learning.
Aims and objectives	The overall aim was to decrease (long-term) unemployment among older individuals, by updating or increasing their job-related knowledge and skills through education and training participation. In order to reach this aim, the objective was that at least 16 500 older unemployed workers would use a training voucher between 2013-2016 (Dutch Government, n.d.[65]).
Instruments	Training finance measure
Implementation period	1 July 2013 until 1 October 2016 (i.e., participation in training funded by vouchers until mid-2017)
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Unemployed individuals who are at least 55 years old (2013) or 50 years old (2014-2016)
Number of participants (total)	18 753 users (Dutch Government, n.d.[65])
Governance	
Key stakeholders	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, PES, social partners
Delivery	PES (*UWV*), but the education and training is mainly delivered by private training providers.
Funding	
Total funding	EUR 16.5 million (Tweede Kamer, 2014[66])
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 880
Funding source	Tax funding

Results	
Reception	Policymakers appear to be very satisfied with the vouchers, and they have been gradually expanded since 2016/17. The government and social partners are currently investigating the possibility to make vouchers available to the entire population by introducing an individual learning account (ILA). To date, there is no evaluation available of individuals' reception of the training vouchers.
Effectiveness	The objective that at least 16 500 people would use a training voucher between 2013-2016 was reached. However, to date there is no causal evidence that the introduction of the vouchers increased participation in education and training.
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Clearly defined target group. - The vouchers are (supposed to) cover 100% of the training costs, which entirely removes the financial barrier to training participation.
Enabling factors	- The existence of a market of private training provision.

Table A A.19. Sector Plans *(Sectorplannen)*

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The reform introduced co-funding from the government of up to 50% for social partner initiatives to improve the sectoral or regional labour market. Each sector plan addresses several themes, one of which can be to retrain and upskill adults.
Aims and objectives	The overall aim of the sector plans is improve the sectoral and regional labour markets in the short and medium-term. More specifically, the plans are aimed at helping people find work and to help workers stay employable throughout their working lives.
Instruments	Sector plans include a wide variety of measures, which have to address at least two of the following themes: i) labour market entrance and guidance of youngsters; ii) retaining older workers; iii) labour market entrance of people with a distance to the labour market; iv) mobility and employability; v) education and training; vi) work-to-work transitions of employees at a sectoral and inter-sectoral level; vii) good employer and employee practices (Overheid.nl, 2015[69]). Types of activities that fall under the 'education and training' theme are career checks and advice for employees, retraining and upskilling measures, future-oriented training for older workers, and recognising acquired competences (*'EVC procedures'*) (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, n.d.[70]).
Implementation period	Funding requests could be submitted between April 2013 and the end of 2016. Sector plans were implemented between mid-2013 and end-2017.
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Mainly employed adults, but depending on the sector plan potentially the entire potential labour force as well as students (for apprenticeship measures).
Number of participants (total)	In total 296 145 participants, out of which 155 532 in retraining in upskilling measures (Van der Werff et al., 2019[71]).
Governance	
Key stakeholders	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, regional governments, employer organisations, individual employers, trade unions
Delivery	Employer organisations, individual employers/companies, trade unions. Education and training measures are mainly delivered through private training providers.
Funding	
Total funding	EUR 977 743 739, out of which EUR 195 404 305 for retraining and upskilling measures (Van der Werff et al., 2019[71]).
Estimated funding per participant	EUR 1 256 for retraining and upskilling measures.
Funding source	Tax funding (max. 50% of total funding per sector plan) and social partner contributions (mainly through training levies). In practice, funding of the sector plans consisted for 70% of sectoral (i.e., social partner) contributions (Van der Werff et al., 2019[71])
Results	
Reception	Overall positive: 82% of employers was (very) satisfied with the education and training activities of their sector plan, and 80% considered that the benefits of the plans are at least as high as their expectations (Heyma, Van Der Werff and Brekelmans, 2016[72]). However, some stakeholders considered the administrative burden too high, and the work-to-work transitions appeared to be more difficult to implement i.e. needing specific attention in a third round of sector plans. In addition, the decentralised approach and broad scope of the policy made it more difficult to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the sector plans. To date, there is no national evaluation available of individual participants' / employees' reception of the sector plans.

Effectiveness	National experts are very satisfied with the extent to which this reform contributed to improving the sectoral and regional labour markets. Moreover, 97% of the planned participants in retraining and upskilling measures were reached (Van der Werff et al., 2019[71]), and the majority of employers who participated in a sectoral plan (60%) indicate that they would not have implemented most of the plan's activities if their sector plan would not have existed (Heyma, Van Der Werff and Brekelmans, 2016[72]).
Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- Collaboration between social partners was incentivised by requiring a partnership in order to receive government funding. - The buy-in of social partners was increased and the probability of deadweight loss was decreased by requiring at least 50% co-funding from social partners. - A decentralised approach allowed for initiatives that were tailored to specific sectoral and regional needs.
Enabling factors	Although the Dutch social partners could benefit from a pre-existing culture of relatively strong social partner collaboration, incentives were put in place to stimulate this collaboration.

Singapore

Table A A.20. Key data on adult learning in Singapore

Adult learning participation	2008	2018
Training participation in formal/non-formal job-related training participation in the past 12 months of 15-64 year-olds	32.1	48.0
Inclusiveness: Age	**2017**	**2018**
Training participation in formal/non-formal job-related training in the past 12 months: 30-49 year-olds	52.5	51.4
Training participation in formal/non-formal job-related training in the past 12 months: 50-64 year-olds	33.7	40.0
Inclusiveness: Education	**2017**	**2018**
Training participation in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree Sec or below	23.8	28.6
Training participation in the past 12 months: Highest obtained degree Dip & Professional Qual/Degree	60.0	56.5
Alignment		
N/a	N/a	N/a

Source: The Supplementary Survey on Adult Training, Manpower Research and Statistics Department, MOM

Reform context

Institutional context: Having been ruled by the People's Action Party (PAP) since 1959, Singapore has a very stable political climate. Singapore's current adult learning policies appear to originate in the early 2000s, when the government introduced a national qualifications framework that guides public training provision (*Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ)*). Based on the outcomes from several councils that set out economic policy strategy (Sekmokas, 2019[73]), the CET Masterplan of 2008 was updated in 2013/14, with plans how to build a career-resilient workforce (*Continuing Education and Training 2020 Masterplan (CET 2020)*). In order to put the CET 2020 masterplan into action a council was created (*SkillsFuture Council*, currently known as the *Future Economy Council*), with members representing the government, industry, trade unions, employer associations and individual employers, educational and training institutions and research institutions. Late 2014, this council played an important role in the launch of the *SkillsFuture* movement.

Today, there is a vast amount of SkillsFuture initiatives, recommended by the Committee on the Future Economy, implemented by the relevant agencies and Ministries, and overseen by the SkillsFuture Council (see, e.g. (Lin and Low, 2017[74]) (Sekmokas, 2019[73]). Courses that can (partially) be subsidised through SkillsFuture initiatives range from courses at public initial education and training institutions (e.g. upper-secondary vocational schools or universities), to state accredited courses at public adult training providers (*CET centres*), as well as other state accredited courses from private or public education and training providers (e.g. *SkillsFuture Series*).

Economic context: Singapore's economy is developing at an impressive rate. Whereas its GDP was well below the EU- and OECD-average until the mid-1990s, nowadays (particularly since around 2011), its per capita GDP is now outperforming many countries across the EU and OECD. Moreover, the country appears to be less severely hit by the financial crisis and recuperating from it faster than other countries. In addition, unemployment rates are relatively low (around 3.5-4% between 2010 and 2018) (The World Bank Group, 2019[75]; 2019[76]; 2019[77])

In the 1980's/'90s, Singapore attracted (often low-skilled) immigrant workers to be able to keep up with the fast-growing economy. Nowadays, around 30% of the total population and 40% of Singapore workers is not a Singaporean resident (i.e. not a citizen and no permanent residency), and around 10% of the population is a permanent resident (Statistics Singapore, 2019[78]).

Singaporean reforms included in this review

Table A A.21. SkillsFuture Credit

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The reform introduced a training voucher of SGD 500 for Singaporeans (i.e. Singapore citizens and permanent residents) aged 25 and above, which can be used to cover (part of the) training costs of one or several courses that are supported by the Government agencies. The voucher does not expire. The vouchers are one of many initiatives falling under *SkillsFuture*: a comprehensive adult learning initiative launched late 2014. It is possible to benefit from several *SkillsFuture* measures at the same time for one single training programme.
Aims and objectives	The overall aim of the *SkillsFuture* movement is to promote a culture and holistic system of lifelong learning through the pursuit of skills mastery, and strengthen the ecosystem of quality education and training in Singapore. More specifically, the training vouchers encourage individuals to take ownership of their skills development and lifelong learning (MySkillsFuture, 2018[79]).
Instruments	Training funding measure
Implementation period	January 2016 until present
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Singapore citizens aged 25 and above (excl. permanent residents (Government of Singapore, 2019[80])).
Number of participants (total)	Around 431 000 users by 2018 (MySkillsFuture, 2019[81])
Governance	
Key stakeholders	Ministry of Education incl. SkillsFuture Singapore (a statutory board under the Ministry), Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the *Future Economy Council* (incl. Ministers, social partners, learning providers, individual employers and research and education institutions)
Delivery	State accredited public and private learning providers
Funding	
Total funding	*SkillsFuture* increased government spending on continuing education and training from SGD 600 million per year (2010-2015) to over SGD 1 billion per year (2015-2020) (Government of Singapore, 2018[82]). However, it is not clear how much of this is spent on each individual *SkillsFuture* initiative.
Funding per participant	SGD 500 per participant one off. Although it is stated that the government will provide periodic top-ups (MySkillsFuture, 2018[79]), it is unclear when this will happen.
Funding source	Government funds (i.e. funds of the Ministry of Education, the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund, the National Productivity Fund), Skill Development Levy on employers, and the tripartite SkillsFuture Jubilee Fund (financed through donations from employers and unions that are matched by the government).
Results	
Reception	People seem to be satisfied with the vast amount of courses for which the training vouchers can be used, and the user-friendliness of the online platform through which the vouchers are spent on courses. It remains unclear how employers received the policy, particularly since they are less involved in the activities.
Effectiveness	It appears that the overall aim of creating a holistic lifelong learning system was reached. Moreover, it seems likely that the wide variety of measures had an effect on education and training participation. However, to date there is no causal evidence that individual measures such as the training vouchers had an impact on education and training participation or ownership of personal skill development.

Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- The amount of the voucher can cover 100% of the costs of several courses: costs of eligible courses start at SGD 10, e.g. for a 3 hour course to learn about the different parts of a computer's operating system and how to use Windows 7. - By being a comprehensive reform that affects the entire population, the entire *SkillsFuture* movement, and particularly the training vouchers, have a lot of visibility. This increases the probability that people are aware of their rights, which, in turn, may increase take-up rates. - The introduction of *SkillsFuture* included the launch of an online platform where individuals can find detailed information on the content, duration and total costs of over 25 000 courses for which the training vouchers can be used. On this platform, individuals can also see their remaining budget on the training voucher and which other initiatives they may be eligible for when they want to sign up for a specific course. This facilitates informed decision making regarding training participation.
Enabling factors	- *SkillsFuture* is a comprehensive approach including a wide variety of different adult learning reforms. Therefore, the entire population is reached (including specific harder-to-reach sub-groups). The fact that every individual is eligible for one or more measures makes it more likely that at least one of these measure will increase an individual's probability to participate in education and training. - Singapore is a small country with the same ruling government for the past 60 years. This political stability may enhance a long-term perspective regarding government spending on adult learning.

Table A A.22. SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The reform introduced a subsidy for anyone aged 40 and above, to cover up to 90% of course fees of courses that are supported by the government agencies, or that are subsidised by the Ministry of Education in designated institutions. Existing courses that were already subsidised at 90% or higher continue to be subsidised at those levels. The training subsidy is one of many initiatives falling under *SkillsFuture*: a comprehensive adult learning initiative launched late 2014. It is possible to benefit from several *SkillsFuture* measures at the same time for one single training programme.
Aims and objectives	The overall aim of the *SkillsFuture* movement is to promote a culture and holistic system of lifelong learning through the pursuit of skills mastery, and strengthen the ecosystem of quality education and training in Singapore. Recognising that mid-career individuals may face greater challenges in undertaking training, the government has implemented the training subsidy (40+) to encourage mid-career Singaporeans to upskill and reskill (Government of Singapore, 2019[83])
Instruments	Training funding measure
Implementation period	1 October 2015 until present
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	Singapore citizens aged 40 and above.
Number of participants (total)	Around 170 000 recipients by 2018 (MySkillsFuture, 2019[81])
Governance	
Key stakeholders	Ministry of Education incl. SkillsFuture Singapore (a statutory board under the Ministry), Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the *Future Economy Council* (incl. Ministers, social partners, learning providers, individual employers and research and education institutions)
Delivery	State accredited public and private learning providers
Funding	
Total funding	SkillsFuture Singapore increased government spending on continuing education and training from SGD 600 million per year (2010-2015) to over SGD 1 billion per year (2015-2020) (Government of Singapore, 2018[82]). However, it is not clear how much of this is spent on each *SkillsFuture* initiative.
Funding per participant	n/a
Funding source	Government funds (i.e. funds of the Ministry of Education, the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund, the National Productivity Fund), Skill Development Levy on employers, and the tripartite SkillsFuture Jubilee Fund (financed through donations from employers and unions that are matched by the government).
Results	
Reception	n/a
Effectiveness	It appears that the overall aim of creating a holistic lifelong learning system was reached. Moreover, it seems likely that the wide variety of measures had any effect on education and training participation. However, to date there is no causal evidence that individual measures such as the training subsidy (40+) had an impact on education and training participation of 40+ year-old Singaporeans.

Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- The combination of the subsidy, the training vouchers (*SkillsFuture Credit*) and other *SkillsFuture* measures allows Singaporeans aged 40+ to participate in even the more expensive courses (almost) free-of-charge. - By being a comprehensive reform that affects the entire population, the entire *SkillsFuture* movement receives a lot of visibility. This increases the probability that people are aware of their rights, which, in turn, may increase take-up rates. - The introduction of *SkillsFuture* included the launch of an online platform where individuals can find detailed information on the content, duration and total costs of over 8 000 state accredited courses and additional eligible courses for which the training subsidy can be used. On this platform, individuals can also see which other initiatives they may be eligible for when they want to sign up for a specific course. This facilitates informed decision making regarding training participation.
Enabling factors	- *SkillsFuture* is a comprehensive approach including a wide variety of different adult learning reforms. Therefore, the entire population is reached (including specific harder-to-reach sub-groups). The fact that every individual is eligible for one or more measures makes it more likely that at least one of these measure will increase an individual's probability to participate in education and training. - Singapore is a small country with the same ruling government for the past 60 years. This political stability may enhance a long-term perspective regarding government spending on adult learning.

Table A A.23. SkillsFuture Series

Key features of the reform	
Short description	The reform introduced new short, industry-relevant training programmes that focus on emerging skills: i) data analytics; ii) finance; iii) tech-enabled services; iv) digital media; v) cyber security; vi) entrepreneurship; vii) advanced manufacturing; and viii) urban solutions. Courses exist at three different levels (basic, intermediary, advanced). SkillsFuture provides up to 70% course fee subsidy for Singapore Citizens and Singapore Permanent Residents (Government of Singapore, 2019[84]).*SkillsFuture Series* is one of many initiatives falling under *SkillsFuture*: a comprehensive adult learning initiative launched late 2014. It is possible to benefit from several *SkillsFuture* measures at the same time for one single training programme.
Aims and objectives	The overall aim of *SkillsFuture* is to promote a culture and holistic system of lifelong learning through the pursuit of skills mastery, and strengthen the ecosystem of quality education and training in Singapore. More specifically, the *SkillsFuture Series* are intended to help Singaporeans stay relevant and prepare for the future (Government of Singapore, 2019[85]).
Instruments	Training measure
Implementation period	2015/16 until present
Target group and participants	
Target group(s)	All Singaporean citizens or permanent residents. However, respective training providers may impose eligibility criteria on their courses.
Number of participants (total)	Over 30 000 participants by 2018 (MySkillsFuture, 2019[81])
Governance	
Key stakeholders	Ministry of Education incl. SkillsFuture Singapore (a statutory board under the Ministry), Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the *Future Economy Council* (incl. Ministers, social partners, learning providers, individual employers and research and education institutions)
Delivery	State accredited public and private learning providers
Funding	
Total funding	SkillsFuture Singapore increased government spending for continuing education and training from SGD 600 million per year (2010-2015) to over SGD 1 billion per year (2015-2020) (Government of Singapore, 2018[82]). However, it is not clear how much of this is spent on each *SkillsFuture* initiative.
Funding per participant	n/a
Funding source	Government funds (i.e. funds of the Ministry of Education, the Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund, the National Productivity Fund), Skill Development Levy on employers, and the tripartite SkillsFuture Jubilee Fund (financed through donations from employers and unions that are matched by the government).
Results	
Reception	n/a
Effectiveness	It appears that the overall aim of creating a holistic lifelong learning system was reached. Moreover, it seems likely that the wide variety of measures had any effect on education and training participation. However, to date there is no causal evidence that individual measures such as the *SkillsFuture Series* had an impact on education and training participation or increased individuals' future-readiness.

Success and enabling factors	
Success factors	- The combination of the subsidy, the training vouchers (*SkillsFuture Credit*) and other *SkillsFuture* measures allows Singaporeans aged 40+ to participate in even the more expensive courses free-of-charge. - By being a comprehensive reform that affects the entire population, the entire *SkillsFuture* movement receives a lot of visibility. This increases the probability that people are aware of their rights, which, in turn, may increase take-up rates. - The introduction of *SkillsFuture* included the launch of an online platform where individuals can find detailed information on the content, duration and total costs all state accredited courses, including the *SkillsFuture Series.* On this platform, individuals can also see which other initiatives they may be eligible for when they want to sign up for a specific course. This facilitates visibility of the new training programmes and informed decision making regarding training participation.
Enabling factors	- *SkillsFuture* is a comprehensive approach including a wide variety of different adult learning reforms. Therefore, the entire population is reached (including specific harder-to-reach sub-groups). The fact that every individual is eligible for one or more measures makes it more likely that at least one of these measure will increase an individual's probability to participate in education and training. - Singapore is a small country with the same ruling government for the past 60 years. This political stability may enhance a long-term perspective regarding government spending on adult learning.

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Annex B. Technical Annex

Introduction

The OECD identified policy lessons from six countries that have successfully increased participation levels in adult learning in the past 15 years. This involved the mapping and analysis of recent reforms of the adult learning system that may have contributed to the observed improvements ('case study research'). The analysis included five European countries and one non-European country.

This annex provides an overview of the methodology applied for the selection of countries and reforms included in the review. The selection of countries is based on the quantitative analysis of participation trends in the past 15 years, as well as trends in inclusiveness and alignment of the training system with labour market needs. It addition, it takes into account qualitative evidence on the existence of relevant reforms of the adult learning system and aims to include countries representing the geographic, policy and cultural diversity of (European) adult learning systems. The final selection of countries was made in consultation with the European Commission.

Country selection

Initial country selection

Based on the data analysed and qualitative evidence, the following countries were proposed to be included in the case study research (see Table A B.1). This proposal included countries that had seen significant improvements in adult learning participation and/or the inclusiveness and alignment of the adult learning system, according to the indicators considered. A detailed outline of the selection methodology is provided in the following.

Following qualitative considerations, it was decided in consultation with the European Commission that Estonia, instead of Latvia, and Singapore, instead of Canada or the United States would be included in the case study research.

Table A B.1. Ranked short-list of countries based on quantitative and qualitative evidence

#	Proposed country	Alternative
European Union (EU)		
1	Hungary	Czech Republic
2	Latvia	Estonia
3	Netherlands	
4	Italy	Portugal, France
5	Austria	
Non-European		
6	Canada	United States, Singapore

Detailed methodology – Selection of European countries

The following outlines the quantitative data sources used as basis for the country selection, as well as the selection criteria and process applied.

Data sources

There are a number of comparative data sources available that facilitate cross-country comparison on the 'performance' of adult learning systems over time. These include:

- **The European Adult Education Survey (AES)** is a survey covering persons between 25 and 64 years old and enquiring about their participation in education and training (formal, non-formal and informal) in the last 12 months. The survey is part of the EU statistics on lifelong learning and covers 35 countries, including all EU Member States, the United Kingdom, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, Serbia and Turkey. Three waves of data collection have taken place (2007, 2011, 2016).
- **The European Union Labour Force Survey (LFS)** is a large household survey covering people aged 15 and over. It contains questions on participation in education and training (formal and non-formal) in the last 4 weeks. The survey covers EU Member States and the United Kingdom, 4 candidate countries and 3 countries of the EFTA. Data on participation in education and training are available with an annual frequency mostly from the early 2000s.
- **Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS)** is a long-running enterprise survey on continuing vocational training and other training in enterprises in the business economy (excluding micro-enterprises with less than 10 persons employed). The survey is part of the EU statistics on lifelong learning and covers all EU Member States, the United Kingdom and Norway. Comparable data are available for the three last waves of data collection (2005, 2010, 2015).

Limitations of these data for the purpose of this project include the non-availability of data for non-European countries and the fact that time-series data of the key sources (AES and CVTS) only cover the past 10 years and is collected in large intervals (typically 5 years).

Selection criteria

The following selection criteria were applied:

- **Improved education and training participation of adults**: Different data sources on adult learning participation can show different trends. Hence, both AES and LFS data on participation were used for the country selection to take into account potential inconsistencies. Trends can be reported as percentage and percentage point change. Both indicators have advantages, with percentage change taking into account initial levels of participation and percentage point change providing a direct reflection of the additional share of the population that has joined training. Again, both indicators are included in the selection for completeness. The AES data includes training participation of 25-64 year-olds in the last 12 months, while the LFS survey provides data on education and training participation of all people aged 15 plus in the past 4 weeks. To be consistent with the age group covered by the AES, the population of the LFS data was also restricted to adults aged 25-64 year olds. Although the LFS is conducted annually, trends were calculated for the same time period as AES for consistency. In both datasets, the change in training participation was calculated for two time periods, namely the past decade (2007-2016), as well as more recent years (2011-2016) to allow for the identification of potential effects of more recent policy changes.
- **Inclusiveness of training participation**: AES data was used to construct indicators on the inclusiveness of adult learning systems. Indicators were created that reflect the increase or decrease of the participation gap for different under-represented groups over time. Specifically, indicators included the change in the participation gap for older workers (age 55-64) compared to

prime age workers (age 35-54) and between workers with low qualification levels (ISCED 0-2) and those who are highly educated (ISCED 5-8) in the time period 2007 to 2016.

- **Alignment of training provision:** Alignment ensures that individuals that participate in adult learning get equipped with the 'right' skills, i.e. skill that are in demand in the labour market. This is especially important in a context where skill needs and the world of work is rapidly changing due to megatrends. Alignment is difficult to measure directly, but some proxies from the CVTS database can shed light on trends. For example, the share of training hours that are not spent on compulsory health and safety courses, can indicate the extent of courses focusing on the development of 'new' skills. Similarly, the share of companies who respond to future skill needs by providing continuing vocational training to their current staff, makes it more likely that the skills of the workforce will be aligned to the labour market. The country selection includes indicators regarding the percentage point change between 2010 and 2015 for both indicators.

Selection process

The generation of a short-list of countries to include in the study was based on a step-wise approach:

1. Counting the number of times a country was amongst the top-10 performers with respect to an increase in training participation, across all indicators considered. Training participation was based on two datasets, i.e. AES data on participation in the last 12 months, and LFS data on participation in the past 4 weeks. For each variable, both the percentage and percentage-point change between 2007-2016 and between 2011-2016 were measured. Countries could therefore be listed up to 8 times among the top-10 performers with respect to increasing training participation.
2. Inclusiveness and alignment variables were taken into account, when the previous step leads to inconclusive results because two or more countries display similar performance. Again, the number of times each country was amongst the top-10 performers with respect to the 4 variables, i.e. decreasing participation-gap with respect to age, and with respect to education level, increasing hours spent on non-compulsory/health and safety courses, and increasing share of firms providing continuing vocational training as response to changing skill needs, were counted. Countries could be listed up to 4 times among the top-10 performers on these variables.
3. Where the previous two steps are inconclusive, priority was given to countries where training participation increased in both time periods for both participation variables. In other words, countries where training participation increased from 2007-2016, but decreased between 2011-2016 in either AES or LFS, were given lower priority in the short-list. For example, according to the LFS, participation increased in the Czech Republic between 2016 and 2007, but decreased between 2011 and 2016.
4. Countries that had opposite time trends when looking at training participation in the two different data sources, were excluded from the short-list (marked in red). This means that, for example, Luxembourg was excluded from the final short-list of countries, because even though training participation increased strongly according to the LFS survey, the trends in adult education *decreased* according to the AES survey.
5. Countries that were never among the top-10 performers with respect to any of the eight training participation indicators (step 1), as well as non-OECD member countries, were also excluded from the short-list (marked in white).
6. Countries for whom preliminary research indicates that they had implemented one or more substantial reforms to their adult learning systems in the past 10-15 years, which may have contributed to the increased participation rates were given preference.
7. Finally and importantly, the short-list ensures that the geographic, policy and cultural diversity of European adult learning systems was represented in the research.

The ordered short-list of countries following this step-wise approach is shown in Table A B.2 overleaf. The short-listed European countries proposed to be included in the research are circled in black. The final selection of countries, i.e. Austria, Estonia, Hungary, Italy and the Netherlands, was made in consultation with the European Commission.

Table A B.2. Ranked list of countries based on results from the dashboard

		Number of times listed among top-10 countries		Inconsistencies	
#	Country	in improving participation (out of 8)	in inclusiveness or alignment (out of 4)	Opposing trends in the different surveys	Opposing trend of the different time periods at least in one survey
1	Hungary	8			
2	Latvia	6	3		
3	France	6			
	Turkey†	6			
4	Italy	5	2		
5	Czech Republic	4	2		x
	Portugal	4	2		x
6	Luxembourg	4	2	x	
7	Switzerland†	4	1		
8	Estonia	4	1		x
9	Austria	4			
10	Greece	3	1		
11	Sweden	3	1	x	
12	Bulgaria	2	3	x	
13	Netherlands	2	2		
14	Slovenia	2	2	x	
	Spain	2	2	x	
15	Belgium	2	1	x	
	Finland	2	1	x	
	United Kingdom	2	1	x	
17	Croatia*	2			x
18	Cyprus	1	2	x	
19	Germany		2		
	Romania*		2		
20	Poland		2	x	
21	Malta*		1		
	Norway†		1		
22	Denmark		1		x
23	Lithuania		1	x	
	Slovak Republic		1	x	
24	Iceland†				
	Ireland				

Short-listed countries

Listed among the top-10 countries for at least 50% of the indicators.

Listed among the top-10 countries for 25-50% of the indicators.

Listed at least once among the top-10 countries, but for less than 25% of the indicators.

Should be excluded due to disparity across surveys.

Can be considered, but has disparity across time periods in at least one survey.

Never listed among the top-10 countries that increased participation rates in adult learning.

* Not an OECD member country, † Not an EU member country.

Methodology – non-European countries

In total, there are nine non-European countries that are member of the OECD, i.e. Australia, Canada, Chile, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States, which were first considered for the selection of a non-European case study country. There is no comparative data-source on time trends in adult learning for these countries, however there is PIAAC data, which can at least provide comparable data on participation in formal/non-formal education and training in a given year. Except for Mexico, all countries mentioned above are included in PIAAC.

Canada, New Zealand and the United States are the top-3 non-European OECD countries with the highest average participation rates, according to PIAAC. Their participation rates are also well above the OECD average. These countries could therefore be interesting for inclusion in the study. Within Canada, participation rates are particularly high in the province Alberta, which makes it an interesting candidate for inclusion in this study.

Although Australia's participation rates are very similar to those of Canada and the United States, we do not propose to include Australia as a potential country for the research, because other national data sources (HILDA, WRTAL) indicate that participation rates have continuously declined in the past decade.

As mentioned above, there is no publicly available longitudinal data with respect to individuals' participation in adult learning activities for New Zealand, Canada (Alberta) and the United States. One can therefore not apply selection criteria that are similar to those used for the short-list of European countries. This means that it (currently) cannot be verified whether the participation rates reflect an increasing or decreasing trend. However, preliminary policy research indicated that all three countries / regions place significant emphasis on adult learning. For example, New Zealand introduced major investments of NZD 168 million to increase literacy, language and numeracy skills of the workforce between 2008-2012, Alberta (Canada) has a Ministry of Advanced Education that focuses specifically on academic upgrading and adult learning and introduced various policies on the topic in the past decade, and in 2011, the Obama administration in the United States introduced USD 500 million in grants to community colleges around the country for targeted training and workforce development to help economically dislocated workers who are changing careers.

Finally, in consultation with the European Commission, it was decided to also review time-series data on learning participation from Singapore. National registry data was used to determine how participation in adult education evolved over time. Based on data from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), the participation rate increased from around 30% to close to 50% over the previous decade as a result of a moderate increase from 2011 and a stark one from 2015. The availability of time-series data, as well as the qualitative evidence on Singaporean reform efforts in the area of adult learning, led to the inclusion of Singapore in this study.

Selection of reforms

The selected countries implemented a large number of policy reforms, which may have influenced adult learning participation in the past decades. To focus the review, the second stage of the research process involved the identification of the most important adult learning reforms for the observed increase in participation. To identify these reforms, the following selection criteria were applied:

- The selected reform had the explicit aim to improve some or more aspects of the adult learning system. This implies that major reforms outside the realm of adult learning policy, e.g. of the social security system, were not taken into account.
- The mechanism by which the reform would have increased adult learning participation had to be clear and plausible. Reforms directly affecting learning participation, such as by funding additional training places or initiating new education and training programmes, were given preference of those

indirectly affecting adult learning participation, such as lifelong learning strategies or initiatives related to improving the quality of adult learning overall. Exceptions to this rule were made in cases, where multiple experts at national level emphasised the importance of the reform for increasing adult learning participation, even when the mechanisms was indirect (e.g. the *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy*).

- In the absence of any causal evidence on the effect of the reform on adult learning participation, it needed to be plausible that it had contributed to the observed increased in adult learning participation. This implied that only reforms that were implemented from or after 2005 were selected, as only these could have plausibly contributed to increased adult learning participation between 2007 and 2016. Reforms also had to display large coverage, i.e. reach a large enough part of the population so that it could probably have contributed to increased learning participation.

A selection of reforms meeting these criteria were made based on desk research and interviews with national adult learning experts. Seventeen adult learning reforms were selected to be included in this review.

Table A B.3. Full data on training participation, inclusiveness and alignment of adult learning systems for European countries

Improvement in	Participation								Inclusiveness		Alignment	
Indicator	Change in participation in adult education and training in the past 12 months (AES)*				Change in participation in adult education and training in the past 4 weeks (LFS)*				Older workers	Low skilled	Training other than health and safety	Continuing training of staff
Unit /	percentage		percentage point		percentage		percentage point		percentage point		percentage point	
Country Period	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2007	2015/1010	2015/2010
Austria	43.0	24.3	18.0	11.7	15.5	10.4	2.0	1.4	-2.2	2.7	-6.1	1.2
Belgium	11.6	19.9	4.7	7.5	-5.4	-5.4	-0.4	-0.4	1.5	-1.4	-2.2	4.5
Bulgaria	-32.4	-5.4	-11.8	-1.4	37.5	37.5	0.6	0.6	7.1	7.0	-15.2	5.6
Croatia	50.0		10.6		3.4	-3.2	0.1	-0.1	-8.4	-2.9	-5.6	-6.1
Cyprus	18.5	13.7	7.5	5.8	-20.7	-11.5	-1.8	-0.9	0.8	8.9	-2.0	8.1
Czech Republic	22.6	24.3	8.5	9.0	46.7	-24.1	2.8	-2.8	0.1	-2.7	12.3	29.0
Denmark	13.3	-13.8	5.9	-8.1	-4.8	-14.2	-1.4	-4.6	3.5	-2.4	-3.5	-11.2
Estonia	4.5	-11.8	1.9	-5.9	124.3	31.9	8.7	3.8	-0.1	3.8	-4.4	
Finland	-1.6	-2.9	-0.9	-1.6	12.8	10.9	3.0	2.6	-1.6	8.0	-3.6	3.9
North Macedonia					-3.3	-19.4	-0.1	-0.7				
France	47.0	1.6	16.4	0.8	208.2	241.8	12.7	13.3	0.4	-9.2	-14.2	-2.2
Germany	14.5	3.6	6.6	1.8	9.0	7.6	0.7	0.6	10.9	2.1	-1.5	0.7
Greece	15.2	42.7	2.2	5.0	66.7	42.9	1.6	1.2	-1.8	0.0	4.0	-0.5
Hungary	518.9	35.5	46.7	14.6	61.5	110.0	2.4	3.3	-15.9	-8.9	-5.4	-3.0
Iceland					-8.5	-6.4	-2.3	-1.7				
Ireland					-17.7	-9.7	-1.4	-0.7				
Italy	86.9	16.6	19.3	5.9	33.9	45.6	2.1	2.6	1.9	-7.6	-7.7	6.5
Latvia	45.3	47.1	14.8	15.2	1.4	35.2	0.1	1.9	-3.1	8.3	3.8	5.8
Lithuania	-17.7	-2.1	-6.0	-0.6	9.1	0.0	0.5	0.0	7.0		-3.4	2.3
Luxembourg		-31.4		-22.0	133.3	20.9	9.6	2.9			1.5	7.5
Malta	7.7	1.1	2.6	0.4	32.2	18.2	1.9	1.2	0.9	11.7	-13.1	3.5
Netherlands	43.7	8.1	19.5	4.8	10.6	9.9	1.8	1.7	1.8	-2.8	-4.5	5.8
Norway	9.9	0.0	5.4	0.0	6.5	5.4	1.2	1.0	0.2	3.1	-3.3	-1.4
Poland	17.0	5.4	3.7	1.3	-27.5	-15.9	-1.4	-0.7	0.2	7.0	-0.2	4.6

Improvement in	Participation								Inclusiveness		Alignment	
Indicator	Change in participation in adult education and training in the past 12 months (AES)*				Change in participation in adult education and training in the past 4 weeks (LFS)*				Older workers	Low skilled	Training other than health and safety	Continuing training of staff
Unit /	percentage		percentage point		percentage		percentage point		percentage point		percentage point	
Country Period	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2011	2016/2007	2016/2007	2015/1010	2015/2010
Portugal	74.6	3.8	19.7	1.7	118.2	-16.5	5.2	-1.9	-5.3	8.5	-3.4	6.2
Romania	-5.4	-12.5	-0.4	-1.0	-20.0	-25.0	-0.3	-0.4	-0.5	4.5	7.2	3.9
Serbia		20.0		3.3		45.7		1.6				
Slovak Republic	4.8	10.8	2.1	4.5	-29.3	-29.3	-1.2	-1.2	5.7		-7.8	-3.1
Slovenia	13.5	27.3	5.5	9.9	-23.2	-27.5	-3.5	-4.4	-3.4	-1.4	4.6	30.6
Spain	40.5	15.1	12.5	5.7	-13.0	-16.1	-1.4	-1.8	-1.7	-5.9	7.1	14.2
Sweden	-13.1	-11.1	-9.6	-8.0	55.8	17.0	10.6	4.3	5.7	-0.4	-2.6	
Switzerland	41.9	5.5	20.4	3.6	17.2	8.7	4.6	2.5	2.4	2.3		
Turkey	48.2	17.4	6.8	3.1	222.2	70.6	4.0	2.4	-5.4	-1.7		
United Kingdom	5.7	45.5	2.8	16.3	-29.8	-11.7	-6.1	-1.9	-1.3	-10.8	7.6	0.7

among top 5 performers in the given indicator

among top 10 performers in the given indicator

Getting Skills Right

Increasing Adult Learning Participation

LEARNING FROM SUCCESSFUL REFORMS

Countries need to urgently scale-up and upgrade their adult learning systems to help people adapt to the future world of work. Today, only two in five adults across the EU and OECD participate in education and training in any given year, according to the OECD Survey of Adults Skills. Participation is even lower among disadvantaged adults, such as those with low skill levels or in jobs at high risk of automation. For adult learning systems to be future-ready, governments must increase their efforts to engage more adults in continuous learning throughout their lives.

While much has been written about the need for progress, it is less clear how adult learning participation can be increased in practice. Many good ideas struggle to translate into real change on the ground, as they get stuck in the reality of policy implementation. This report aims to understand the factors that make adult learning reforms succeed. It identifies lessons from six countries that have significantly increased participation over the past decades: Austria, Estonia, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands and Singapore. To shed light on how these countries achieved this objective, this study looks at the details of reform design, implementation and evaluation.

Consult this publication on line at ***https://doi.org/10.1787/cf5d9c21-en***.

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