



Policy recommendations

Introduction:

The partners of the Erasmus+ project, Praline defined at the end of their project 18 recommendations, including required actions. The recommendations are based on the Good Practices, that were shown during the Peer Learning Visits, the online webinars and the discussions that were held after every meeting.

The recommendations provide opportunity to policy-makers and relevant stakeholders to align them to different national, regional and institutional circumstances. The implementation requires enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders, as they are mentioned in this document, in order to ensure that the recommendations have a real impact. The partners of the Praline project tried with this recommendation-document not only to define what needs to be done, but also to take own responsibility by indicating which party needs to take a certain action to reach the objectives. In the case of this project, it concerns providers. To promote lifelong learning for every European individual and to contribute in fostering an inclusive society, we call upon the EU institutions and the EU Member States' national, regional and local decision-makers, companies and providers to consider and implement the following eighteen recommendations:

Learning opportunities

1. Ensure that all students, independent of socio-economic background, have access to quality education and training in order to provide them with the necessary skills, in particular those required by the digital and green transition. Less common approaches to reach out to the 'hard to get' target groups might be fruitful.

Actions of providers: Identify groups at the local level which need to be supported. Lobby on behalf of these groups at policy makers. Define governance and accountability structures. Qualification centres should be nearby.

Actions of policymakers: Providing individual learning accounts or vouchers that makes learning affordable. Ensuring other preconditions, like affordable childcare, to make learning more feasible. Take into account that adults' motivation problems can be due to family situations, time limits and financial issues

2. There is a need to be more innovative in delivery models for adult education, creating flexible models for personalised learning paths including the recognition of prior learning and work experience. This should be reflected in a choice of access to learners – face-to-face, online or a mix of both.

Actions of providers: Move to more learner centred approach. Bridge the gap between required skills and those skills already present.

Actions of policymakers: Provide the legal frameworks to make this possible. Paid time off for study leave. Must be regulated through law with a requirement for employers to comply.

Actions of providers, employers and policy makers: Increase social dialogue between employer representatives and associations and ministries.

3. Ensure that salary goes on during study leave. This must be regulated through law with a requirement for employers to comply.

Actions of employers: Facilitate paid time off for study leave. Make it part of the company policy. Regulate it through the social partners dialogue.

Actions of policy makers: Regulate paid time off for study leave by law. Encourage the social dialogue on this issue.

Labour market and other stakeholders

4. Ensure a stronger link between educational institutions and the demands of the labour market in order to increase the responsiveness of education and training systems to meet the needs of learners and the rapid changes in the labour market and society as well as enable smooth transitions.

Actions of providers and employers: Working with employers to come to a joint responsibility as education leaders and VET Providers. Both parties must commit to put pressure on policy makers to come to flexible modes of delivery. Consider together with employers co-financing and co-owning of the personal development for employees where national funding is not available.

Actions of policy makers: Investing in Skills Governance through a system of jobs and skills forecasting. Increase social dialogue between employer representatives, providers' associations and ministries.

5. Advocate and support flexible and adequate work-based learning opportunities for adults as an important step in occupational progression for every individual.

Action of providers: Promote and organize work based learning. Provide information and organize regular tripartite monitoring between learner, provider and company.

Action of companies: Open the doors for apprentices and appoint mentors for the learners/apprentices in the companies

Action of policy makers: Evaluate tax incentives (for example social security reductions). Create the possibility of quick adaptations of curriculum with less focus on the CV and more on key competences – soft skills – transversal skills. Involve social partners, companies, providers and chambers.

6. Encourage and promote stronger cooperation in public-private partnerships to make lifelong learning a reality for every individual. The importance of these partnerships was again underlined during the Covid-19 pandemic, when work disappeared in certain sectors, but arose in others. The crucial role of VET/adult education providers in supporting SMEs with business innovation, productivity, and product development deserves more recognition.

Action of providers, companies and policy makers: Support and engage in public-private partnerships like the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE's) . Allow for a public education be as fast as private training providers that can be more agile. Evaluate the necessary bureaucracy with flexibility and efficiency, to react quickly to employers needs.

7. Promote vocational and educational training courses and other forms of lifelong learning as a means of integrating migrants and refugees in their host countries and leading them to the labour market.

Actions of providers: Sharing of Good Practices and preparing teachers for training to newcomers. Support integration and language learning in a combined environment of school/college and company.

Actions of companies: Take newcomers on board and provide them with a mentor from the company.

Actions of policy makers: Migrant and economic migrant policy should take the local context of the country into account. Barriers to participate in the labour market need to be lifted.

8. Facilitate strong sectoral dialogue (providers, authorities, social partners) and meaningful, sustainable cooperation in education and training by fostering peer learning among European, national, and regional/local partners in education and training.

Action of providers: Organize and participate in Peer Learning Activities among the mentioned parties. Disseminate good practice cases from abroad to the networks of your regional/local employers and other providers.

Action of companies: Try to engage in the sectoral dialogue.

Action of policy makers: Support this process with all possible means and through (keeping on) investing in budgets for international cooperation, like Erasmus+

Quality, VET providers and teachers

9. Improve the quality of adult learning- and VET institutions to enhance good learning environments for students and supportive work environments for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other education personnel in relation to digital and green transition of VET institutions and in light of the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Action of providers: Organisations need to be accountable and clearly demonstrate what they are doing with their budgets. In case of in-company training the providers/schools need to improve the guidance of the learners. Staff need to keep up with innovations.

Action of companies: Learning is a two-way street. Schools need to take the needs of companies into account, but companies (SME's) can also learn from schools, regarding innovations on sustainability and digitalisation.

Action of policy makers: Vocational providers need to have the infrastructure and tools to provide high-class and attractive learning opportunities

10. Adult education programs that support wellbeing, mental health and integration of mentally or physically challenged people should be a shared responsibility of providers and stakeholder services.

Actions of providers: Appoint not only teachers for the learning programs, but also mentors with a more holistic task about the learning (and living) environment of the learner. Involve all relevant stakeholders in the process of the learner.

Actions of companies: Take up shared responsibility regarding offering opportunities for all.

Actions of policy makers: Invest in supportive structures, like guidance and mentoring for the mentioned target groups.

11. Increase attractiveness of the profession of adult learning educators, VET trainers and other education personnel by improving recruitment processes and ensuring their retention, decent and challenging working conditions and stable employment.

Actions of providers: Define a plan for teachers to increase their knowledge and skills.

Capacity building should be supported to engage with more EU funded projects.

Evaluate how we can boost internal trainers coming from the employees. Consider incentives for employers and employees, eg. tax reductions.

Actions of policy makers: Granting more institutional autonomy to providers. Propose a framework for hiring teachers/trainers and promote free circulation of those professionals. Encourage the increase in research in VET.

12. Ensure that adult educators receive training on adult education that includes topics such as: principles of adult education (andragogy), adults' motivational orientations, adults' reasons to withdraw from training/education, use of materials in adult education, psychological counselling and guidance applications in Adult Education. Ensure also that the training will be systematically repeated.

Actions of providers: Facilitate the teacher's role to perform a guidance and coaching role, taking into consideration the students' learning style. Teacher training programs need to take that role of a teacher into account.

VET Providers need to offer attractive opportunities for study leave of their staff and collaborate in delivery of the CPD for VET teachers.

Actions of policy makers: Creating the necessary (legal) conditions and financing.

13. Encourage and support the continuous professional development of teachers, trainers, school leaders, supported by necessary reforms in consultation with social partners, governments and other relevant stakeholders, in order to provide skills that co-align with the needs of the labour market and are accessible to all.

Action of providers: Continue lobbying at national governments to support VET teachers and conduct regular consultations of employers about skills needs.

Action of companies: Conducting regular consultations about required skills of the workers.

Action of policy makers: Creating facilities and legal frameworks for the continuous professional development of teachers, trainers, school leaders. Conducting regular consultations with social partners and providers' associations.

Status

14. The profile of VET/adult education needs raising at government level. Too many people are taking a path through to university and then end up coming back to the VET system to retrain. This is an unwise use of public funds. The Covid pandemic and global conflict has shown that the VET/adult education sector is extremely resilient. Governments should build on this and support growth.

Actions of Providers: Reaching out to secondary schools with information and introduction programs about the possibilities of VET to show potential new learners the world of VET.

Actions of policy makers: Continue to invest in the status of VET as a valued pathway option to employment and continuing education. Employment services should provide unemployed people and those groups in danger of losing their job with information about re-skilling through adult learning programs.

15. There is a need to consider both the social value as well as the economic value of adult education. Governments should consider the importance of both. Leisure or social adult programmes can be a first stepping stone back into education and training for hard-to-reach adults.

Actions of providers: Invest in information about follow up programs to promote to the maximum the progression from leisure programs to work and employment programs.

Actions of employers: Provide and support learning opportunities in a broad sense, not only for narrowly job-oriented skills.

Actions of policy makers: Providing not only support to direct labour market oriented programs, but also to more social programs, in a financial and facilitating way.

Finances

16. If a variety of learning access is offered, i.e., hybrid learning, to increase adult participation, then infrastructure and technology needs to be in place and the funding to cover this. Ensure also that the funding system encourages more effectiveness and transparency of learning rights and opportunities.

Action of providers: Pay appropriate attention to accountability and show in a transparent way the results of the investments. Contribute to a culture of trust.

Action of companies: Offer adequate opportunities to employees for reskilling and upskilling during working time.

Action of policy makers: Remove barriers and make funding inclusive, both for adult education and initial education. Increase the trust in providers.

17. Invest in supportive learning cultures for lifelong learning, in schools and companies. Combining younger and older learners contributes to a supportive learning culture and makes provision financially viable.

Action of providers: Organize mixed age groups of learners. This can work out positively for young and elderly people.

Action of companies: Encourage participation in learning programs

Action of policy makers: Make no difference between adult learning and initial learning, but support all learning within the same legislation.

18. Covid has resulted in better sharing of resources and learning materials. A move towards collaborative working between providers and teachers should be positively encouraged.

Action of providers: Cooperate with other providers (and companies) to reach more efficiency in the use of resources. Think on putting small classes together, sharing the use of expensive instruments (technology). More cooperation instead of competition.

Action of companies: Cooperate with providers on all possible levels, like guest lecturers from companies at schools, common use of expensive and advanced instruments and sharing knowledge.

Action of policy makers: Encourage the cooperation, if necessary by using funding as a steering wheel.