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Key competences for people 50+

# SUMMARY



**Summary of the five Reports referring to the state of education in terms of key competences and the needs of the target group (people 50+) in France, Norway, Poland, Spain and European Union**

Project result 1 - Methodology of training courses  
"Key competences for people aged 50+" (part 1)

Free publication

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# **Summary of the five Reports referring to the state of education in terms of key competences and the needs of the target group (people 50+) in France, Norway, Poland, Spain and European Union**

**Version: English**

**Prepared by: Deinde sp. z o. o.**

**within the project 2021-1-PL01-KA220-ADU-000035200, „Key competences for people aged 50+”**

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## Introduction

The first part of Project Result no. 1 Methodology of training courses "Key competences for people aged 50+" within the project were desk research in each Partner's country, referring to the state of education in terms of key competences and the needs of the target group (especially people 50+) in France, Norway, Poland, Spain and in the European Union as an area.

General conclusions and recommendations from the five Reports referring to key competences in each Partners country (in alphabetical order) and in EU are:

### 1. France:

- Because of the link between the occupation and the level of education required to practice it, it's the most highly educated people who undertake the most vocational training. Occupations that require high levels of initial training are often accompanied by a high level of continuing education. Thus, among employed persons, 66% of graduates with more than two years of higher education attended at least one vocational training course during the year, compared with 25% of persons with no qualifications.
- Managers and professional are ones who take the most training: 68% of them had access to training for professional reasons during the year, compared with 37% of manual workers. For the same size of establishment, managers and intermediate professions also benefit more often than employees or workers.
- The differences in access to training between men and women depend on their level of qualification. While among managers and intermediate professions the same proportion of men and women access vocational training, among blue-collar and white-collar workers, the participation of women is significantly lower than that of men.
- Access to training decreases with age, even when people are still in employment. Older people attend fewer training courses for professional reasons than younger people, the same applies to the unemployed compared to those in employment, but their training courses are longer. Training is more beneficial to managers and people working in large establishments.
- According to figures from the PIAAC adult skills assessment, of the 24 countries participating in the survey, "France ranks among those with the lowest digital literacy skills". This low skill level of the French adult population is largely explained by the results for the 45-65 age group. The lower level of qualification of older people is explained by "an age effect, i.e. the deterioration of skills, linked to ageing, and by a cohort effect, linked to the fact that the level of education of older people is lower".
- The researchers have identified several specific areas where the shortage key skills is particularly acute. These include IT and electronics, mechanics or teaching and training, management, but also more transversal skills such as verbal communication or complex problem solving. On the other hand, there is a surplus of sales and marketing or consultancy skills.
- The mismatch between supply and demand is also highlighted. It is measured in terms of qualifications (the highest level of education achieved) and in terms of fields of study. The survey results are particularly telling:
  - 35.1% of French employees were in jobs for which they were not sufficiently qualified;
  - 23.4% of the employees were in a job for which a higher level of qualification is normally required, i.e. they were underqualified for that job;
  - 11.7% of employees work in a job that requires a lower level of qualification. In other words, they are overqualified.
- The level of skill mismatch in France is close to the EU average, but France has one of the highest levels of under-qualification.
- The experts recommend "adapting the content of vocational education curricula to make them more relevant to employers' needs".
- They experts recommend that teachers should "constantly monitor developments in business practices".
- The experts suggest extending vocational education to more sectors, "including emerging sectors", without giving further details.



- The experts regret that "information on career guidance is often scattered and not linked to labor market needs as identified by other actors".
- France need to develop more digital training opportunities and use the following levers to encourage the 50+ to train: motivation, self-confidence and peer learning.

## 2. Norway:

- As a non-member state of European Union, Norway is using the national definition of basic skills. The Norwegian basic skills are comprised of four categories – literacy, numeracy, digital skills and oral skills. Even though one can argue that certain elements of the basic skills in Norwegian context are useful for instance for entrepreneurship and civic skills, like in the European framework.
- According to Skills Norway, the four basic skills are reading and writing (from here on referred to as literacy), mathematical (from here one referred to as numeracy), oral and digital skills. These are a prerequisite for being able to actively participate in education, society and working life.
- There is a strong societal push for keeping workers in gainful employment as long as possible, something which manifests itself in incentives, reforms and general view on the role of the older people in labour market and the society.
- Older employees are very often most motivated to sign up for on-the-job training and education courses closely related to their work situation. For older workers, there is a greater focus is on informal on-the-job-training.
- Norway needs to boost the participation of the older age groups in work life.
- A relatively large proportion of older population receives disability benefits and cannot access the training at work.
- For the unemployed, the public social services NAV offers classes according to their employability assessment.
- In addition to the public sector, the third sector has traditionally played an important role in education and learning in Norwegian society.
- The increasing opportunities in distance learning are also playing a role in evening out the access to learning, both geographically, disability - and age wise.
- The digital skills in the population as a whole are good, but there are digital skill gaps between the majority and minority populations.
- The migrant population has generally weaker digital skills.
- An older person with little education and a migrant background face a double hindrance, especially if they are expected to master the basic digital skills in order to access the training opportunities for other skills that are necessary for entering or reentering the work force.
- The level of participation in formal and informal learning among the older cohorts in the population is reasonably high due to high labor force participation rate in this age group in Norway.
- The older learners are bound to attend non-formal education that enables them to keep up with the changing work life.
- The high level of digital skills in the population makes learning accessible to the learners, but at the same time the combination of low digital skills, high age and migrant background is a concrete hindrance in accessing learning opportunities.

## 3. Spain:

- Regarding digital competence, the comparison is notably unequal between young people and adults. The use of ICTs is much more widespread among individuals aged 16 to 24, students and college students, in all cases exceeding 70% of their members. On the other hand, there is a huge drop in digital proficiency among people over 55 years of age.
- The population aged 25-34 years has a higher level of training in scientific and technological competence. This is particularly influenced by the quality of education received by different population groups and the



development of historical events that may have shortened the training period, with adults aged between 55 and 65 achieving substantially lower scores.

- Some statistics show that one in four adults has a significantly lower level in areas such as reading comprehension, but there are many experts who support the imminent immersion of young people in linguistic poverty. The use of neologisms, pet words and abbreviations, or the repetition of the same word instead of using its synonyms, can be understood either as a way of enriching a language or as a way of gradually eroding it. Some adults consider that polite expressions are used less and less, and thus run the risk of being lost, while some young people maintain there are outdated expressions that can be avoided in order to optimise language and receptiveness.
- The innovative attitude characteristic of young people is closely related to entrepreneurship. The internet enhances the creative capacity in terms of youth language codes, and motivation for new ideas leads to greater entrepreneurial vision.
- Digital competences seem to be the most pressing, as this is something relatively new for older people.
- Entrepreneurship is highly convenient when it comes to the world of work. There are many adults who have lost motivation or interest in working, either because of monotony or because of personal concerns and uncertainties.
- Life experience is a clear advantage for adults, something that is definitely helpful in terms of cultural competences and appreciation of their surroundings. People over 50 may not be as open-minded as someone in his youth.
- There is a need for the appropriate construction of the most suitable teaching model for adults over 50 years of age.
- The activities and the dynamics are decisive and have to be adjusted as precisely as possible to the demand.
- The type of exercises should move towards something more active and abandon the passivity of the participants, as well as being based on the internalisation of competences.
- The important point is not to demonstrate knowledge of older people, but rather to learn how they work and internalise them in order to perform competently and in a natural way.
- Deepening self-reflection can be of great help to the participants to understand themselves and to face the resolution of their problems.
- It is essential to pay special attention to new technologies and to avoid the rejection that may arise due to the lack of knowledge on the part of adults, as they are very recent tools.
- A presentation on what social networks are and how they can be used, as an example, would be a good first step in learning about their use.
- Key competences are introduced through curricula and presented as interdisciplinary in order to generate critical thinking in participants in order to develop and improve adult learners attitudes towards citizenship, employment and self-identity.
- It is essential to take into account key competences and invest in resources for their optimisation in order for the population to achieve a state of well-being at both national and European level.

#### **4. Poland:**

- Poland is one of the leading European countries in terms of the level of education of its inhabitants. The share of people aged 25-64 who completed their education at least secondary level was 93.2% in 2020, with the average of 79.0% for the European Union countries.
- Poland ranked 11th among the European Union countries in terms of education of people with higher education in age from 30 to 34 years - 47.0% of population (6.0 p.p. more than the EU average). The average number of years of formal education completed by people aged 25 and more was 12.3 years, and Poland was ranked 9-12 among the 27 countries of the European Union



- Public funds allocated to education in Poland in relation to GDP do not differ from the EU average. However, Poland has one of the lowest rates of adults aged 25-64 participating in lifelong learning in the EU (PL - 5.7%, with the EU average of 11.1%).
- In 2016, more than two-thirds of the population aged 18-69 declared knowledge of any foreign language. The most numerous group were the respondents who could use only one language (44.8%), 65.8% of whom mastered it at the basic level. The respondents able to use more than one foreign language constituted 23.5% of the surveyed population
- Poles aged 16-74, who used the internet, the majority (60.3%) were under the age of 45. The most numerous group of internet users were people with secondary (56.9%) and higher (34.5%) education, and the smallest - with less than secondary education (8.6%). At the same time, the community of internet users was clearly diversified in terms of their status on the labor market. The most users were employed (66.8%), among which hired workers (54.6% of users) were distinguished, while farmers constituted the smallest group - 3.6%.
- In 2020, 3.7% of Poles aged 25-64 declared participation in education including formal learning and non-formal education. The participation rate in various forms of lifelong learning ranged from 3.7% in 2016 and 2020 to 5.7% in 2018.
- In 2016, 45.9% of Poles aged 18-69 declared participation in broadly understood education, including 31.4% (nearly 8.5 million people) in informal education. Participation in formal education was declared by 11.3% of the respondents (slightly over 3 million people), while every fifth person (nearly 5.8 million people) indicated further education at courses and training and in other forms non-formal education.
- Age is a characteristic feature of participation in the education of adult Poles - the older people are, the less they participate in raising the level of education and developing their knowledge or skills. In 2016, 67.8% of people aged 18-24 benefited from formal education, among people aged 25-29 - 16.3%, while among people aged 50-69 this percentage was only 0.5%.
- Participation in non-formal and informal education also decreased with the age. On average, 25% of people aged 18-49 and only 12% of people aged 50-69 participated in courses and training (non-formal education). Also in self-education there was a trend of decline in participation with age. The older the people are, the less likely they are to self-educate. Among the respondents aged 18-24, 42.5% of people used informal education, while in the group of people aged 50-69 this share was only 24.3%.
- In 2020 the participation rate of people aged 25-64 in education in Poland was almost half lower than in the European Union countries and amounted to 3.7% (with an average of 9.2% for the European Union). In 2016, 25.5% of the respondents aged 25-64 participated in formal or non-formal education.
- Adult Poles, especially people over 50, are characterized by a deficit in such key competences as: using the mother tongue, knowledge of foreign languages, IT and digital skills, soft skills (personal, social, civic) and entrepreneurial competences.
- The improvement of key competences by adult Poles, especially people aged 50+, is an important element not only for the personal development, but will become more and more important over time in the context of the availability of human resources on the labor market.
- Strong motivation is crucial to participate in the lifelong learning in the case of older people (50+) who, due to the fact that they are approaching the end of their professional activity, are less likely to learn as they do not see the need for training.
- In order to increase the number of adult Poles, especially people aged 50+ in lifelong learning and the development of key competences, it is necessary to change the awareness of these people in society. Awareness of the advantages and possibilities of acquiring / improving their competences is the starting point for the entire process of taking up education by these people.
- Lifelong learning must be promoted more widely. Adults must know where and what forms of education they can take.



- The processes of educating key competences must be adapted to the specific needs of people aged 50+, e.g. in terms of not very long training cycles, architectural accessibility of places of education, financial availability, accessibility of the provided content and training materials.
- In the process of encouraging and motivating adult Poles, especially after the age of 50, to raise key competences, it is important to overcome existing stereotypes, such as thinking that education is for young people, that education is mainly related to professional work.

## **5. European Union:**

- Lifelong learning, including the acquisition and improvement of key competences by adults, is the driving force of social and economic progress in the European Union. It not only translates into better career opportunities for Europeans, but also affects the personal development and well-being of people.
- Lifelong learning is an opportunity to overcome the social and economic difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to accelerate the digital and ecologically sustainable transformation of the European economy and society.
- In the conditions of global economic competition, advancing technological and technical changes, occurring crises and economic shocks, adult Europeans must constantly improve their key competences and skills.
- European Union policy gives everyone in the EU the right to inclusive, high-quality education, training and lifelong learning.
- The participation of adults in education and training differs from one EU country to another. A common feature is that most of the learning activities in which adults participate are non-formal.
- Adult participation in education and training is unevenly spread across the EU, with the Nordic and some Western European countries having significantly higher participation rates than the EU average.
- EU Member States must develop education and training systems to identify and target the most vulnerable socio-economic groups of citizens and encourage them to participate in education and training, especially in key competences / basic skills. These groups of citizens include people over 50.
- The EU target by 2030 is for 60% of adult Europeans to participate in education or training each year.
- In 2019, less than a third of European countries met the EU 2020 benchmark of 15% adult participation in education and training in the four weeks preceding the survey.
- In 2019, 21.6% of European adults aged 25-64 (i.e. 51.5 million) did not complete upper secondary education (ISCED 3; EQF 3 or 4). Of these, 12.5 million left the education system with education below lower secondary school.
- People in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups have a higher level of education than the older population (people 50+).
- Southern European countries are most affected by low levels of education among the adult population.
- Low-skilled adult Europeans participate less in education and training than those with a higher level of education.
- People aged 50+ with a low level of basic competences or qualifications belong to the most disadvantaged groups on the labor market and in society.
- A large proportion of adult Europeans (depending on the country from 15% to 57%) have a low level of key competences in literacy (reading and writing), numeracy or digital skills.
- Between 8% and 39% of adults are low achievers in both literacy and numeracy (EU average 16.0%).
- On average, around 40% of adults in the EU are at risk of digital exclusion: i.e. either have low or no digital skills, or do not use the internet or use it in a very limited way.

