

6

Getting skills right for all

Continuous skill investments are key to participate in today's rapidly changing world of work. Yet, people with disability too often lack the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Too few participate in adult learning, further aggravating existing education inequalities. This chapter proposes actionable recommendations to OECD governments to make their adult learning systems deliver better for all – including for people with disability.

In Brief

Too many people with disability have low skills and too few participate in adult learning. OECD countries should make their adult learning systems more inclusive and effective to get skills right for all.

- **Continuous skill investments are crucial for individuals and employers alike.** Individuals with the right skill set fare much better in our constantly changing labour markets. Employers need a skilled workforce to produce and innovate. **Governments play an important role to promote skill formation for all** by designing a formal education and adult learning system (Section 6.1).
- **Too many people with disability have low literacy, numeracy and digital skills.** This is worrying, since such basic skills are becoming a precondition to participate in our more and more digital society and economy (Section 6.2).
- **While skill investments are all the more important for people with disability, in reality few find their way into the adult learning system.** Adult learning participation rates of PWD are well below those of their peers without disability in virtually all OECD countries. Rates are particularly low for the large group of non-employed with disability, placing them at even greater distance to the labour market. Public employment services (PES) already play a major role in providing inclusive publicly funded mainstream adult learning, although still very few persons on reduced work capacity benefits register and enrol (Section 6.3).
- **Those who participate do not always receive the adult learning they need.** Promisingly, adult learning participants at the PES with disability find their way into employment almost as often as their peers without disability. Yet, employees with disability are less positive about the usefulness of their formal training and express lower support from their boss in their personal development. Moreover, employees with disability more often find themselves in jobs in which they cannot put their skills to good use. This likely further hampers their career development and motivation to learn (Section 6.4).
- **OECD countries, including Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, should improve their adult learning system to get skills right for all – including for people with disability.** This chapter proposes a set of six guiding principles to do so: (i) active mainstreaming combined with widely available flexibility; (ii) clear career guidance; (iii) proactive outreach to potential learners; iv) making adult learning more relevant; (v) capacity-building and encouragement of employers to train their entire workforce for a changing world of work; and (vi) tackling of time and financial barriers (Section 6.5).

6.1. Continuous skill investments are crucial for production and inclusion

Job-related skills are essential for the performance of both individuals and firms in the labour market. An adequate skill set means having both the level and the types of skills needed to perform the tasks that are demanded in the labour market. In a rapidly transforming world of work, having adequate skills requires continuous skill investments (OECD, 2019^[1]; OECD, 2019^[2]; OECD, 2017^[3]).

Individuals with the right skill set have better labour market prospects in a changing world of work. Skilled individuals are more often employed, earn higher wages, enjoy better working conditions and report on average greater job satisfaction. Skilled individuals also have better chances to progress in their careers and make the most of changes in the world of work. While the changes in the world of work affect everyone, those with low skills are most at risk of seeing their labour market prospects deteriorate (Chapter 5). More broadly, having the right skill set facilitates social and economic inclusion (OECD/ILO, 2017^[4]; OECD, 2019^[1]; OECD, 2016^[5]).

For employers, having a workforce equipped with the skills required for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow is vital. Employers benefit from a skilled workforce through increased productivity, higher employee retention rates, more engaged workers and enhanced relations between management and workers. Furthermore, having employees with the right skills is important for firm survival, development and innovation. A skilled workforce facilitates the implementation of new technologies and work practices, and skilled workers are more prepared to adapt to changes in the nature of work (OECD/ILO, 2017^[4]; OECD, 2016^[5]).

Job-related skill formation, i.e. acquiring skills that likely impact work performance and productivity, principally takes place in formal education and adult learning systems. This report only considers adult learning, broadly understood as all learning to upskill and reskill at all levels by adults who have left formal education. Adult learning is sometimes referred to as lifelong learning. Adult learning comprises of i) formal adult training and education, which results in a formal qualification; ii) non-formal adult training and education, including structured on-the-job training, open and distance education, courses and private lessons, seminars and workshops; and iii) informal learning, including unstructured on-the-job learning, learning by doing or learning from colleagues. Adult learning not only improves skills, it also comes with positive health effects (Box 6.1). The analysis and recommendations in the report cover learning at all levels; not only basic skills training. This chapter does not cover formal education in great detail, as the need for education mainstreaming is briefly discussed in Chapter 3. While solid formal education is beyond the remit of this report, it is imperative for social inclusion and labour market performance. In particular, formal education lays the groundwork for skill formation, and affects the effectiveness of later skill investments (Heckman, Humphries and Veramendi, 2018^[6]; Heckman, 2006^[7]).¹

Governments have an important role to play to promote job-related skills formation, firstly because of efficiency arguments. Both employers and individuals may underinvest in adult training and education due to a lack of information, capacity and incentives. Employers and individuals may not be well informed about the benefits, availability and quality of training, as well as which skills to invest in. Employers, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, can have limited capacity to plan, fund and deliver training. More generally, employers may underinvest in skills out of concern for poaching, i.e. losing trained workers to other employers. Individuals may underinvest in education because of training participation barriers. Such barriers can include disability and health problems, a lack of time for instance because of caring responsibilities, financial resources, the possibility to learn on-the-job and employer support (SCP, 2021^[8]).

Box 6.1. Learning for healthy lives

Participation in adult learning can have positive effects on mental health. Participation increases social interactions and connectedness. It helps to create a structured time routine, which can improve mental well-being (Bailey et al., 2018^[9]; Zechmann and Paul, 2019^[10]). The acquisition of new skills through adult learning helps to boost self-esteem and creates a sense of purpose (Manninen et al., 2014^[11]). Continued learning throughout life contributes to a “cognitive footprint” which helps to delay the onset of dementia (Rossor and Knapp, 2015^[12]). As an activation measure, adult learning is found to have better health outcomes than sanctions. An evaluation of adult learning courses for unemployed persons in Sweden showed improvements in mental and cardiovascular health, and a decrease in sickness absence. Instead, punitive benefit sanctions consisting of temporary income cuts increased stress (Caliendo et al., 2020^[13]).

Participation in adult learning can also improve physical health, by empowering adults to take informed health choices (Li and Powdthavee, 2015^[14]; Brunello et al., 2016^[15]). For instance, longitudinal studies show that adult learning is linked with higher rates of smoking cessation, exercising, taking up cervical screening, better nutrition, less drug abuse and lower risk of coronary heart disease, especially for those with the lowest qualifications when leaving school (Schuller, 2017^[16]; Westergren and Hedin, 2010^[17]; Chandola et al., 2011^[18]).

Skill investments through adult learning can have further positive mental and physical health effects by improving employability. A large literature finds that unemployment and job insecurity have negative effects on mental and physical health. Conversely, taking up employment comes with health improvements (Voßemer et al., 2018^[19]; Cygan-Rehm, Kuehnle and Oberfichtner, 2017^[20]; Farré, Fasani and Mueller, 2018^[21]).

Secondly, governments can support individuals in their skill formation out of equity considerations. In a rapidly evolving world of work, increasing everyone’s engagement in adult learning is key to sustained labour market participation. Having insufficient skills can aggravate labour market inequalities of groups that already experience labour market disadvantage, such as people with disability (PWD), individuals without a high-school diploma and long-term unemployed (OECD, 2019^[2]). As shown in Chapter 5, PWD are more exposed to risk of job loss due to automation and polarisation, reinforcing their need for skill investment.

Governments have multiple instruments at their disposal to improve skill formation for all by making adult learning more inclusive. These include amongst others:

- Publicly funded adult learning provisions. Governments can directly provide or fund adult learning programmes, to make them widely accessible to their population. Many countries provide publicly funded adult learning programmes through their public employment services (PES).
- Publicly funded career guidance services. Similarly, governments can directly provide or fund career guidance services. Such services can be in-person, as well as online by means of a career guidance portal.
- Financial incentives to individuals and firms. Financial incentives can be more generous for targeted groups with lower participation, such as low-skilled workers or smaller firms.
- Statutory training leave entitlements for workers.
- Standards for adult learning content and provision. Governments may put particular emphasis on programmes to improve basic skills and skills in high demand, such as digital skills. Governments can also implement quality controls for adult learning programmes, including through teacher

curriculums. Furthermore, countries can set standards for adult learning provision, for instance to promote flexibility.

- Accessibility and support. Countries can improve accessibility of adult learning programmes, for example by means of anti-discrimination legislation, reasonable accommodation requirements and tailored support systems.
- Mutual obligations. Governments can make participation or provision of adult learning obligatory for certain groups of individuals and/or employers.
- Information and awareness. Governments can provide information and organise awareness campaigns targeted to individuals and firms to promote an inclusive learning culture.

6.2. People with disability have lower skills

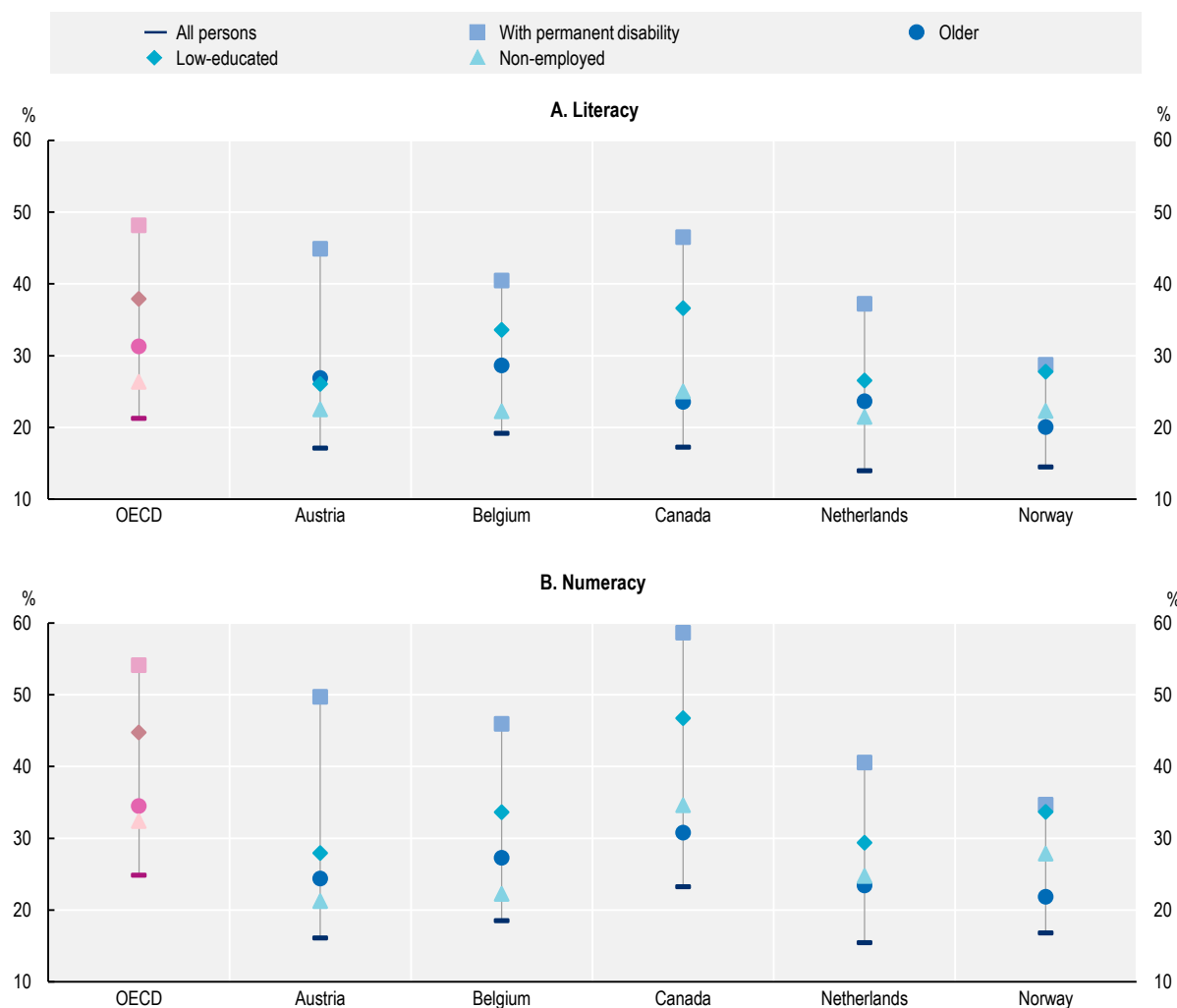
Many PWD have low literacy and numeracy skills. OECD PIAAC data show that among all adults across OECD countries, about one-fifth is able to complete only very basic literacy tasks and a quarter can only perform very basic numerical tasks (Figure 6.1). The five country cases covered in OECD PIAAC data (Switzerland is missing; Belgian data cover Flanders only) perform only slightly better. However, about one in two people with permanent disability has low literacy or numeracy skills on average across OECD countries. Norway performs better, with about one in three people with permanent disability with low skills. The PIAAC data only include information on people with permanent disability, e.g. those who say that “permanently disabled” best describes their current labour market situation. This group likely contains especially people with more severe disability who are furthest away from the labour market. It can therefore be seen as an upper bound estimate of the share of those with disability with low skills. Groups in which PWD are overrepresented – older, lower educated or non-employed individuals – also more often have low literacy and numeracy skill levels in all five country cases. These levels may be seen as lower bound estimates of the share of those with disability (permanent or not) with low literacy or numeracy skills.²

Digital skills deserve particular attention, as digital connectedness is becoming more and more a precondition to participate in our digital society and economy:

- Basic digital skills are important in everyday life, including for communication, to access information, government and financial services, to find housing and to shop online.
- Basic digital skills, such as using email and word processing, are virtually indispensable in the labour market. Evidence for the United States shows that older workers with limited skills with workplace computing retire earlier, face pay cuts and transfer to less intensive jobs with worse career prospects (Hudomiet and Willis, 2021^[22]).
- Recruitment now predominantly takes place online. In 2013 already, an estimated two-thirds of vacancies in the United States were posted online (Carnevale, Jayasundera and Repnikov, 2014^[23]). A 2015 survey showed that four in five American jobseekers utilised online resources in their most recent job search and for a third these online resources were the most important tool available to them (Smith, 2015^[24]).
- Individuals with digital, abstract and non-routine skills enjoy better employment perspectives and job quality (OECD, 2017^[3]; Thewissen and Rueda, 2019^[25]; Thewissen, van Vliet and Wang, 2017^[26]).
- The digital transformation is creating well-paid employment opportunities that require strong digital expertise, such as data scientists, web designers and artificial intelligence specialists.
- Much of adult learning and career guidance takes place online – a trend that has expedited during the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021^[27]) (see Section 6.5).
- Digital skills are a prerequisite for teleworking (see Chapter 5).

Figure 6.1. People with disability more often have low skills

Share with low skills aged 16-65 among selected groups of the population, 2012



Note: See <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/Key%20facts%20about%20the%20Survey%20of%20Adult%20Skills.pdf> for definition of low skills. *With permanent disability*: “permanently disabled” best describes their current labour market situation. *Older*: aged 55-65. *Low-educated*: below upper secondary education. Data for Belgium refer to Flanders. OECD is an unweighted average and excludes countries not participating in PIAAC (Colombia, Costa Rica, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Switzerland) and countries with low number of observations (Australia, Japan, Sweden, Türkiye).

Source: OECD calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/ktdljh>

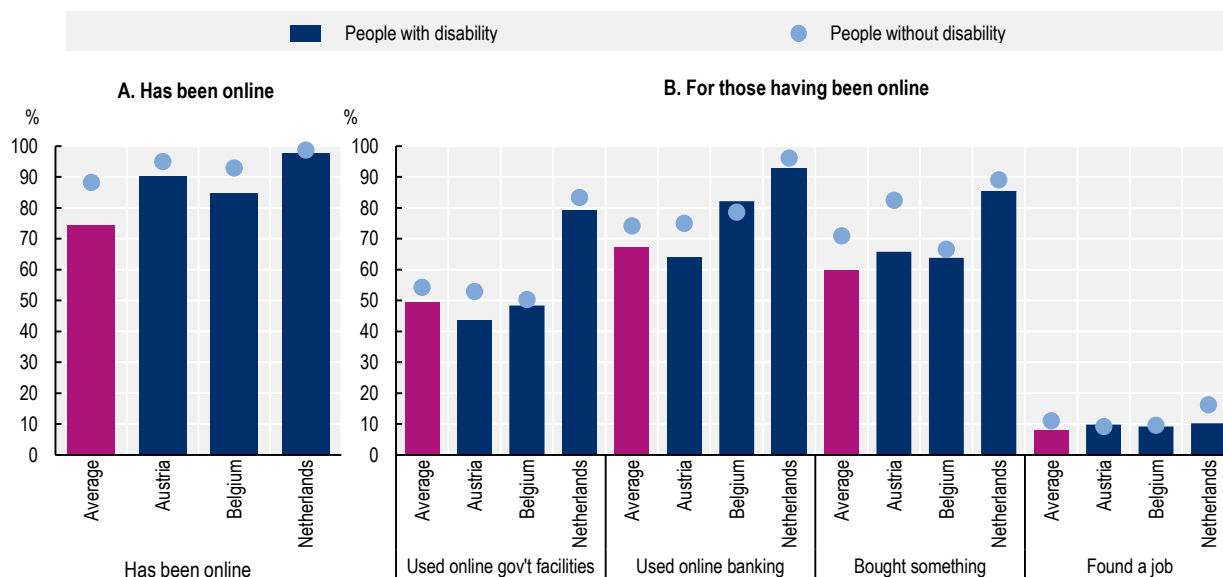
The importance of digital skills has accelerated significantly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Shopping online has become imperative with the closure of non-essential shops and curfews. Government services, such as those offered by public employment services, have shifted online almost entirely (OECD, 2020^[28]; OECD, 2021^[29]). Teleworking has become common practice in order to continue working. It is very likely that these new digital practices are here to stay.

Yet, PWD have lower digital skills. Fewer PWD have been online (Figure 6.2, Panel A). Among those with disability who have been online, fewer have used online facilities of public administration, banking, shopping or found a job online (Panel B). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 5, PWD more often do not have access to basic digital technology, such as a computer and internet. Disabilities are at the origin of

the digital skills gap, even when taking into account age and educational differences. Accounting for age and education differences reduces the gap by about half for the five indicators across European OECD countries.³ The reason for the disability skills gap can be manifold and could certainly be because digital technologies are not disability inclusive, or because PWD are less exposed to acquiring these skills through work or adult learning. It could also be a matter of income.

Figure 6.2. Even people with disability who have access to the internet show lower digital skills

Share of persons aged 18-69 by disability status, 2016



Note: All indicators refer to behaviour in the last 12 months. Used online government facilities refers to having used any online facility of public administration (tax returns, applications for benefit claims, driving license, passport, etc.). The purple bars represent the unweighted average of 23 European countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. Norway and Switzerland are not covered in this dataset. Greece is excluded due to a low number of observations.

Source: OECD calculations based on the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/ejkui8>

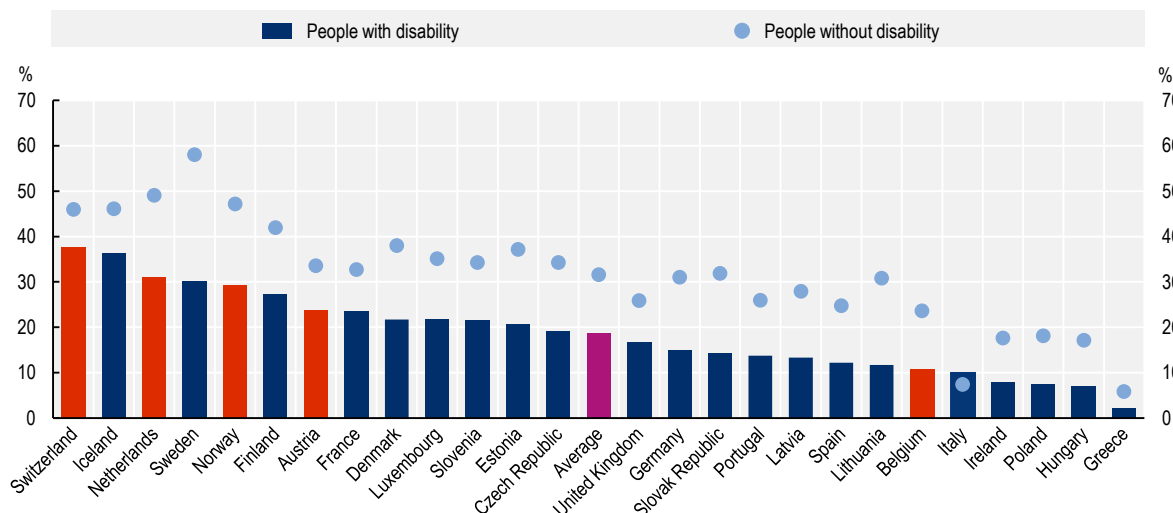
6.3. People with disability participate less often in adult learning

While adult learning is all the more important to make up for lower levels of education and skills, PWD rarely participate in adult learning. Less than one in five PWD engaged in adult learning on average across European OECD countries. Participation rates for PWD vary widely between countries, from about one in three in for instance Switzerland and the Netherlands to one in nine in Belgium and substantially lower still in other OECD countries such as Greece (Figure 6.3).

PWD participate much less often in adult learning than people without disability (PWOD). While less than one in five PWD participated in adult learning, the corresponding figure was one in three for PWOD. PWD face an adult learning participation gap of 10-15 percentage points in most European OECD countries. The gap is larger in Norway and the Netherlands (around 18 percentage points), and lower in Switzerland (8 percentage points).⁴ Also in this case, age and education can only explain about half the adult learning participation disability gap.⁵ The adult learning participation disability gap is apparent in data from multiple sources.⁶

Figure 6.3. People with disability participate much less often in adult learning

Adult learning participation rate among persons aged 15-69 by disability status, 2016



Note: The purple bar represents the unweighted average of the 26 European countries shown.

Source: OECD calculations based on the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) ad-hoc module.

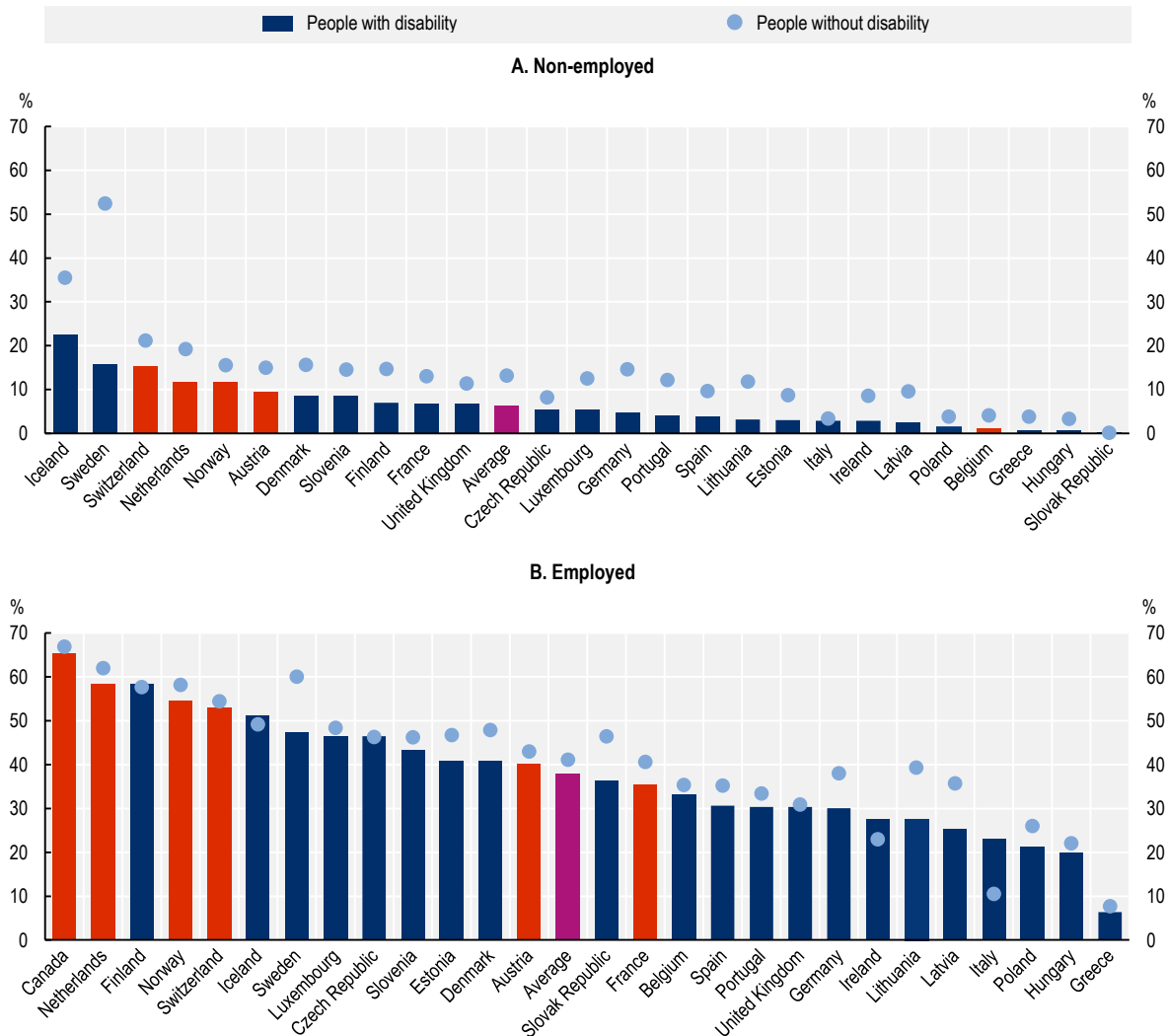
StatLink  <https://stat.link/zh13fv>

Adult learning participation rates are particularly low among non-employed PWD (Figure 6.4, Panel A). About one in 16 non-employed with disability enrolled in adult learning, compared to one in eight non-employed without disability. Rates are too low in all countries, but particularly so in Belgium: only 1% of non-employed with disability indicated to have participated in adult learning. The gap can only partly be explained by differences in age and education.⁷

The lower levels of education, skills and adult learning participation rates act as a major impediment to the labour force participation of PWD. Findings from surveys among employers and PWD in the United States corroborate the importance of education and skills for employment. The three most often barriers to employment for PWD listed by HR staff in the United States all relate to skills or work experience: a lack of qualified applicants (51%), lack of relevant experience (36%) and a lack of requisite skills and training (30%) (Erickson et al., 2014_[30]). American jobseekers with disability in a large representative sample most often mentioned not having enough education or training as an employment barrier (41%). Only 39% were able to overcome this barrier (Sundar et al., 2018_[31]).

Figure 6.4. The adult learning participation gap is particularly high among non-employed people with disability

Adult learning participation rate among persons aged 15-69 by employment and disability status, 2016



Note: Data for Canada cover ages 15-64. The purple bar represents the unweighted average of the 26 European countries shown in Panel A with the addition of Canada in Panel B.

Source: Data provided by Employment and Social Development Canada from the General Social Survey, (GSS, 2016) and OECD calculations based on the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) ad-hoc module.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/fn26d7>

Employed PWD participate much more often in adult learning and face a smaller adult learning participation gap than non-employed PWD (Figure 6.4, Panel B). In fact, for those who are employed the disability adult learning participation gap is no longer significant when taking into account education and age differences on average across European OECD countries as well as for the five European country cases separately.⁸ The higher adult learning participation rates of employed PWD reinforces the importance of bringing PWD into the labour market to facilitate further skill investments in a rapidly evolving world of work.

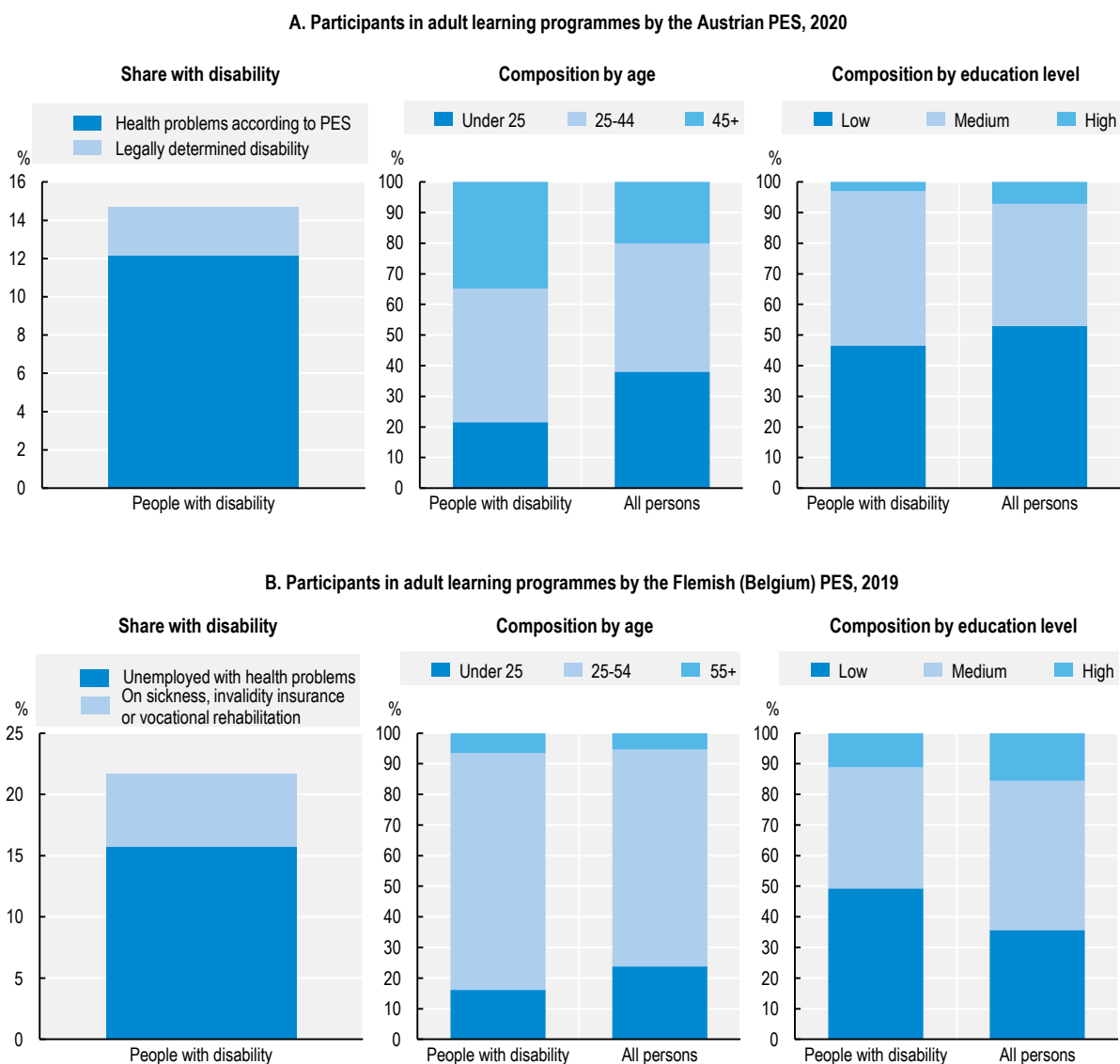
Publicly funded adult learning provided by public employment services (PES) is of major importance for PWD, and for inclusion in general. About 15% of persons availing of adult learning programmes funded by the Austrian PES are either unemployed and have health problems according to the PES or have a legally

determined disability (Figure 6.5, Panel A). In Flanders (Belgium), about 22% of those participating in adult learning organised by the PES are either unemployed and have health problems according to the PES or are on sickness, invalidity insurance or vocational rehabilitation (Figure 6.5, Panel B). PES adult learning programmes are important for inclusion more broadly. Also older and lower educated individuals, who tend to participate less often in adult learning, make heavy use of publicly funded adult learning in Austria and Flanders (Belgium). The national administrative data used for these calculations provide useful illustrations between different groups within countries but may not be fully comparable across countries (Box 6.2).

Very few persons on incapacity (i.e. sickness or disability) benefits – generally less than 1% – make use of adult learning offers from the PES. A principal reason for this is that few register with the PES. Increasing the number of persons on incapacity benefits who register with PES is an essential first step for the promotion of adult learning rates among PWD.

- In **Austria**, the large majority of all PES learners are unemployed (more than 85% in the provided data). About 12% are employed and 2% are out of the labour force. Virtually no people on disability-related benefits make use of PES adult learning, mainly because registration with the PES is not possible for disability pension claimants, only for those receiving transitional benefits. Adult learning participation rates among different registered groups are comparable (Figure 6.6, Panel A).
- In **Flanders (Belgium)**, almost all PES learners were unemployed in 2019 (94% in the provided data). The remaining 6% were on sickness and invalidity insurance or on vocational rehabilitation. This means that less than 1% of recipients of sickness and invalidity insurance or vocational rehabilitation made use of adult learning provided by the PES. Very few persons on disability benefits or workers' compensation make use of PES adult learning.⁹ Those few on sickness and invalidity insurance or on vocational rehabilitation who register with the PES actually enrol in adult learning more often than unemployment benefit recipients (with or without health problems) (Figure 6.6, Panel B) – maybe choosing to register in order to participate in adult learning.
- In **Norway**, while many of those on PES programmes that could be defined as adult learning (see definition in note to Figure 6.6) are on incapacity benefit, this is still a low share as percentage of the total population of benefit recipients. One in two adult learners at the PES are on some incapacity benefit (Work Assessment Allowance or Permanent Disability Benefit). The remaining 50% is either unemployed or receiving other or no benefits.¹⁰ The PES administers all benefits, hence, registration is also automatic for recipients of incapacity benefits. Yet, few actually participate in adult learning: only 13% of all Work Assessment Allowance recipients and about 1% of Permanent Disability Benefit recipients with reduced work capacity (Figure 6.6, Panel C). The share of registered persons on Work Assessment Allowance that participates in adult learning is comparable to the share of unemployed.¹¹
- In **the Netherlands**, 11% of the PES adult learning courses were taken by disability and sickness benefit recipients between 2012 and 2018 (UWV, 2020_[32]).¹² This implies that about 1% of all disability and sickness benefit recipients are enrolled in PES adult learning courses.
- **Also in Ireland, very few inactive and employed PWD make use of mainstream publicly funded adult learning.** Less than 5% of employed and inactive people with and without disability enrol in publicly funded adult learning. On the contrary, as many as about one in four unemployed with disability and one in three of all unemployed enrol (OECD, 2021_[33]).

Figure 6.5. People with disability often use publicly funded adult learning in Austria and Belgium



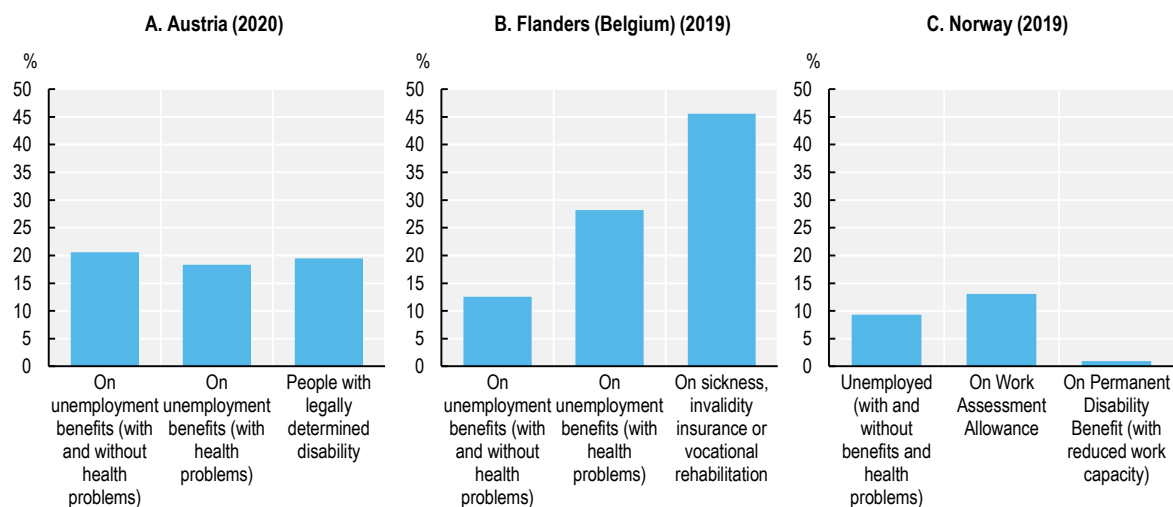
Note: “Unemployed with health problems”: Persons on unemployment benefits with health problems assessed by the public employment service. Low educated: primary or lower secondary education (“Pflichtschulausbildung” or “Kortgeschoold”, ISCED 0-2). Medium educated: medium to upper secondary education (“Lehrausbildung, Mittlere und Hoehere Ausbildung” or “Middengeschoold”, ISCED 3-4). Higher educated: tertiary education and above (“Akademische Ausbildung” or “Hooggeschoold”, ISCED 5-8). The educational levels might not be fully comparable across countries. Panel A: Data cover Qualifizierung programmes (partly) funded by the Austrian PES: the Apprenticeship Guarantee (AG25), the Employment Foundation and Training Measures (BM, AST) and Individual Subsidised Qualification Schemes (FKS, GSK, KK, QBN, QFB, SFK). The data exclude persons on disability benefits or workers’ compensation. Panel B: Data cover all in-person adult learning programmes and exclude online adult learning. Persons “on sickness, invalidity insurance or vocational rehabilitation”: persons on “arbeidsongeschiktheidsuitkering”, “invaliditeitsuitkering” and “socio-professionele re-integratie”, all provided by RIZIV. The data do not cover persons on disability benefits (“IVT”), on workers’ compensation (“Arbeidsongevallen/beroepsziekten”), employees (unless on sickness- or invalidity insurance) or persons on any other benefits.

Source: OECD calculations based on administrative records provided by Austrian and Flemish (Belgium) authorities.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/pk8h0t>

Figure 6.6. Once registered with PES, health problems do not hinder participation in adult learning

Share of different groups registered with the PES who participate in adult learning



Note: See Figure 6.5 for information on data for Austria and Flanders (Belgium). Panels A and C: Data do not distinguish between those on unemployment benefits and those employed but registered as job seeking. Panel C: Adult learning is defined as active labour market policies related to education, training, work practice and work training (“Oppl ring” and “Arbeidspraksis”).

Source: OECD calculations based on administrative records provided by Austrian, Flemish (Belgium) and Norwegian authorities.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/a1mo05>

Box 6.2. Comparability of PES data on adult learning and career guidance

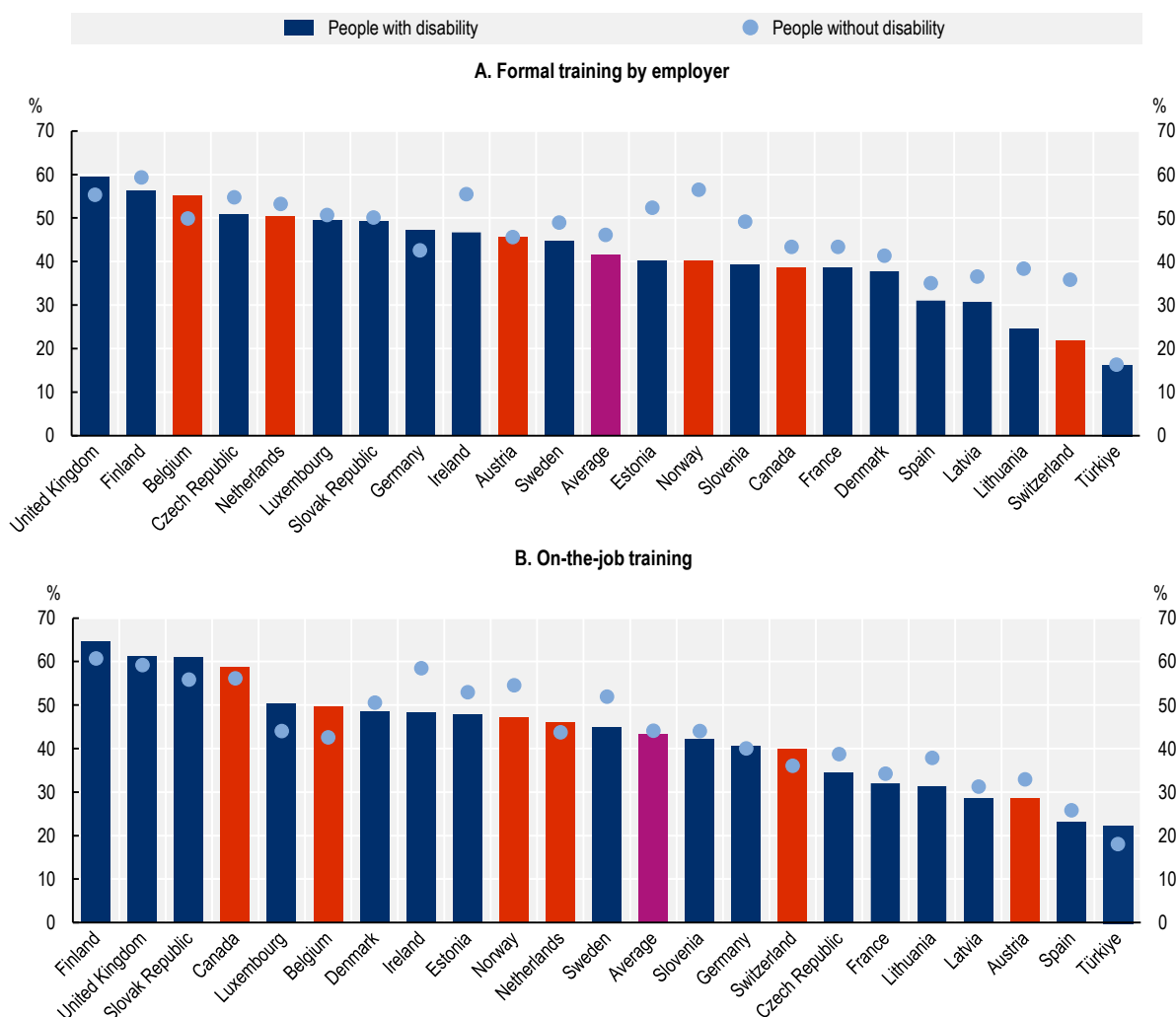
This chapter makes use of administrative PES data provided by Austria, Flanders (Belgium) and Norway. These data provide useful illustrations between different groups within countries but may not be fully comparable across countries for multiple reasons:

- The Austrian data refer to 2020 and are likely significantly affected by the COVID-19 **pandemic**, whereas the Norwegian and Flemish (Belgium) data refer to 2019. For instance, the low entry rates into employment after participation in adult learning likely at least partially reflect the difficulty of entering employment throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 6.9). The entry into employment for Norway may also be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, since the data measure entry into employment six months after having completed an adult learning course.
- The **population with disabilities registered at PES** may vary from country to country, depending on the obligations to register and the role of PES in managing health-related benefits and occupational rehabilitation and the **definition of health problems identified by PES**.
- The **definition of adult learning by PES** may differ across countries. For instance, students in ordinary education are included in the definition of adult learning in Austria and Belgium but not in Norway.
- The **role of PES in the adult learning landscape** may differ across countries. Other organisations may also provide publicly funded mainstream adult learning courses (OECD, 2019^[2]). The role of PES in providing vocational rehabilitation may differ as well.

PWD who are employed participate less often in formal training provided by the employer, though they participate about as often in on-the-job training as PWOD. About two in five employed PWD participate in formal training provided for or paid by the employer on average across European OECD countries and in Canada (Figure 6.7, Panel A). A similar rate participates in on-the-job training on average across European OECD countries, compared to about three in five employed PWD in Canada (Figure 6.7, Panel B). Employed PWD participate 5 percentage points less often in formal training by the employer. This gap is larger in Norway and Switzerland. The gap seems largely due to the weaker labour market position of PWD. The gap shrinks to about 2 percentage points when employee (education, age and gender), job (occupation, working part-time and type of contract) and firm characteristics (sector and firm size) are taken into account. This suggests that some PWD find themselves caught in a low-skills trap, where their weaker labour market position and lower initial skills level prevents them from developing further through education and training (OECD, 2019^[34]).

Figure 6.7. Employees with disability engage less often in formal training provided by the employer

Adult learning participation rate among employees aged 15-69, 2015



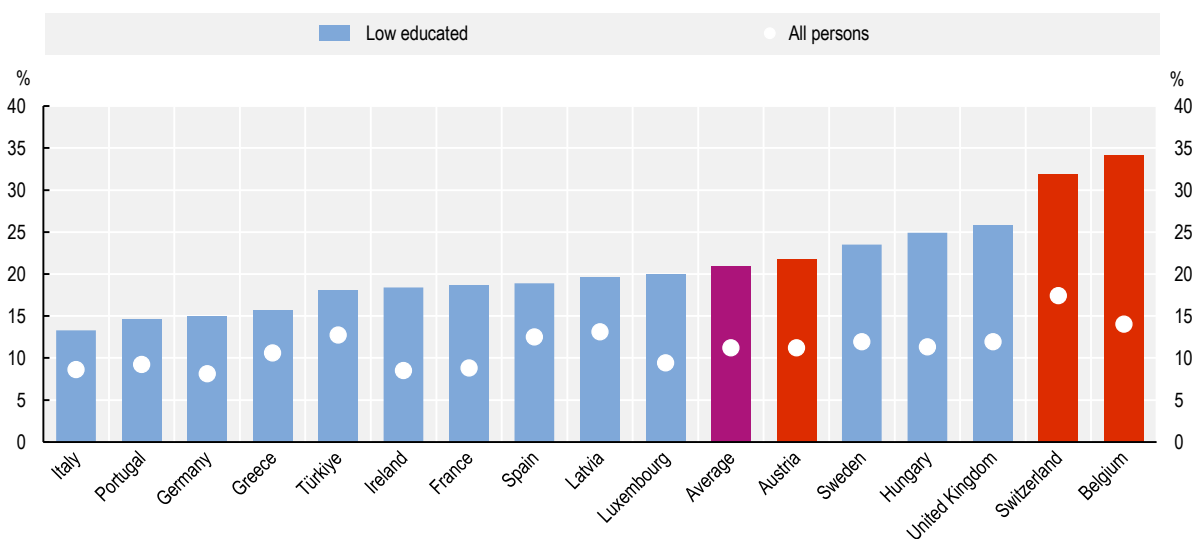
Note: The purple bars represent the unweighted average of the 22 countries shown. Data for Canada cover employees aged 15-64 in 2016.

Source: Data provided by Employment and Social Development Canada based on the General Social Survey (GSS, 2016) and OECD calculations based on the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS).

Lower participation rates suggest that PWD face higher participation barriers. Indeed, many low-educated persons wanting to participate in adult learning mention health or age as a barrier to not participating (Figure 6.8). Health or age present particularly often a barrier for low-educated persons in Switzerland and Belgium.¹³

Figure 6.8. Health and age are adult learning participation barriers for many low-educated persons

Share of persons aged 25-64 wanting to participate in education or training but did not participate mentioning health and age as barrier, 2016



Note: The purple bar represents the unweighted average of the 16 European countries shown.

Source: Adult Education Survey, Eurostat dataset: Population wanting to participate in education and training, by reason for not participating and educational attainment level [TRNG_AES_178].

StatLink  <https://stat.link/c7vuty>

Employed PWD more frequently face a lack of employer support as an adult learning participation barrier. Different pieces of evidence suggest that a lack of employer support contributes to the lower participation rates in employer-provided formal training of PWD. First, analysis from 2016 *EU-SILC data* shows that 23% of employed PWD across European OECD countries state that their main reason for not participating in adult learning was that the employer did not provide this, compared to 20% of PWOD.¹⁴ Second, PWD state about 25% more often that they asked their employer for training but did not receive it.¹⁵ Third, participants with disability in the British *Unionlearn* programme, discussed in greater detail below (Box 6.4), report more often a lack of managerial support (22% vs. 16%), including for time off for learning (25% vs. 17%) as major adult learning barriers (Stuart et al., 2016_[35]).¹⁶

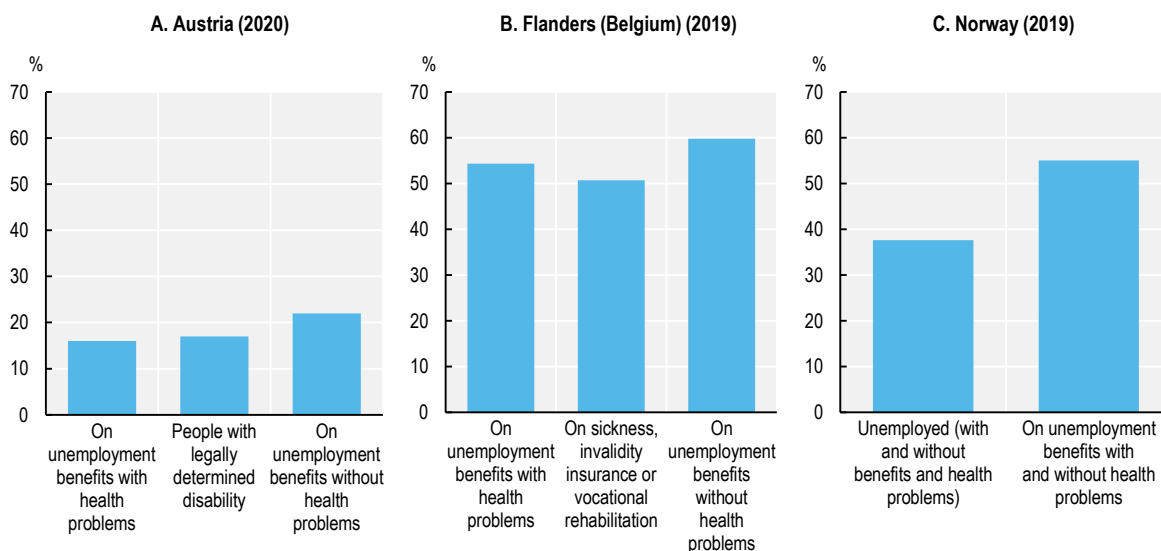
6.4. People with disability may less often receive the training they need

Even when participating, PWD may not always receive the adult learning they need to enter employment or advance in their careers. PWD who participate in adult learning from the PES slightly less often find their way into employment than their peers without disability, though the difference is encouragingly small (Figure 6.9). This finding underlines the importance of adult learning for all, but also to better understand which publicly funded adult learning programmes are most effective for PWD as a priority for further research. Part of the difference in employment outcomes likely comes from compositional differences,

including in age and education. More detailed data for Flanders (Belgium) shows that entry rates into work are similar for young and low-educated PWD and PWOD. Instead, prime-aged, middle and higher educated PWD are in employment after adult learning less often than their counterparts without disability. There may also be differences in type of adult learning that persons receive, with different entry rates into work (see Section 6.4). More generally, whereas comparisons of entry rates between PWD and PWOD within countries are useful, the comparability of entry rates between countries may be low (Box 6.2). For instance, the low rates of entry into employment in Austria and to a lesser extent for Norway likely at least partially reflect the difficulty of entering employment in 2020 throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷

Figure 6.9. People with disability slightly less often enter work after participation in adult learning

Percentage entering employment after having completed PES adult learning



Note: Percentage in employment three months (Austria and Flanders (Belgium)) or six months (Norway) after having completed PES adult learning. See Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.6 for information on data for the three countries. Panel A: Data only cover Employment Foundation and Training Measures (BM, AST). Panel C: Data cover labour market training and education ("Oppl ring") and work practice and training ("Arbeidspraksis"). Persons entering employment may still be registered with the PES, may still participate in adult learning and can be employed with or without a benefit (such as a wage subsidy).

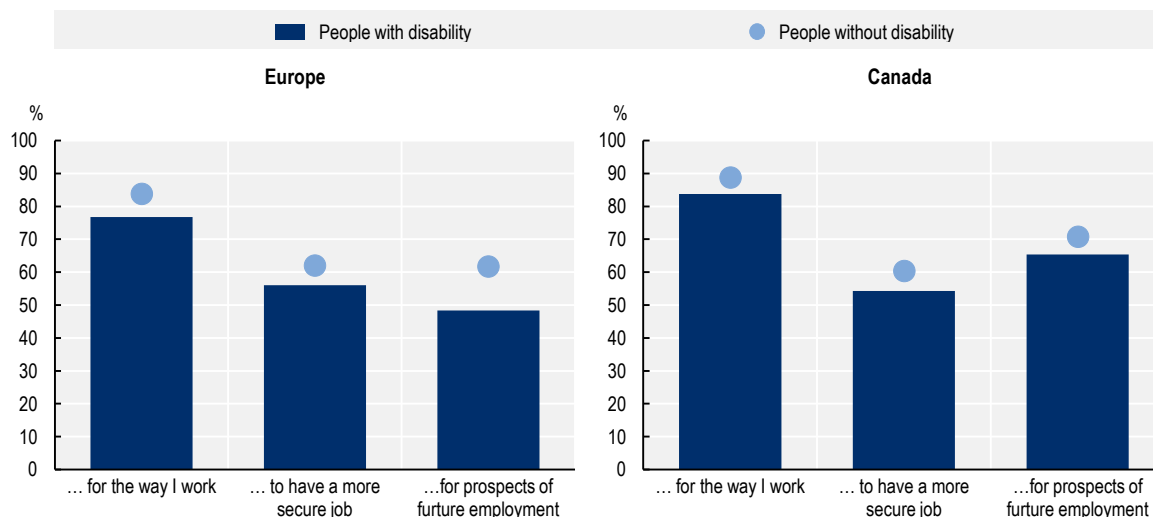
Source: OECD calculations based on administrative records provided by Austrian, Flemish (Belgium) and Norwegian authorities.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/y2mx39>

Employed PWD report receiving lower-quality formal and on-the-job adult learning. They are less optimistic about the usefulness of formal training they receive. PWD across European countries as well as in Canada less often state that their training helped them improve the way they work, to have a more secure job or for prospects of future employment (Figure 6.10). The gap is significant, even when taking into account their labour market position.¹⁸

Figure 6.10. Employees with disability are less optimistic about their adult learning outcomes

For employees aged 15-69 in 2015, the training helped...



Note: Europe is the unweighted average of 21 European countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. Data for Canada cover employees aged 15-64 in 2016.

Source: Data provided by Employment and Social Development Canada based on the General Social Survey (GSS, 2016) and OECD calculations based on the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS, 2015).

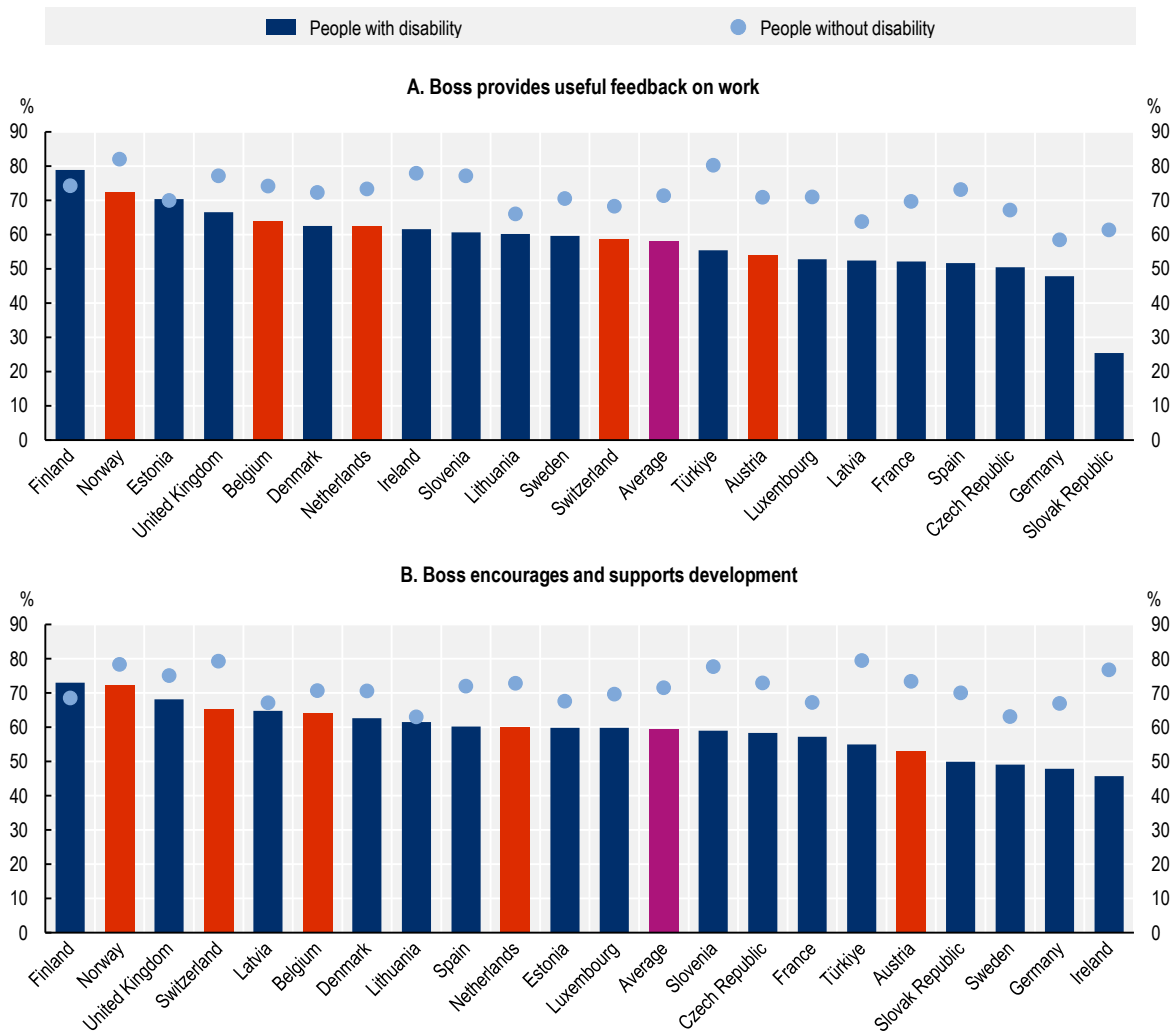
StatLink  <https://stat.link/oitqka>

PWD also express worries about the quality of on-the-job training, indicating that they are less supported by their boss in their personal development. PWD state less often that their boss provides useful feedback on their work (Figure 6.11, Panel A), or encourages or supports their development (Panel B). The gap is large and generally significant, even when taking into account their labour market position.

Moreover, PWD more often state that their skills are not well matched with the skills needed to perform their job.¹⁹ The main reason for this is that PWD more often express to be overqualified for their job (Figure 6.12). Particularly many Austrian and Swiss PWD declare a skills mismatch. Skills mismatches have negative consequences for both firms and workers. First, skills mismatches imply that workers are less productive as they do not use their skills to their fullest in their job. Second, high skills mismatches lower the incentives for persons to invest in their skills, and therefore negatively affect human capital accumulation and career developments. Third, skills mismatches reduce allocative efficiency, as more productive firms can less easily hire skilled labour and gain market shares at the expense of less productive firms (McGowan and Andrews, 2015_[36]).

Figure 6.11. Employees with disability less often say their boss supports learning development

Share of employees aged 15-69 by disability status, 2015



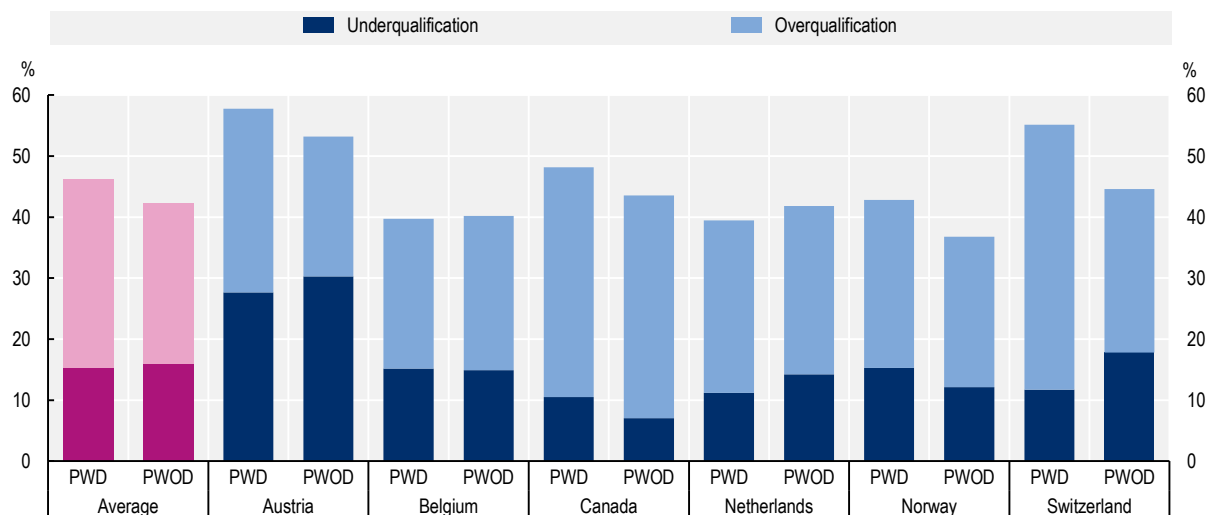
Note: The purple bars represent the unweighted average of the 21 European countries shown.
Source: OECD calculations based on the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS, 2015).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/1ckws2>

The fact that self-assessed skills mismatches are more prevalent for PWD is worrying for their labour market position and prospects. It suggests that PWD do not apply to or manage to get into more challenging jobs that fit better with their skills. It further means that PWD flourish less in their current jobs, which likely hampers their career development. More generally, it suggests that increasing education and skills alone is not sufficient to improve the labour market position of PWD (Chapter 2).

Figure 6.12. Self-assessed skills mismatch is higher for employees with disability

Share of employees aged 15-69 reporting being underqualified or overqualified in their job, 2015



PWD: People with disability; PWOD: People without disability.

Note: The purple bars represent the unweighted average of Canada and 21 European countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. Underqualification: in need of further training to cope well with duties. Overqualification: having the skills to cope with more demanding duties. Data for Canada cover employees aged 15-64 in 2016.

Source: Data provided by Employment and Social Development Canada based on the General Social Survey (GSS, 2016) and OECD calculations based on the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS, 2015).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/vopfut>

6.5. Towards adult learning that delivers for people with disability

OECD countries, including Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, should improve their adult learning system to get skills right for all – including for PWD. Getting skills right for all is important to have an adequately skilled and future-ready workforce and to promote universal inclusion. Countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – which include all OECD countries except the United States – are legally required to promote, protect and ensure the full inclusion of PWD in adult learning on an equal basis with others.²⁰

This section proposes a set of guiding principles for the design of an adult learning system that delivers for all, including for PWD, irrespective of the main provider of adult learning (i.e. PES and others):

1. Apply an active mainstreaming approach with widely available flexibility
2. Provide clear career guidance
3. Reach out proactively to potential learners
4. Make adult learning relevant for employment
5. Build capacity of and encourage employers to train in an inclusive fashion
6. Tackle time and financial barriers

The section illustrates these six guiding principles by providing examples of promising practices and identifying room for improvement for the six country cases. It goes beyond the purview of this section to comprehensively review the performance of the entire adult learning system for PWD, given the breadth and complexity of these systems in the six country cases (OECD, 2019_[2]).²¹

1. Apply an active mainstreaming approach with widely available flexibility

Formal education and publicly funded adult learning should be based on a mainstreaming philosophy. Persons with any additional needs should participate as much as possible in the same class or school as persons without additional needs. Mainstreaming is an effective strategy to get the basic system right for everyone, including for PWD in the open labour market. It further helps to prevent segregation and stigmatisation. It also minimises the necessity for persons to disclose their additional needs. Finally, emerging evidence for the United States shows that PWD participating in mainstream education programmes have better employment outcomes. Students with disability enrolling in mainstream programmes obtain more often paid employment and enjoy higher salaries (Qian et al., 2018^[37]; Grigal et al., 2019^[38]).²²

First, mainstreaming requires a formal education and adult learning system built on *Universal Design* from the outset. This means that the system should be designed in such a way that (virtually) everyone can access, understand and benefit from it, irrespective of their needs or ability (Story, Mueller and Mace, 1998^[39]). Countries can draw from the rich guidelines and evidence on developing learning systems, material and software based on Universal Design collected by the non-profit research and development organisation CAST (www.cast.org). More detailed guidelines based on the CAST framework have been created for instance for online adult learning (Rogers-Shaw, Carr-Chellman and Choi, 2018^[40]). Canada has set up the 2019 Accessible Canada Act to make Canada without barriers by 2040, although the act only extends to the federal jurisdiction and education is the responsibility of individual provinces and territories, some of whom have accessible education standards in place (DESD Canada, 2021^[41]). There are a number of federal skills programmes with targeted adult learning support for PWD, such as the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities and earmarked federal funding for PWD for provinces and territories (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018^[42]).²³ Norway was an early adapter, presenting in 2009 its action plan “Norway universally designed by 2025” that covers formal education and adult learning (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2009^[43]).²⁴ A promising practice is the case of Ireland, which has made significant steps to create a formal education and adult learning system built with a Universal Design in mind (Box 6.3).

Second, all adults, including all benefit recipients, should have access to all mainstream publicly funded adult learning, as everyone is a potential learner. This includes that enrolment in adult learning should not affect benefit entitlement. Currently, too many people on disability benefits do not receive adult learning (see Section 6.3). The PES is a key provider of publicly funded mainstream adult learning in the six country cases. While persons on unemployment benefits have access to these services, this is not always the case for persons on different sickness or disability benefits, or for employed PWD (Table 6.1). Certain countries demand that people have proof of remaining work capacity to be able to register with the PES. This is the case in Austria (beneficiaries on disability benefits and paid sick leave), Switzerland (disability benefits, paid sick leave and workers’ compensation) and the Netherlands (disability benefits).²⁵ Restrictions are stronger still in Austria for people on permanent disability pensions who need a referral from the Department of Social Affairs to register. Once they register, they lose their disability benefit entitlement. They can register with the Department of Social Affairs, but this organisation only offers segmented adult learning and career guidance such as sheltered employment. Switzerland and British Columbia (Canada) focus their more intensive training measures and counselling primarily to unemployment benefit recipients.²⁶ That said, British Columbia has a well-established adult basic education system that is tuition free for all citizens outside the PES, delivered primarily by post-secondary institutions and school districts (OECD, 2020^[44]).

Table 6.1. Disability benefit recipients cannot access mainstream publicly funded adult learning

Access to mainstream publicly funded adult learning provided by public employment services

| | Austria | Flanders (Belgium) | British Columbia (Canada) | Netherlands | Norway | Switzerland |
|--|---------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------|-------------|
| Disability benefit recipients | | | | | | |
| Paid sick leave recipients | | | | | | |
| Workers' compensation recipients | | | | (Benefit does not exist) | | |
| Unemployment benefit recipients (with identified disability) | | | | | | |
| Employed person with disability not receiving any benefits | | | | | | |

Note: Light blue: benefit recipients have access. Darker blue: benefit recipients can have access under certain conditions or to a limited training offer. Darkest blue: benefit recipients (essentially) do not have access.

Source: 2021 Disability Inclusion questionnaire.

Third, mainstreaming necessitates an active engagement and awareness of adult learning providers and teachers. Providers and teachers should view it as their responsibility and be able to instruct as many learners in the classroom as possible and help identify learners in need of further accommodation. For this, providers and teachers require access to authoritative and accessible guidelines how to identify and support learners with disability. These guidelines should go beyond compliance requirements and promote best practices. Furthermore, inclusive education and disability awareness should be part of the teacher curriculum. Again, countries can draw from the rich material on curriculum design and courses on effective inclusive learning from CAST (www.cast.org). Austria's training for all teachers contains a compulsory module on inclusive education and disability awareness, since its adoption of the *New Teacher Training* guidelines in 2013. Its PES also demands that its contracted out services have taken inclusive learning modules. Such modules exist but are not compulsory for adult learning teachers in Flanders (Belgium), the Netherlands and Norway (ANED, 2021^[45]).

Fourth, the adult learning system should be held accountable for mainstreaming. This firstly includes clear budget lines to resource supports to learners with disability in the mainstream system. Dedicated budget is particularly important in a mainstreaming system, to make sure that a sufficient part of investment goes to PWD. Governments should use such budget lines as an instrument to promote mainstreaming, by requiring mainstream establishments to transfer budgets in case of referrals. Governments should further set out clear institutional targets for the inclusion of adult learners with disability. There is little information available whether the six country cases use financial incentives and institutional targets to promote inclusion, although this is of vital importance for effective mainstreaming. The Austrian National Action Plan on Disability 2012-20 stresses that universal accessibility should be an important principle when awarding government funding for adult learning to (private) providers. The evaluation of the action plan states that the government has only partially accomplished this, without more detail (Austrian Sozialministerium, 2020^[46]). More generally, countries should track adult learning participation and consecutive labour market outcomes of PWD to hold the system responsible for inclusion. The Austrian, Flemish (Belgium) and Norwegian PES are promising practices to follow in this regard, as is evident from the figures displaying their data in this report.

Fifth, the adult learning system should accommodate individualised learning pathways by means of widely available flexibility in content and provision. Mainstreamed accommodation reduces the need for learners to disclose their preferences and constraints, including health problems. Many learners, such as PWD, migrants and older persons can benefit from access to simplified language course material. Equally, many

learners including those with disability and with family commitments would gain from possibilities for part-time enrolment and distance, blended and modular courses to shape their own learning path in their own time and place (Kis and Windisch, 2018^[47]). Distance learning can be particularly helpful for learners for whom it is physically or mentally more demanding to come to a learning facility at a set hour. Blended courses that combine face-to-face and distance learning are particularly promising, as they still allow learners to benefit from direct contact with teachers and classmates to improve both technical knowledge and social skills (McGinty, 2018^[48]). Modular learning provides flexibility by allowing individuals to work towards a full qualification over time by successively adding self-contained modules to their learning portfolio, in contrast to traditional learning programmes that require full completion to gain a qualification (OECD, 2019^[34]).

The extent to which publicly funded adult learning is flexible differs across countries and type of adult learning. For instance, the Centres of Adult Education in Flanders (Belgium) are a promising practice, by providing adult learning in an almost fully modular format (Box 6.3). The courses provided by the Flemish PES courses are less flexible by themselves, though flexible learning is still generally possible by means of a generous offer of courses. Higher education institutions however, in particular universities, offer little flexibility, which may explain why few adults enrol in their programmes (OECD, 2019^[49]).

Box 6.3. Promising practices of Universal Design in Ireland, modular learning in Belgium and Denmark and profiling learners in Dublin

Ireland has underscored its ambition for a formal education and adult learning system based on Universal Design in its National Planning Framework for Project Ireland 2040 (Government of Ireland, 2018^[50]). The country has taken a frontrunner position in advancing towards an adult learning system built on Universal Design, although it is not yet there. The independent non-profit organisation AHEAD that aims to create inclusive education and learning environments has published a conceptual framework of Universal Design for formal education and adult learning, commissioned by the Irish state agency SOLAS responsible for funding, planning and co-ordinating of publicly funded adult learning. AHEAD has recently published concrete guidelines for adult learning providers to implement Universal Design, which were written in consultation with stakeholders. The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design of the Irish National Disability Authority (NDA) was heavily involved in the design of these guidelines (OECD, 2021^[33]).

Adult learning provided by the Centres for Adult Education in Flanders (Belgium) is almost entirely modular. The Centres account for more than half of all formal adult learning in Flanders. The Centres provide a wide range of literacy, numeracy, ICT and social skills courses. Learners obtain a partial certificate after each module they attend, which can lead to a full qualification (OECD, 2019, p. 72^[49]). The system provides particular support to low-skilled adults and PWD. These groups benefit from lower fees (between EUR 0–EUR 0.30 rather than EUR 1.50 per hour) and are entitled to extra learning support and adjusted learning materials (OECD, 2019^[49]).

The Danish adult learning system provides high flexibility to its learners, allowing them to tailor their education and training programme based on their individual needs (Desjardins, 2017^[51]). Learners can combine modules from different training providers and across multiple subjects. For example, learners aiming to attain a vocational qualification can select from a wide range of vocational training courses from Labour Market Training Centres (Arbejdsmarkedsuddannelse) but also enrol in courses provided by the general education system. Adults can also follow modules at universities. For instance, Danish bachelor programmes have a modular structure (OECD, 2019, p. 73^[49]).

The Technological University Dublin (Ireland) has adopted an online tool, called *Do-It profiler*, which screens and profiles all students at the point of their induction on a volunteer basis. Students making use of the service receive immediate feedback on their learning styles with some suggestions about how best to study. About 10% of the screened students are profiled with a possible learning difficulty that may require additional support. These students are invited for a meeting with the institute's educational support service. Uptake of this invitation is high. The profiler helps to identify those in need of more support immediately at the beginning of their studies. Moreover, teachers can access learning style profile reports to tailor teaching approaches to the needs of the class group (ETBI, 2018^[52]; OECD, 2021^[33]).

In Austria, PES programme guidelines generally do not allow for provision in the evenings, weekends or modular blocks. The minimum intensity is 16 hours per week. There are specific programmes that offer more flexibility, such as the modular training programme *Kompetenz mit System* at apprenticeship level for persons with recurring periods of unemployment. The system also offers more online courses since the COVID-19 pandemic. Dutch private providers generally offer wide flexibility, though this is not the case for higher education institutions such as universities (OECD, 2017^[53]). Swiss law explicitly acknowledges that equal opportunities in access to adult learning involves adaptation of the duration and organisation of adult learning offers for PWD.²⁷ A promising practice of prevalent flexibility throughout the adult learning system comes from Denmark (Box 6.3).

Sixth, learners need to have access to continuous and proactive support where needed. Dedicated and knowledgeable access officers should be responsible for continuous and one-stop shop support at course entry, throughout the course and afterwards towards further learning and sustainable employment. Ideally, support should be proactive. As many learners may not disclose constraints, countries may consider implementing a standardised process that screens all learners at point of entry to identify any additional needs. In Canada, each adult learners at Nova Scotia's Community College, a network of 14 campuses, is assigned a faculty advisor who provides support throughout the programme to achieve their individual career and academic goals. The faculty advisor can help the student to access learning supports, academic accommodations and tutoring programs. The Netherlands provides possibilities for extended learning paths and individual guidance throughout secondary and higher professional education. A promising example of screening comes from the Irish Technological University Dublin (Box 6.3).

Seventh, PWD should play an active role in the design of adult learning systems. A truly inclusive system requires that all voices are heard. Active involvement helps to ensure that the adult learning system is designed with bodies and abilities of PWD in mind. It further empowers PWD, as expressed by the motto "Nothing About Us Without Us". A first example comes from Flanders (Belgium), where the PES uses focus groups of employees who are part of the target groups for inclusion, including employees with disability. The VDAB also reports on the share of employees with disability – 4% in 2019 (VDAB, 2021^[54]). Disability interest groups can play a role as well, and can provide a perspective of non-employed and employed PWD. For instance, Norway has established permanent contact forums and focus groups for PWD within relevant directorates, including in the departments of labour, education and training and health. Each municipal and county authority are required by law to set up an advisory council for PWD (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2018^[55]). Such focus groups of PWD are also actively involved in the creation of the strategy to increase secondary education completion rates in Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Education, 2021^[56]).

2. Provide clear career guidance

Career guidance helps adults to appreciate the importance of learning and to make well-informed educational, adult learning and occupational choices in a constantly evolving world of work. Many organisations provide career guidance services, including private providers and publicly funded career services such as the PES (OECD, 2021^[57]).

Persons facing labour market disadvantage, including PWD, have much to gain from career guidance services. PWD more often are unemployed, inactive or in lower quality jobs and have higher training needs. Moreover, they may be less aware of promising training avenues and may opt for no or less demanding training as they are more risk-averse or lack confidence (Klein, Iannelli and Smyth, 2016^[58]).

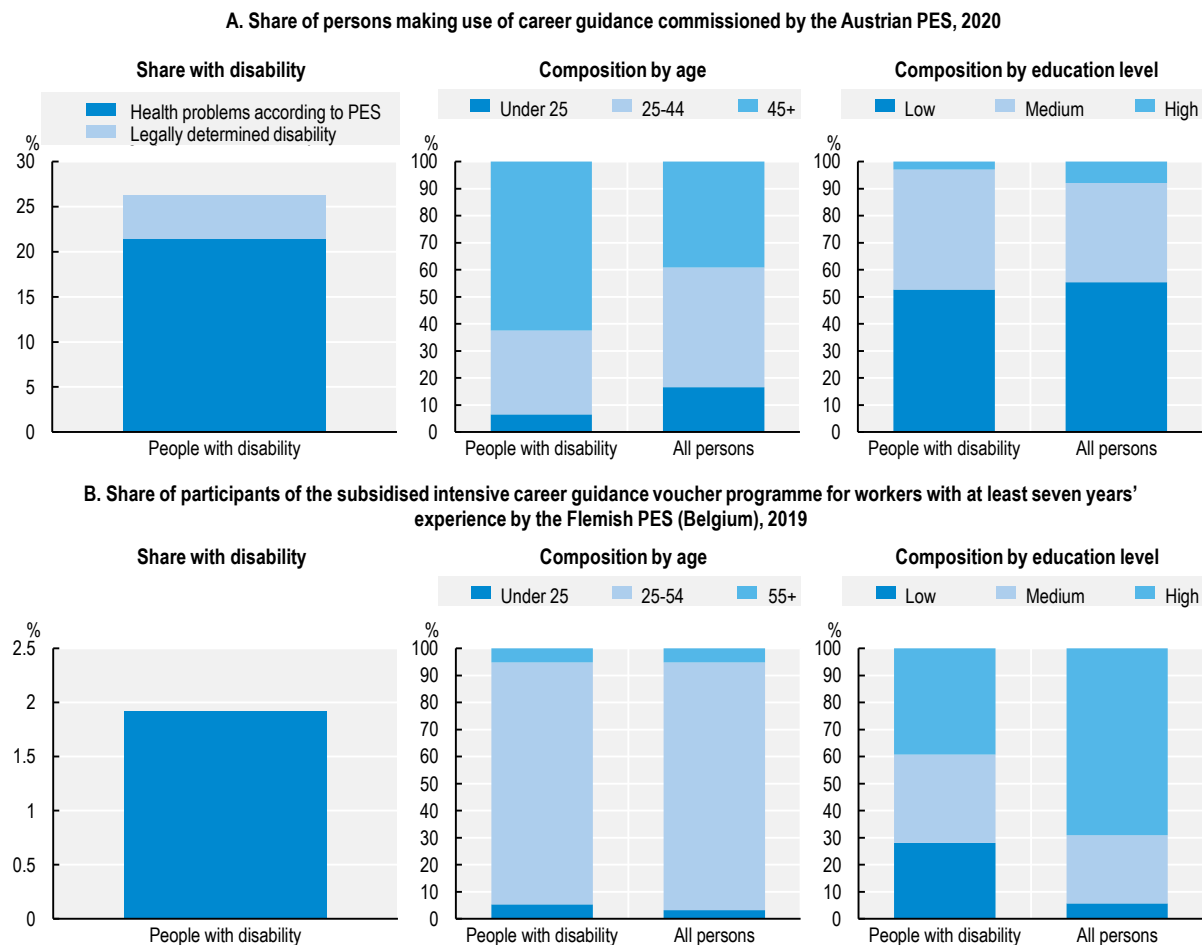
Whilst career guidance services can be particularly helpful to persons facing labour market disadvantage, they tend to use them less often. Evidence for Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States from the *OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults* shows that older and lower educated adults avail of career guidance services in general much less often.

For persons facing labour market disadvantage, career guidance provided by publicly funded institutions is particularly important.²⁸ Administrative records for Austria show that a relatively high share of people availing of career guidance commissioned by PES have a disability, is older or has a lower education (Figure 6.13). Conversely, PWD may less avail of career guidance targeted to persons already in the labour market, when this measure is offered by the PES. Participants of the Flemish (Belgium) career guidance voucher programme offering highly subsidised intensive career guidance of up to seven hours for workers with at least seven years work experience tend not to have a disability, are generally prime-age and higher educated.²⁹ Participants with disability making use of this programme tend to ask more questions on rehabilitative work and work accommodation, whereas participants without disability pose more questions on career advancement and leadership (VDAB, 2019^[59]).

Countries can improve their career guidance offer to PWD in multiple ways. Countries should have a high-quality online career guidance portal built on Universal Design principles. Online portals are important for PWD who may appreciate flexibility of time and place more. Online portals have become even more vital throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021^[27]). High-quality online portals integrate information on availability, costs and quality of education and training programmes, up-to-date labour market information and available financial support. They further help persons understand what skills they have and provide ways to communicate directly with a career guidance advisor to ask questions and interpret the information. This should be all centralised in a single portal to prevent fragmentation. The portal should be built on Universal Design principles so that PWD can use them effectively. All OECD countries have space to improve their online portal, and can learn from experiences of identified promising practices (OECD, 2021^[57]). Norway launched in 2020 a national digital career guidance service, including an e-guidance service for end-users as well as for practitioners (www.karriereveiledning.no). The service has been built with accessibility in mind. It presents easily accessible self-help online information as well as guidance to local in-person services (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2016^[60]).

Countries should offer high-quality in-person career services that are free for all. In-person services are important for PWD to identify fitting pathways into work, promote self-confidence and motivation and improve career and training-search efficacy (Solberg et al., 2012^[61]). Moreover, in-person services are of particular importance for PWD ability as they more often lack digital access and skills. In Norway and the Flemish and German-speaking parts of Belgium, all individuals have the statutory right to career guidance, forcing governments to offer universal career guidance services. Austria and Wallonia (Belgium) do not have such universal legal right, but offer their services freely to all adults (OECD, 2017^[62]). Instead, access to career guidance in Switzerland varies by canton. It is generally free for low-skilled and low-income individuals. Austria is a promising example of high-quality career guidance services.

Figure 6.13. Publicly funded and widely available career guidance is important for persons facing labour market disadvantage



Note: Panel A: Data cover career guidance provided by educational institutions that have been commissioned by the Austrian PES (*Beratungs- und Betreuungseinrichtung*). Data cover persons registered with the PES and exclude people on disability benefits or workers' compensation. Low educated: primary or lower secondary education ("Pflichtschulausbildung", ISCED 0-2). Medium educated: medium to upper secondary education ("Lehrausbildung, Mittlere und Hoehere Ausbildung", ISCED 3-4). High educated: tertiary education and above ("Akademische Ausbildung", ISCED 5-8). Panel B: Persons availing of the career guidance voucher ("loopbaancheque"). Eligible persons are principally employees and self-employed with at least seven years work experience. People with disability have been identified as having a disability by the PES. Low educated: below secondary education. Medium educated: secondary education. Higher educated: above secondary education. The educational levels might not be fully comparable between countries.

Source: OECD calculations based on administrative records provided by Austrian and Flemish authorities.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/a0f3gi>

Career guidance should be personalised, by addressing the adult learning and employment barriers that people face. PES career guidance services generally provide personalised services that are more intensive for groups at a greater distance of the labour market (Desiere, Langenbucher and Struyven, 2019^[63]). Countries may propose more extensive personalised services to particular groups facing larger barriers. Several OECD countries, including Canada and Norway, have career guidance services for early school leavers and students with additional education needs (Brussino, 2020^[64]). Austria's online portal (www.erwachsenenbildung.at) includes specific support for low-educated learners to overcome fear to go back to learning and how to learn effectively (OECD, 2021^[57]). Moreover, its main vocational rehabilitation provider (*Berufliches Bildungs- und Rehabilitationszentrum*) offers integrated and personalised career

guidance particularly relevant for PWD, provided by certified providers. In 2019, about 65 000 individuals availed of these services. Canada Pension Plan (CPP) provides career guidance and occupational vocational rehabilitation to its disability benefit recipients with regained work capacity who wish to return to work. The Netherlands offers more intense career guidance to workers aged 45 and above; an age group among which disability is more prevalent. The advice provides insights on the workers' current job, competences, and future career prospects as well as on staying employed until retirement and favouring a smooth transition into retirement (OECD, 2021^[57]). Switzerland launched a free career assessment for people aged 40 plus in 2021 in 11 cantons called *viamia*. In 2022 the policy was implemented as the evaluations were positive. An interesting example are the French one-stop career guidance shops (*Conseil en Evaluation Professionnelle, or CEPI*) that offer free and personalised advice to anyone wishing to receive guidance. Users can find their professional development advisor on an accessible website, which guides the user to a specialised CEP organisation tailored to their personal situation (e.g. employment status, age, or disability). In a first step, the client is invited for a one-to-one interview for a personalised assessment of skills and experience. Next, the CEP adviser and client develop together a professional plan, including any recommended training. The CEP adviser continues to provide support to the client when executing the professional plan (OECD, 2021^[57]). First evaluations indicate the importance of better equipping CEP advisers with knowledge on health issues, in order to help identify clients in need of further accommodation (Rougier and LeGrand-Jung, 2016^[65]).

3. Reach out proactively to potential learners

Reaching out proactively to groups that participate less often in career guidance and adult learning using existing relationships helps them connect with adult learning. An important reason why many groups facing a labour market disadvantage participate less often in training is that they find it more difficult to recognise their learning needs and enquire less often into training opportunities. On average across European OECD countries, only 12% of adults with low skills looked for learning opportunities compared to 36% of adults with high skills, according to the *2016 Adult Education Survey* (OECD, 2019^[34]).

Public authorities should reach out proactively to potential learners on sickness and disability benefits using their benefit provision network. As shown previously, benefit recipients cannot always register with PES nor access publicly funded adult learning and career guidance (Table 6.1). Even if they register, they rarely enrol. This truly is a missed opportunity, firstly, since reaching out can be easily organised through the disability benefit and support system, and secondly, data presented in this chapter show very promising entry rates into employment after having finished adult learning (Figure 6.9). Indeed, further evidence supports the view that adult learning is one of the most efficient ways for labour market re-integration, in particular among low-educated jobseekers and long-term unemployed (Card, Kluve and Weber, 2018^[66]; Kruppe and Lang, 2018^[67]). The Dutch PES, for example, has conducted an experiment in which disability benefit recipients were approached to promote training as part of their re-integration, with promising results (Box 6.4). There are some examples of proactive outreach, but it remains scattered and voluntary. For instance, the Flemish Government has initiated a policy with additional funding for additional career guidance and adult learning for people on disability benefits, in collaboration with the PES and disability insurance organisations. Participation is voluntary and requires the agreement of a doctor that the person has remaining work capacity (Flemish Parlement, 2021^[68]).

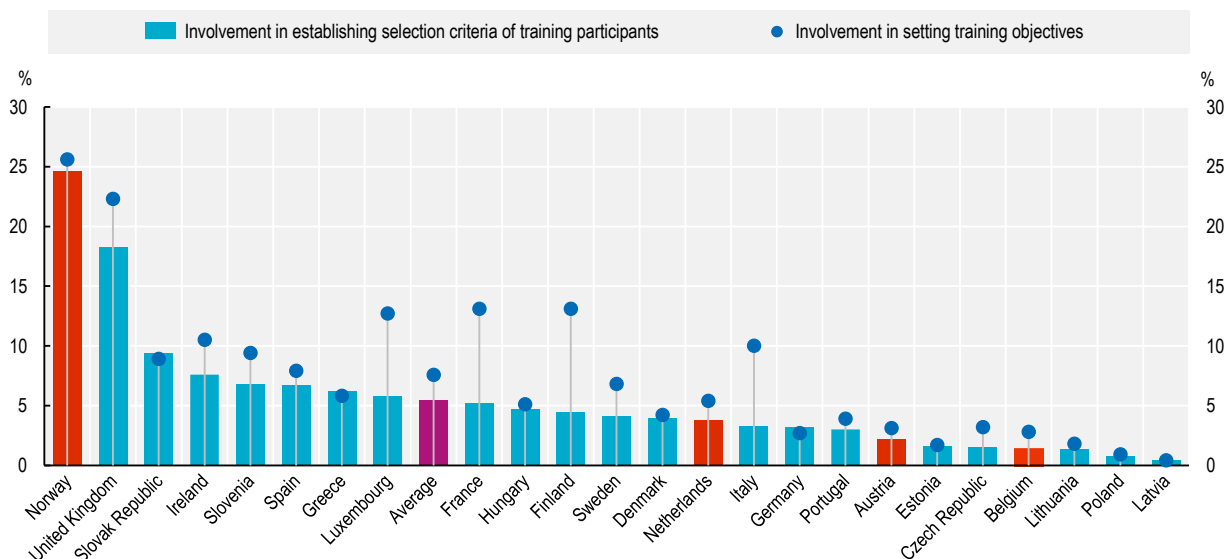
Countries may consider going even further by making career guidance and possibly adult learning obligatory for certain groups on reduced work capacity benefits, such as young persons, as well as individuals who enter disability benefits or who acquire a disability and have significant remaining work capacity. Countries may want to adopt a mutual-obligations framework, in which governments have the duty to provide benefit recipients with effective career guidance and adult learning services, and in turn, beneficiaries have to participate in the offered services to improve their employability (OECD, 2018^[69]). Voluntary participation provides disappointing results. For instance, in 2020, 3 602 disability benefit recipients participated in the Flemish initiative for additional career guidance and adult learning; about 3%

of the disability benefit population.³⁰ In a concept strategy, the Flemish Parliament does not seem ready to make participation obligatory (Flemish Parliament, 2021_[68]). The Dutch Government is planning to make registration with the PES obligatory for people on disability benefits with remaining work capacity. In the new regime, all new registrants will write together with the PES a re-integration plan, with follow-up support for five years. Countries may draw inspiration from rehabilitation and workers' compensation schemes, where obligations for training and reintegration are generally stronger. An interesting case in this regard is the 2014 reform in Austria. The reform abolished the temporary disability benefit and replaced it by either a rehabilitation benefit, for people in need of medical or occupational rehabilitation, or a retraining allowance for persons who can no longer carry out the occupation they were trained for. The PES is since then responsible for paying the retraining allowance and offering training to those people with the goal to reintegrate them into the labour market (Fuchs et al., 2018_[70]).

Employees with low skills can be encouraged to participate in adult learning by means of outreach through the workplace. The workplace is one of the key places where individuals identify their training needs and take part in training opportunities. Trade unions and staff representatives can provide a bridging function to help employees voice their training needs to their employers. The extent to which staff representatives are involved in establishing selection criteria for training participants and setting training objectives varies substantially across OECD countries. Whilst in Norway staff representatives have a say in about one in four firms with at least 10 employees, this is the case in less than 5% of firms in the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium (Figure 6.14).

Figure 6.14. Staff representatives are not often involved in the organisation of adult learning

Share of firms with 10 employees or more with staff representative involvement in training elements, 2015



Note: The purple bar represents the unweighted average of the 24 European countries shown.

Source: Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS).

StatLink  <https://stat.link/a07kw9>

The British *TUC Unionlearn* programme trains Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), who help workers identify training needs and arrange learning opportunities within their companies. Independent evaluations show promising results, including for PWD (Box 6.4). The Canadian Union Training and Innovation Program (UTIP) supports union-based apprenticeship training, with an emphasis on supporting access to trade careers for key groups facing barriers, including PWD.

Interest groups from the disability sector can facilitate a pathway to engage persons with adult learning and career guidance. Interest groups are aware of the diverse needs and circumstances of their cohorts and have a network. For instance, the Dutch Academy for Self-Reliance (*Academie voor Zelfstandigheid*), a collaboration between disability interest groups, the disability and health sector and adult learning providers, provides support to persons with additional needs to participate in adult learning and to live independently. The Academy also provides guidelines to adult learning providers how to support learners with additional needs (Artéduc, 2020^[71]). The Flemish interest group *Rentree* provides career guidance to former cancer patients back to work, in collaboration with the Flemish PES (Flemish Parlement, 2021^[68]).

Many countries also use awareness campaigns to reach potential learners, although there is little evidence that such campaigns are successful. The German campaign *Nur Mut – Der nächste Schritt lohnt sich. Besser lesen und schreiben lernen*, aimed to engage adults with low-literacy skills by means of TV and radio advertisements and posters. The evaluation noted that it raised overall awareness of the importance of literacy, but was not effective in reaching the target group itself. The Portuguese *New Opportunities Initiative* campaign suffered from similar problems (OECD, 2019^[34]). Switzerland launched two campaigns in 2017 on prior learning recognition and improving basic skills, but these have not been evaluated. Flanders (Belgium) has campaigns promoting lifelong learning (*Work Up Call*) and the use of services of its PES for all adults (*En iedereen beweegt*). Both campaigns are organised in collaboration with the social partners. Evaluations generally indicate that campaigns are not very successful in increasing adult learning participation rates (OECD, 2019^[34]). It seems unlikely that broad campaigns will work better to engage PWD, as they may face additional learning barriers and require more personalised support.

Box 6.4. Reaching out to potential learners in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

In the Netherlands, the *No Limits at Work* research agenda aims to expand the knowledge base on effective training for bringing disability benefit recipients back to work. The PES offers 11% of its trainings to disability benefit recipients, although this still only covers 1% of the total benefit population. The initiative to enrol in adult learning can come from the benefit recipient, the PES, the employer or an organisation involved in re-integration. Clients who followed the training were relative to the overall benefit population more often male and younger. About half were low-educated. The labour market effects of training targeted to disability benefit recipients are promising. Around 80% finished their training. About 60% who received training found a job – almost twice as high as those who did not receive training and 50% higher than those who only followed a re-integration process. About half still have a job five years later (UWV, 2020^[32]; UWV, 2020^[72]).

Unionlearn, established by a trade union federation in the United Kingdom, supports workers in acquiring qualifications to improve their employability. The programme actively considers overcoming disability-related barriers to learning. One of its key activities is the training of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), who help workers identify training needs and arrange learning opportunities within their companies. Since its inception in 2006, *Unionlearn* has trained 40 000 ULRs. It provides learning opportunities to about 250 000 workers per year, including relatively high numbers of workers with no or low qualification levels according to independent evaluations. In 2016, 14% of union learners disclosed to have a disability, in line with the share of the working age population with a disability. Employers report positive effects on productivity and employee commitment (Stuart et al., 2016^[35]).

4. Make adult learning relevant for employment

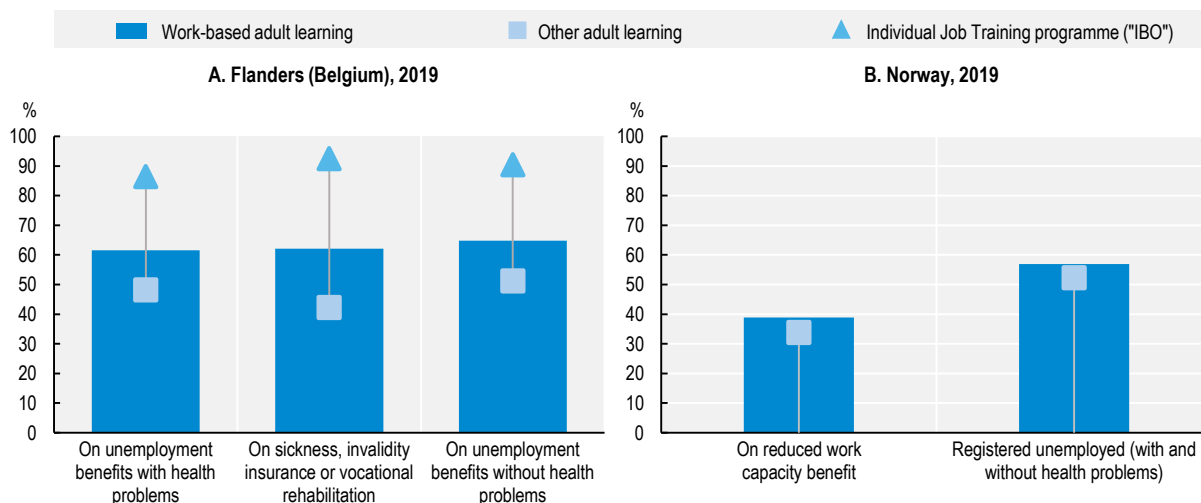
A lack of motivation is the principal reason for persons with and without disability not to engage in adult learning across European OECD countries.³¹ PWD may face additional motivational barriers, such as a lack of self-esteem and confidence about one's ability to acquire skills (McGinty, 2018_[48]). This is compounded by the fact that many are further away from the labour market.

Crucial for motivation to participate in adult learning is that the investment leads to better income prospects. This is not always the case for PWD. First, for those on disability benefits, the (partial) transition to work does not always lead to higher incomes because of high benefit replacement rates. The transition to work may also come with loss of additional benefits, such as free travel passes or housing support attached to disability benefits (Chapter 4). Second, the transition to work may lead to higher income on average, but this may not be the case. It may be difficult to find a position for a sufficient amount of working hours or a sufficiently high hourly wage. There is also a possibility that work proves too challenging, but that the possibility to move back to disability benefits is restricted or administratively cumbersome (Chapter 4). Third, those with disability that are already in the labour market may not be inclined to invest in their skills if this does not translate into better career possibilities or a higher wage. It may be harder for an employed person with disability to get a better job with the same employer or a new employer. In the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium), low work incentives come out as important adult learning participation barriers for disability benefit recipients (UWV, 2020_[72]; Flemish Parlement, 2021_[68]).

A generous offer of high-quality learning possibilities to improve basic skills helps to reduce motivational barriers. Improving basic skills is all the more important for PWD who often enter the labour market with an educational disadvantage. For instance, administrative data on publicly funded adult learning in Ireland shows that learners with health problems more often enrol in lower level and generic programmes, such as employability skills and language courses (OECD, 2021_[33]). The six country cases generally pay additional attention to getting basic skills right. All basic adult learning and language courses in Flanders (Belgium) and British Columbia (Canada) are free.³² The Norwegian adult learning agency (*Kompetanse Norge*) has a specific mandate to improve basic skills of the population. In this regard, it has developed training modules to teach basic skills to adults, the *SkillsPlus* basic skills training in the workplace programme (Box 6.5), and it is currently piloting projects in eight adult education centres across the country to test the effectiveness of basic skills courses. While adult learning in Switzerland is mostly a responsibility of individual cantons, the federal state has specific responsibilities and funding mechanisms to promote basic skills with the implementation of the 2017 Federal Adult Learning Act (*Loi fédérale sur la formation continue*). Evaluations in the Netherlands indicated that PES case workers should propose more often basic skill courses to its clients (Artéduc, 2020_[71]; Artéduc, 2020_[71]).

Furthermore, adult learning provision should be practical and problem-oriented. Currently, large parts of adult learning still take place in a classroom setting with school-type learning styles. This approach can be problematic for PWD, since they may have experienced difficulty during their formal education and may not want to return to such a setting (OECD, 2019_[34]). Moreover, classroom-type learning is less effective for acquiring soft skills (Musset, 2018_[73]). One possibility is to promote embedding of adult learning in the workplace for persons already employed, such as the *SkillsPlus* programme in Norway (Box 6.5). Another is to promote work-based adult learning organised by the PES.³³ Information from the Flemish (Belgium) and Norwegian PES (Belgium) shows that persons with and without health problems who participate in work-based learning more often find their way into employment (Figure 6.15).

Figure 6.15. Participants of work-based adult learning programmes more often find employment



Note: Percentage in employment three months (Flanders (Belgium)) or six months (Norway) after having completed PES adult learning. See Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.6 for information on data for the two countries. Panel A: Work-based adult learning covers "IBO", "IBO+", "ISS", "BIS", "Werkveringsstage", "Beroepsverkenkende stage", and "Activeringsstage". "Individual Job Training programme" covers both "IBO" and "IBO+". Other adult learning covers "Beroepsgerichte opleiding", "Oriënterende opleiding", and "Niet-sectorgerichte competentieversterking". Panel B: Work-based adult learning covers: "Arbeidspraxis". Other adult learning: "Opplæring".

Source: OECD calculations based on administrative records provided by Flemish (Belgium) and Norwegian authorities.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/sigq11>

A particularly promising example of the Flemish PES is the Individual Job Training programme ("*Individuele Beroepsopleiding*", IBO). This programme provides jobseekers with work-based learning opportunities by means of a training plan jointly established by the PES and the employer. Employers receive a subsidy to cover wage and social security costs, and financial support to pay for training. Employers have to pay a "productivity premium" and are expected to offer a permanent work-contract to the trainee following the training (OECD, 2019_[2]). The PES offers an alternative version of the programme (IBO+) to employers who hire PWD or long-term unemployed. This version offers a longer maximum duration (52 instead of 26 weeks), employers do not have to pay a productivity premium, and the training is completely free.

Countries should further ensure that learning opportunities equip PWD with the skills needed for the labour market. Promoting digital skills deserves particular attention. Digital skills are more and more important in a constantly changing world of work and are a prerequisite for participating in online and distance learning as well as working from home as accelerated through COVID-19 (OECD, 2021_[27]). Moreover, as discussed previously, PWD have on average lower digital skills (Section 6.2) and less access to basic digital tools (Chapter 5). Administrative data on publicly funded adult learning in Ireland indicates that only 4% of learners with health problems, and 5% of all learners, enrolled in ICT courses (OECD, 2021_[33]). In many countries, digital skills are now considered to be a foundation skill, much like literacy and numeracy. For instance, the Swiss confederation has made the promotion of basic digital skills a key objective with the implementation of the 2017 Federal Adult Learning Act (*Loi fédérale sur la formation continue*). Luxembourg has established a basic digital skills programme (*Internet-Führerschäin*) for adults with very low literacy skills to develop their knowledge and skills on using ICT. The United Kingdom's *Digital Skills Partnership* programme provides access to low-skilled adults to free digital skills programmes, that have been developed together with employers and charities (OECD, 2019_[2]). There are also examples of courses targeting PWD. The Spanish foundation ONCE has developed multiple inclusive training programmes focusing on digital skills (Box 6.5) (ILO & ONCE, 2021_[74]). The *European Network for Technology Enhanced Learning in an Inclusive Society (Entelis+)*, consisting of a consortium of ten

partners from EU countries and the United States, aims at developing and implementing innovative methods and practices to foster digital skills and competences of digitally excluded groups. Their Fact Sheets and Success Factors on improving accessibility of ICT education and adult learning and uptake of technology provide additional information for OECD countries to invest in digital skills of their citizens with disability. It includes for instance references to digital accessibility training for web developers in Austria, Greece, Poland, Slovenia and Spain (Entelis+, 2021^[75]).

Employers have a key role to play in creating relevant learning opportunities that align with skill needs. Better engaging with employers is an effective way to reduce the high skills mismatches reported by persons with and without disability (see Figure 6.12 in Section 6.4).

Firstly, employers can be involved actively in training using work placement programmes. This for instance can be done using work-based adult learning organised by the PES as discussed previously (Figure 6.15).

Secondly, employers, together with trade unions, can help to establish joint priorities in adult learning and anticipate training needs. Social partners and governments come together in skills or sectoral councils to play such a role in many countries. In the six country cases, their engagement varies from managing parts of the adult learning system in Austria and the Netherlands to having a more passive consulting role in Québec (Canada) (Table 6.2). As of 2020, Flanders (Belgium) has a Platform Life Long Learning (*Platform levenslang leren*) that recommends the Flemish Government. The Platform consists of representatives of social partners, key stakeholders (public and private adult learning providers, municipalities, the PES) and different experts (on adult learning, education, technological innovation) (Government Flanders, 2020^[76]). Canada launched in 2019 the federal government initiative Future Skills. The initiative established an advisory body to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion (Future Skills Council), with members from public, private, labour, education and training providers, non-profit organisations and Indigenous interest groups, as well as an independent research institute (Future Skills Centre). The Future Skills Council and Centre have a special mandate to address the needs of disadvantaged groups, including PWD (OECD, 2020^[44]). A promising practice comes from Korea, where social partners help to define national training standards and integrate them in their own training (Box 6.5).

Table 6.2. Involvement of social partners in adult learning varies across countries

| Social partners... | Country |
|--|---|
| ... define and manage the training system | Austria, the Netherlands |
| ... contribute to the curriculum development | Belgium, Alberta (Canada), British Columbia (Canada), Norway, Switzerland |
| ... have a consulting role | Québec (Canada) |

Source: OECD (2019^[77]), "Getting Skills Right: Making Adult Learning Work in Social Partnership", <https://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/adult-learning-work-in-social-partnership-2019.pdf>.

Box 6.5. Making adult learning relevant in Norway, Spain and Korea

The Norwegian programme SkillsPlus provides training grants to firms to embed basic skill training in the workplace. Any organisation can apply. Training must consist of a combination of on-the-job learning through work and basic skills training in an attempt to strengthen motivation to learn, ideally complemented with other job-related training. The training has to be aligned with the Norwegian national standards for basic skills for adults (reading, writing, mathematics, digital competence and oral communication). The government assures quality of provision and supports firms by providing competence goals, profession-specific profiles for basic jobs skills, tests and learning materials (OECD, 2019^[34]). Moreover, it has established a publicly accessible database that includes information on participants by age, gender and educational background (not by disability status) to track progress. More than 100 000 adults enrolled into the programme between 2006-19. About half the participants had low education levels. Unfortunately, data by disability status are unavailable.

The Spanish Foundation ONCE has developed multiple training programmes to improve digital skills of PWD. *Por Talento Digital* is targeted at PWD. The programme *Radia* aims to promote the inclusion of women with disability, and has been developed in collaboration with the Conference of Social Councils of Spanish Universities and the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organisations Foundation. Both programmes aim to make participants familiar with new digital technologies by means of a digital training course supported by mentors and by providing the possibility to intern at a company (ILO & ONCE, 2021^[74]).

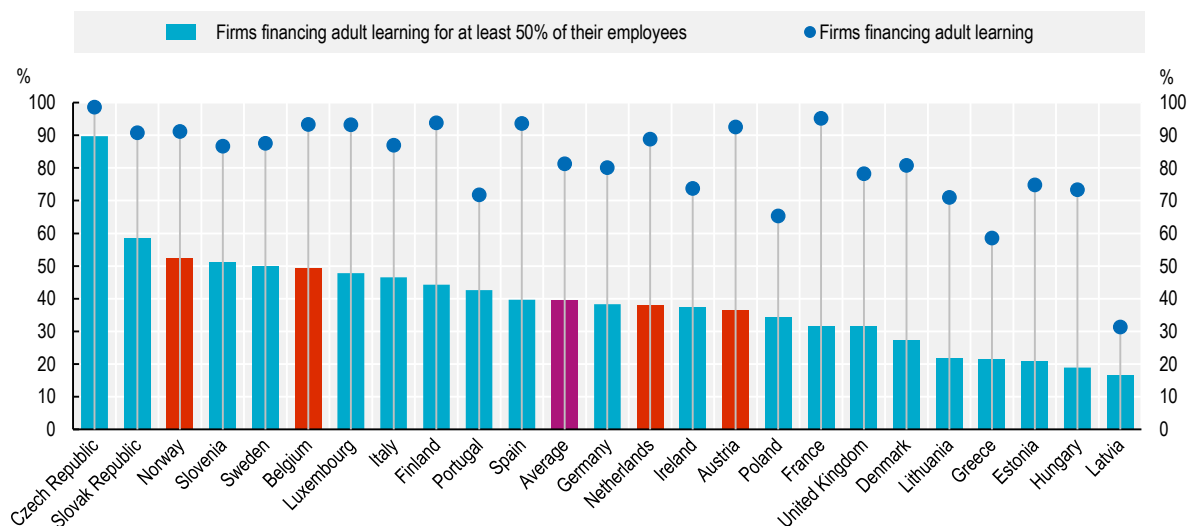
In Korea, social partners provide information on changing skill needs and help set training standards. Tripartite Industry Skills Councils use labour market information to develop national occupational standards, to ensure that these standards reflect the needs of the workplace. These standards then form the base of vocational education and adult learning qualifications. Employers can apply the same standards in their human resource management, for instance for on-the-job learning (OECD, 2019^[2]).

5. Build capacity of and encourage employers to train in an inclusive fashion

Employers should be actively supported and encouraged to provide inclusive training. While employers play a key role in providing adult learning, few firms do so to a large part of their staff. As discussed previously, PWD participate less often in employer-provided training and receive less employer support for their personal development. Less than two in five European firms with at least ten employees fully or partly finance adult learning to 50% of their employees (Figure 6.16). Firms in Belgium and Norway are somewhat more inclusive in their training behaviour. Inclusiveness is particularly a concern in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Further, firms may not necessarily know what skills to invest in or how to develop an appropriate training offer.

Figure 6.16. Fewer than half of firms provide adult learning to a significant part of their employees

Share of firms with at least ten employees financing (at least partly) adult learning, 2015



Note: Adult learning here is defined as continuing vocational training (CVT): training measures or activities which have as their primary objectives the acquisition of new competences or the development and improvement of existing ones and which must be financed at least partly by the firms for their persons employed who either have a working contract or who benefit directly from their work for the firm such as unpaid family workers and casual workers. The pink bar represents the unweighted average of the 22 European countries shown.

Source: Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS).

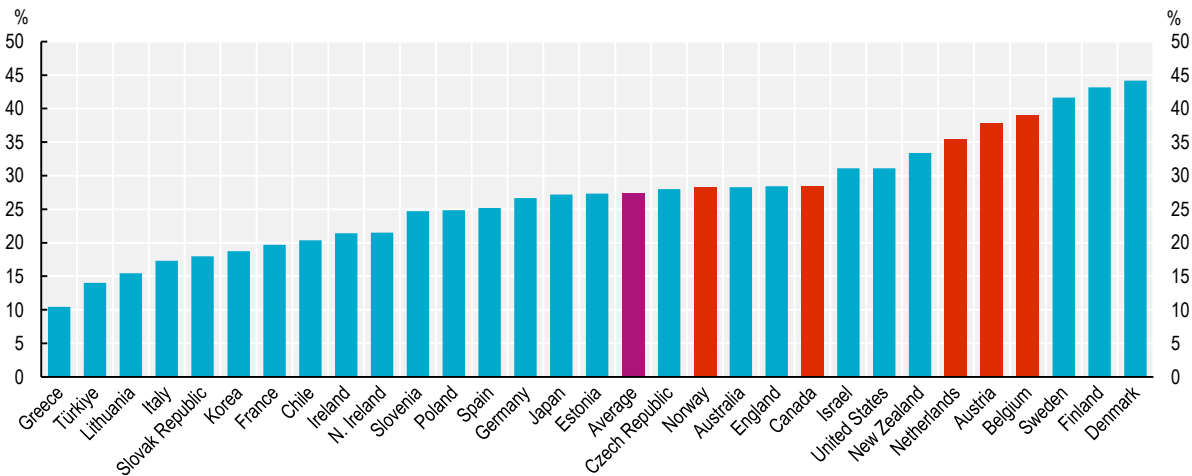
StatLink  <https://stat.link/iut9e3>

Governments may provide targeted coaching and financial incentives to firms to help them provide inclusive adult learning. In Flanders (Belgium), the government-funded Centres for Adult Basic Education send so-called “ambassadors” to firms to evaluate work-based learning opportunities and discuss the benefits of providing these opportunities with the company. The ambassadors particularly aim to improve adult learning opportunities for low-skilled workers. Countries can also address capacity constraints by encouraging firms to team up and use economies of scale to provide better and more inclusive training. The Austrian PES helps firms establish networks of firms (*Implus-Qualifizierungs-Verbund*) to provide cost-efficient and work-relevant training. The PES funds operational costs of these networks, the development of training plans and assists with applying for further financial support for in-company training (OECD, 2019^[2]). Another promising practice comes from the Finnish PES, which provides co-financing to set up employer networks that provide training targeted to specific groups of workers (Box 6.6).

More broadly, the dissemination of high-performance work practices (HPWPs) within firms can promote the better use of skills to improve job quality and productivity. Better using skills in the workplace concerns the extent to which skills are effectively applied in the workplace to maximise workplace and individual performance. It is also an effective remedy against the high skills mismatches that PWD currently experience (Section 6.4). There is considerable diversity to the degree to which employers value and utilise the skills of their employees. HPWPs include, for example, employee reward programmes, more flexible working hours, mentoring and leadership development courses, as well as a company culture that promotes training and development. About one in three jobs in Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands apply HPWPs more than once a week (Figure 6.17.). Levels are lower in Norway and Canada. New Zealand has adopted an innovative employer support to promote HPWPs (Box 6.6).

Figure 6.17. Many firms do not apply high performance work practices across OECD countries

Share of jobs which adopt high-performance work practices at least once a week, 2012-15



Note: The high-performance working practices index combines indicators on work flexibility, work organisation and management practices. Data for Belgium refer to Flanders. The purple bar represents the weighted average of the countries/regions shown.

Source: OECD (2016^[78]), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en>.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/e4109t>

Promoting and raising awareness among employers of the importance and benefits of an inclusive learning culture deserves particular attention. Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands have set up multiple campaigns to disseminate rights and responsibilities in relationship to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD). Many of the campaigns target both employers and PWD. The Dutch Coalition for Inclusion, a network of NGO's and individual PWD financed by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, provides assistance and guidance to respect the UN-CRPD (ANED, 2021^[45]).

Countries should also enforce anti-discrimination legislation, including with respect to all forms of adult learning. Article 27 of the UN-CRPD explicitly extends anti-discrimination legislation for PWD into the realm of career advancement and adult learning. Governments have to enforce these obligations to make sure that firms abide. Many countries, including for instance Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, as well as provincial governments of Canada, have an anti-discrimination Ombudsman who has as a part of its task to promote equality for the groups protected by the equality and anti-discrimination legislation. Austria has a dedicated Disability Ombudsman as of 2006, which provides support and information, handles inquiries and cases, and actively works together with NGOs.

Box 6.6. Building capacity of employers in Finland and New Zealand

Finland's Joint Purchase Training (*Yhteishankintakoulutus*) provides guidance to employers to build a positive learning culture. The programme is offered by the PES, which provides informational support and covers between 20% and 80% of the training expenses (OECD, 2019^[77]). The programme consists of three different services, all tailored to the needs of the firm: (i) training for non-employed persons to be recruited afterwards; (ii) retraining for existing staff in light of technological and operational changes; and (iii) training of staff that has to be dismissed due to financial and production-related reasons. In 2016, almost 24 000 persons participated in the programme. An evaluation from 2012 indicated positive impacts on competence development, job retention and productivity, as reported by employers.

New Zealand has set up a two-year programme to improve utilisation of skills in the workplace in an attempt to boost productivity and profitability. The High-Performance Working Initiative (HPWI) provides business coaching for SMEs to help streamline work practices and increase employee engagement and satisfaction. Specialised business improvement consultants are responsible for the coaching. The government funds half of the programme. Any private firm can apply. The HPWI is part of a broader set of services designed to improve innovation and skills provided by the government (OECD, 2016^[5]).

6. Tackle time and financial barriers

About one in seven employees with and without disability mention that time constraints were the main reason for not participating in adult learning across European OECD countries, according to EU-SILC data from 2016. According to OECD PIAAC data, time constraints either due to work related (22%) or family related reasons (19%) are even the most prevalent barrier for low-skilled adults. Low-skilled workers have limited bargaining power to ask their employer for (paid) training leave during working hours (OECD, 2019^[34]). Moreover, getting to training facilities and learning may take more time for PWD. Learners with disability part of the *Unionlearn* programme in the United Kingdom more often mentioned work-related shortage of time as a major barrier to learning (29% vs. 19%) (Box 6.4) (Stuart et al., 2016^[35]).

More generally, adult learning systems should have a flexible provision to reduce the barriers of entry (OECD, 2019^[2]). Many countries offer several forms of flexible adult learning provision, such as part-time, evening and weekend programmes, distance learning, or programmes in a modular format, all of which contribute to making it easier to work or attend to family obligations while participating in adult learning.

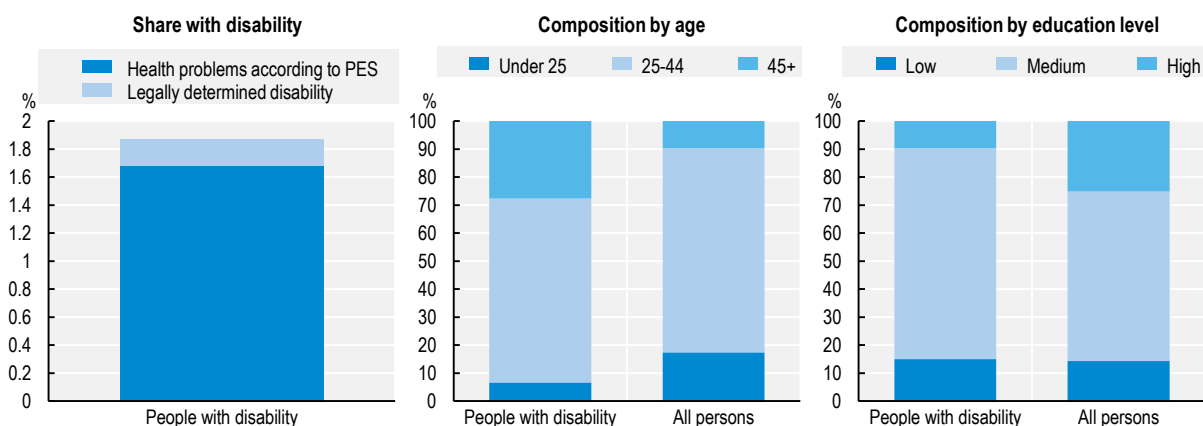
Giving all workers, including those with disability, the statutory right to take leave for education and training purposes can increase training participation. Austria, Belgium and Norway have a legislative entitlement to education or training leave. In Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland, such leave is organised through collective agreements that do not cover all workers. Collective bargaining agreements only cover about one in four workers in Canada and one in two in Switzerland.³⁴ While collective bargaining coverage is higher in the Netherlands (78% in 2017), significant differences in the regulation of training leave exist between sectors as well as by firm size (OECD, 2021^[57]).

Compensation for employees and employers to take up leave can further stimulate participation. Training leave in Austria is open to all employees, including part-time workers since 2013. It provides employees the possibility to take up to one year of leave, with compensation equal to the level of unemployment benefits. This comes at a high cost of around EUR 12 000 per participant in 2016 (OECD, 2020^[79]). In Belgium, employees can take between 32 and 120 hours off per year. The maximum training leave is longer for training in occupations with labour market shortage (180 hours). During their training leave, workers receive full pay up to a capped amount, while employers can be compensated for the wages paid during training leave (OECD, 2019^[2]).

Still further efforts may be needed to promote training leave among PWD. Administrative data from the generous training leave entitlement in Austria show that still very few PWD make use of the scheme (Figure 6.18). This is in contrast to adult learning and career guidance programmes administered by the Austrian PES, where relatively high shares of participants have a disability (Figure 6.5 and Figure 6.13). The low share of persons availing of training leave with disability is part of a wider inclusion problem: relatively few users are older or lower educated. It echoes results of a previous evaluation finding that older and lower educated workers, as well as migrants make less of the scheme (Bock-Schappelwein, Famira-Mühlberger and Huemer, 2017^[80]). Part of the low take-up may be explained by the fact that fewer PWD are employed. Other reasons may be low awareness, and perhaps the requirement that employers need to agree with the leave – though a certain form of agreement makes sense for business continuation reasons. Further research could help to make the system a success for everyone.

Figure 6.18. People with disability make little use of training leave in Austria

Share of persons making use of (part-time) training and educational leave in Austria, 2019



Note: Data cover part-time and full-time training and education leave in Austria (*LeistungsbezieherInnen Bildungsteilzeitgeld und Weiterbildungsgeld*). Low educated: primary or lower secondary education ("Pflichtschulausbildung", ISCED 0-2). Medium educated: medium to upper secondary education ("Lehrausbildung, Mittlere und Hoehere Ausbildung", ISCED 3-4). High educated: tertiary education and above ("Akademische Ausbildung", ISCED 5-8).

Source: OECD calculations based on administrative records provided by Austrian authorities.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/jqc8p4>

Financial barriers form another obstacle for PWD. About one in 14 PWD, compared to one in 20 PWOD, state that financial constraints are the main reason for not participating in adult learning across European OECD countries, according to EU-SILC data from 2016. Disability comes on average with more frequent career breaks and a wage penalty, and may come with higher expenses. Moreover, training investments may have lower returns for those in low-paid positions with limited opportunities to progress.

Financial incentives that support individuals can make adult learning systems more inclusive. Financial incentives targeted to individuals, such as loan and individual subsidy schemes, are generally more effective to increase adult learning among underrepresented groups than financial schemes directed to firms. Employers have a tendency to train educated workers who are involved in more complex tasks (Brunello and Wruuck, 2020^[81]). Financial incentives may be more generous for targeted groups. France, Canada and the United Kingdom have schemes that provide PWD with additional funding (Box 6.7). The Austrian PES provides an *Allowance for Course and Course-related Costs* that PWD, among other groups, can avail of. Norway provides more generous conditions for study loans for persons aged over 45 through its *Educational Loan Fund*. Flanders (Belgium) has a relatively large number of financial incentives targeted

to different groups. Take-up among low-skilled and older individuals is relatively low, however, due to complexities in the system and entitlement rules that often exclude for instance jobseekers and workers with a weak attachment to the labour market (OECD, 2019^[49]). Canada offers employees since 2019 the *Canada Training Benefit*, which consists of a refundable tax credit up to CAD 5 000 (about 3 804 EUR) to offset tuition costs and related fees, an additional benefit to compensate income lost while training and leave provisions for federally regulated workers to take time away from work for training while maintaining their job security (OECD, 2020^[82]). It also has financial supports for PWD. The *Canada Student Loans Program* offers loan forgiveness for qualifying borrowers who have a severe permanent disability. The *Disability Supports Deduction* provides tax relief for the cost of disability supports incurred for the purposes of education, including accommodation, tuition, tutors and sign interpreters. The Dutch Government is planning to implement in March 2022 a personal training account of EUR 1 000 annually available to all adults, called the STAP-budget. In first instance, this personal training account will not be more generous for groups underrepresented in adult learning.

Box 6.7. Tackling time and financial barriers in France, Canada and the United Kingdom

The French *Compte Personnel de Formation* is a personal account that provides individuals with training credits based on the time spent in employment during the year. Entitlements are portable between employers. Enhanced support is available for low-skilled individuals and PWD, including extra training credits (48 hours as opposed to 24 hours) and extra funding (EUR 800 per year) to purchase training. Evaluations show that while enrolment has increased rapidly, low-skilled individuals still rarely avail of the personal account, underlining the need for accompanying career and training guidance (Perez and Vourc'h, 2020^[83]).

Adult Upgrading Grants in British Columbia (Canada) cover the indirect costs of participating in adult learning. The grant is available to low-income adults attending public post-secondary education or adult learning. The grant covers tuition as well as indirect costs such as additional fees, books, supplies, transportation, unsubsidised childcare (OECD, 2019^[34]). The effectiveness of this measure has not been evaluated.

The United Kingdom has a *Disabled Students Allowance*. This scheme covers costs up to GBP 23 258 a year for undergraduate or postgraduate students with a disability in part-time or full-time studies, including distance learning. There is no age limit or means test. Financial support is available for day-to-day costs of studying related to the disability, including specialist equipment, day-to-day costs related to the disability, a travel allowance and a non-medical helper such as a sign language interpreter. About 6-7% of full-time first-degree students received the allowance in 2017/2018 in the United Kingdom (IES, 2019^[84]). More half of the recipients agreed that the supports they received through the allowance meets all of their needs, and two-thirds stated that the support allows them to participate more fully in their course than they would be able to otherwise. Nevertheless, the allowance had a limited impact on the decisions of students with disability to go into higher education, in part because of low awareness of the support scheme (Johnson et al., 2019^[85]).

References

- ANED (2021), *DOTCOM - The Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED)*, DOTCOM: The Disability Online Tool of the Commission, <https://www.disability-europe.net/dotcom> (accessed on 17 May 2021). [45]
- Artédud (2020), *Succesfactoren voor post-initiële arbeidsmarktgerichte scholing: Onderzoek en advies naar een succesvolle implementatie van post-initiële arbeidsmarktgerichte scholing vanuit UWV*, <https://www.uwv.nl/overuwv/Images/succesfactoren-voor-post-initiele-arbeidsmarktgerichte-scholing.pdf> (accessed on 16 July 2021). [71]
- Austrian Sozialministerium (2020), *Evaluierung des Nationalen Aktionsplans Behinderung 2012–2020*. [46]
- Bailey, M. et al. (2018), “Social Connectedness: Measurement, Determinants, and Effects”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 32/3, pp. 259-280, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.32.3.259>. [9]
- Bock-Schappelwein, J., U. Famira-Mühlberger and U. Huemer (2017), *Instrumente der Existenzsicherung in Weiterbildungsphasen in Österreich*, WIFO Monatsbericht, Vienna, <https://www.stipendium.at/studienfoerderung/beihilfe-beruf/selbsterhalterinnen-stipendium/> (accessed on 19 May 2021). [80]
- Brunello, G. et al. (2016), “The Causal Effect of Education on Health: What is the Role of Health Behaviors?”, *Health Economics*, Vol. 25/3, pp. 314-336, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.3141>. [15]
- Brunello, G. and P. Wruuck (2020), “Employer provided training in Europe: Determinants and obstacles”, *EIB Working Paper*, No. 2020 / 03, European Investment Bank, <https://doi.org/10.2867/50660>. [81]
- Brussino, O. (2020), “Mapping policy approaches and practices for the inclusion of students with special education needs”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 227, <https://doi.org/10.1787/600fbad5-en>. [64]
- Caliendo, M. et al. (2020), “Side Effects of Labor Market Policies”, *IZA Discussion Paper Series*, No. 13846, <http://www.iza.org> (accessed on 16 December 2020). [13]
- Card, D., J. Kluve and A. Weber (2018), “What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations”, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 16/3, pp. 894-931, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvx028>. [66]
- Carnevale, A., T. Jayasundera and D. Repnikov (2014), *Understanding Online Job Ads Data: A Technical Report*, Georgetown University. [23]
- CAST (2018), *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2*, <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/> (accessed on 28 April 2021). [91]
- Chandola, T. et al. (2011), “Is adult education associated with reduced coronary heart disease risk?”, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 40/6, pp. 1499-1509, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyr087>. [18]
- Cygan-Rehm, K., D. Kuehnle and M. Oberfichtner (2017), “Bounding the causal effect of unemployment on mental health: Nonparametric evidence from four countries”, *Health Economics (United Kingdom)*, Vol. 26/12, pp. 1844-1861, <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.3510>. [20]

- DESD Canada (2021), *Canada Gazette, Part 1, Volume 155, Number 7: Accessible Canada Regulations*, <https://canadagazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2021/2021-02-13/html/reg2-eng.html> (accessed on 18 June 2021). [41]
- Desiere, S., K. Langenbucher and L. Struyven (2019), “Statistical profiling in public employment services: An international comparison”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 224, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b5e5f16e-en>. [63]
- Desjardins, R. (2017), *Political economy of adult learning systems*, Bloomsbury Academic, London. [51]
- Employment and Social Development Canada (2021), *Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities – Phase II*, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations-opportunities-fund-persons-disabilities-phase2/OFPhaseIIFinalReport-EN.pdf> (accessed on 14 September 2021). [89]
- Employment and Social Development Canada (2018), *Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities – Phase I*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations/opportunities-fund-persons-disabilities.html> (accessed on 20 July 2021). [42]
- Entelis+ (2021), *Entelis+, Accessibility skills for a technology enhanced learning in an inclusive society*, <https://entelisplus.entelis.net/homepage/> (accessed on 18 May 2021). [75]
- Erickson, W. et al. (2014), “The Employment Environment: Employer Perspectives, Policies, and Practices Regarding the Employment of Persons With Disabilities”, *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, Vol. 57/4, pp. 195-208, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355213509841>. [30]
- ETBI (2018), *Meeting the Needs of Learners with Disabilities*, Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Naas, https://www.etbi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Meeting_Needs_Learners_with_Special_Needs_FET-2.docx (accessed on 1 March 2021). [52]
- Farré, L., F. Fasani and H. Mueller (2018), “Feeling useless: the effect of unemployment on mental health in the Great Recession”, *IZA Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 7/1, pp. 1-34, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40172-018-0068-5>. [21]
- Flemish Parlement (2021), *Conceptnota voor nieuwe regelgeving over de activering van langdurig zieken*, https://www.serv.be/sites/default/files/documenten/STIA_20210224_Arbeidshandicap_WKN_RAP.pdf (accessed on 16 July 2021). [68]
- Fuchs, M. et al. (2018), *Social and Employment Policies in Austria*, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy, Vienna, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/618991/IPOL_STU\(2018\)618991_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/618991/IPOL_STU(2018)618991_EN.pdf) (accessed on 17 May 2021). [70]
- Government Flanders (2020), *De lerende samenleving Conceptnota voor de Vlaamse Regering*, <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/download-file/38649> (accessed on 16 June 2021). [76]
- Government of Ireland (2018), *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework*, <http://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf> (accessed on 5 May 2021). [50]

- Grigal, M. et al. (2019), “Experiences That Predict Employment for Students With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Federally Funded Higher Education Programs”, *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, Vol. 42/1, pp. 17-28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143418813358>. [38]
- Heckman, J. (2006), “Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children.”, *Science (New York, N.Y.)*, Vol. 312/5782, pp. 1900-2, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1128898>. [7]
- Heckman, J., J. Humphries and G. Veramendi (2018), “Returns to Education: The Causal Effects of Education on Earnings, Health, and Smoking”, *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 126/S1, pp. S197-S246, <https://doi.org/10.1086/698760>. [6]
- Hudomiet, P. and R. Willis (2021), “Computerization, Obsolescence, and the Length of Working Life”, *NBER Working Paper*, No. 28701, <https://doi.org/10.3386/W28701>. [22]
- IES (2019), *Review of Support for Disabled Students in Higher Education in England*, Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton. [84]
- ILO & ONCE (2021), *An inclusive digital economy for people with disabilities*, ILO Publishing, Geneva, https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_770150/lang-en/index.htm (accessed on 26 February 2021). [74]
- Johnson, C. et al. (2019), *Evaluation of disabled students’ allowances*, Government Social Research, London. [85]
- Kis, V. and H. Windisch (2018), “Making skills transparent: Recognising vocational skills acquired through workbased learning”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 180, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5830c400-en>. [47]
- Klein, M., C. Iannelli and E. Smyth (2016), “School subject choices and social class differences in entry to higher education – Comparing Scotland and Ireland”, in Blossfeld, H. et al. (eds.), *Models of Secondary Education and Social Inequality*, Edward Elgar Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785367267.00025>. [58]
- Kruppe, T. and J. Lang (2018), “Labour market effects of retraining for the unemployed: the role of occupations”, *Applied Economics*, Vol. 50/14, pp. 1578-1600, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2017.1368992>. [67]
- Li, J. and N. Powdthavee (2015), “Does more education lead to better health habits? Evidence from the school reforms in Australia”, *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 127, pp. 83-91, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.07.021>. [14]
- Manninen, J. et al. (2014), *Benefits of Lifelong Learning in Europe: Main Results of the BeLL-Project Research Report*, <http://www.bell-project.eu> (accessed on 28 May 2021). [11]
- McGinty, J. (2018), “Tips for Creating Inclusive and Accessible Instruction for Adult Learners: An Overview of Accessibility and Universal Design Methods for Adult Education Practitioners”, *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 27, pp. 1-20, https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=mcginty+Tips+for+Creating+Inclusive+and+Accessible+Instruction+for+Adult+Learners%3A+An+Overview+of+Accessibility+and+Universal+Design+Methods+for+Adult+Education+Practitioners.&btnG= (accessed on 10 February 2021). [48]

- McGowan, M. and D. Andrews (2015), "Skill Mismatch and Public Policy in OECD Countries", *OECD Economics Department Working Paper Series*, No. 1210, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5js1pzw9lnwk-en>. [36]
- Musset, P. (2018), "Improving work-based learning in schools", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 233, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/918caba5-en>. [73]
- North Carolina State University Press (ed.) (1998), *The Universal Design File: Designing for People of All Ages and Abilities*, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED460554.pdf> (accessed on 11 February 2021). [39]
- Norwegian Department of Culture (2021), *Sustainability and equal opportunities - a universally designed Norway (2021–2025) (ærekraft og like muligheter – et universelt utformet Norge (2021–2025))*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/barekraft-og-like-muligheter-et-universelt-utformet-norge/id2867676/> (accessed on 14 September 2021). [88]
- Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality (2018), *A Society For All: The government's strategy for the equality of persons with disabilities for the period 2020–2030*. [55]
- Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality (2009), *Norway universally designed by 2025: The Norwegian government's action plan for universal design and increased accessibility 2009–2013*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/bld/nedsatt-funksjonsevne/norway-universally-designed-by-2025-web.pdf> (accessed on 13 July 2021). [43]
- Norwegian Ministry of Education (2021), *Completion reform - with open doors to the world and the future (Fullføringsreformen – med åpne dører til verden og fremtiden)*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/581b5c91e6cf418aa9dcc84010180697/no/pdfs/stm202020210021000dddpdfs.pdf> (accessed on 14 September 2021). [56]
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2016), *Norge i omstilling – karriereveiledning for individ og samfunn*, <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/05a79a5ed91e40e1a80e6f8028b21e3e/no/pdfs/nu201620160007000dddpdfs.pdf> (accessed on 16 July 2021). [60]
- OECD (2021), "Adult Learning and COVID-19: How much informal and non-formal learning are workers missing?", *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/56a96569-en>. [29]
- OECD (2021), *Career Guidance for Adults in a Changing World of Work*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a94bfad-en>. [57]
- OECD (2021), *Disability, Work and Inclusion in Ireland: Engaging and Supporting Employers*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/74b45baa-en>. [33]
- OECD (2021), *OECD Skills Outlook 2021: Learning for Life*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0ae365b4-en>. [27]
- OECD (2021), "Teaching and learning in VET: Providing effective practical training in school-based settings", *OECD Policy Responses to COVID-19*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/64f5f843-en>. [90]
- OECD (2020), *Increasing Adult Learning Participation: Learning from Successful Reforms*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/cf5d9c21-en>. [79]

- OECD (2020), *Preparing for the Future of Work in Canada*, OECD Reviews on Local Job Creation, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/05c1b185-en>. [44]
- OECD (2020), “Public employment services in the frontline for jobseekers, workers and employers”, *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (Covid-19)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c986ff92-en>. [28]
- OECD (2020), *Workforce Innovation to Foster Positive Learning Environments in Canada*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a92cf94d-en>. [82]
- OECD (2019), *Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning*, OECD, Paris, <http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf> (accessed on 26 January 2021). [34]
- OECD (2019), *Getting Skills Right: Future-Ready Adult Learning Systems*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311756-en>. [2]
- OECD (2019), *Getting Skills Right: Making Adult Learning Work in Social Partnership*, OECD, Paris, <https://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/adult-learning-work-in-social-partnership-2019.pdf> (accessed on 26 January 2021). [77]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Employment Outlook 2019: The Future of Work*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9ee00155-en>. [1]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Skills Strategy Flanders: Assessment and Recommendations*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264309791-en>. [49]
- OECD (2018), *Good Jobs for All in a Changing World of Work: The OECD Jobs Strategy*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264308817-en>. [69]
- OECD (2017), *Financial Incentives for Steering Education and Training*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264272415-en>. [62]
- OECD (2017), *Getting Skills Right: Skills for Jobs Indicators*, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264277878-en>. [3]
- OECD (2017), *OECD Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report: The Netherlands 2017*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264287655-en>. [53]
- OECD (2016), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en>. [78]
- OECD (2016), “Skills use at work: Why does it matter and what influences it?”, in *OECD Employment Outlook 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2016-6-en. [5]
- OECD/ILO (2017), *Better Use of Skills in the Workplace: Why It Matters for Productivity and Local Jobs*, OECD, Paris, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_618785.pdf (accessed on 27 January 2021). [4]
- OFS Switzerland (2018), *Données actuelles de la statistique de la formation continue*, Office fédéral de la statistique, Bern, https://www.sbf.admin.ch/dam/sbf/it/dokumente/2019/07/wb-statistik.pdf.download.pdf/dialog_weiterbildungsstatistik_f.pdf (accessed on 24 June 2021). [87]

- Papay, C. et al. (2018), “Predictors of inclusive course enrollments in higher education by students with intellectual and developmental disabilities”, *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, Vol. 56/6, pp. 458-470, <https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-56.6.458>. [86]
- Perez, C. and A. Vourc’h (2020), “Individualising training access schemes: France – the Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal Training Account – CPF)”, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 245, <https://doi.org/10.1787/301041f1-en> (accessed on 15 February 2021). [83]
- Qian, X. et al. (2018), “Predictors associated with paid employment status of community and technical college students with intellectual disability”, *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, Vol. 123/4, pp. 329-343, <https://doi.org/10.1352/1944-7558-123.4.329>. [37]
- Rogers-Shaw, C., D. Carr-Chellman and J. Choi (2018), “Universal Design for Learning: Guidelines for Accessible Online Instruction”, *Adult Learning*, Vol. 29/1, pp. 20-31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159517735530>. [40]
- Rossor, M. and M. Knapp (2015), “Can we model a cognitive footprint of interventions and policies to help to meet the global challenge of dementia?”, *The Lancet*, Vol. 386/9997, pp. 1008-1010, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)60248-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60248-3). [12]
- Rougier, I. and B. LeGrand-Jung (2016), *Evaluation des Cap emploi et de l’accompagnement vers l’emploi des travailleurs handicapés chômeurs de longue durée*, Inspection générale des affaires sociales, Paris, <https://www.igas.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2016-124R.pdf> (accessed on 24 March 2021). [65]
- Schuller, T. (2017), *What are the wider benefits of learning across the life course?*, Foresight, UK Government Office for Science. [16]
- SCP (2021), *De werkende duizendpoot: Hulpbronnen en barrières voor werkenden die zorgen en leren*, <https://www.scp.nl/onderwerpen/veranderende-arbeidsmarkt/documenten/publicaties/2021/04/22/de-werkende-duizendpoot> (accessed on 13 July 2021). [8]
- Smith, A. (2015), *Searching for work in the digital era*, Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/11/19/searching-for-work-in-the-digital-era> (accessed on 21 April 2021). [24]
- Solberg, V. et al. (2012), “Quality Learning Experiences, Self-Determination, and Academic Success”, *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, Vol. 35/2, pp. 85-96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143412439887>. [61]
- Stuart, M. et al. (2016), *Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund Rounds 15-16 and Support Role of Unionlearn*, University of Exeter, Exeter. [35]
- Sundar, V. et al. (2018), “Striving to work and overcoming barriers: Employment strategies and successes of people with disabilities”, *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, Vol. 48/1, pp. 93-109, <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-170918>. [31]
- Thewissen, S. and D. Rueda (2019), “Automation and the Welfare State: Technological Change as a Determinant of Redistribution Preferences”, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 52/2, pp. 171–208, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017740600>. [25]

- Thewissen, S., O. van Vliet and C. Wang (2017), "Taking the Sector Seriously: Data, Developments, and Drivers of Intrasectoral Earnings Inequality", *Social Indicators Research*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1677-2>. [26]
- UWV (2020), *Extra scholingsmogelijkheden voor WGA'ers*, UWV, <https://www.uwv.nl/overuwv/Images/extra-scholingsmogelijkheden-voor-wga-ers.pdf> (accessed on 10 February 2021). [72]
- UWV (2020), *Scholing van UWV-klanten met een arbeidsbeperking*, UWV, <https://www.uwv.nl/overuwv/Images/scholing-van-uwv-klanten-met-een-arbeidsbeperking.pdf> (accessed on 10 February 2021). [32]
- VDAB (2021), *Jaarverslag VDAB 2020*, <https://www.vdab.be/sites/web/files/doc/trends/Jaarverslag-2020.pdf> (accessed on 15 July 2021). [54]
- VDAB (2019), *Jaarverslag 2019*, VDAB, Brussels, https://www.vdab.be/sites/web/files/in-de-kijker/VDAB_Jaarverslag_2019.pdf (accessed on 28 September 2021). [59]
- Voßemer, J. et al. (2018), "The Effects of Unemployment and Insecure Jobs on Well-Being and Health: The Moderating Role of Labor Market Policies", *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 138/3, pp. 1229-1257, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1697-y>. [19]
- Westergren, A. and G. Hedin (2010), "Do study circles and a nutritional care policy improve nutritional care in a short- and long-term perspective in special accommodations?", *Food and Nutrition Research*, Vol. 54, <https://doi.org/10.3402/fnr.v54i0.5402>. [17]
- Zechmann, A. and K. Paul (2019), "Why do individuals suffer during unemployment? Analyzing the role of deprived psychological needs in a six-wave longitudinal study", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, Vol. 24/6, pp. 641-661, <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000154>. [10]

Notes

¹ Other OECD work examines formal education for PWD or additional education needs (Brussino, 2020^[64]).

² We thank Elish Kelly (ESRI) and Annelore Verhagen (OECD ELS/SAE) for providing data and coding. Further calculations not shown here indicate that individuals who are older, lower educated as well as non-employed have about equally as often low literacy and numeracy skills as persons with permanent disability.

³ The disability digital skills gap is significant for the five indicators for the pooled sample of European OECD countries, with and without controlling for age and education. In the case of founding a job online this is the case when restricting to the sample of non-employed. Small sample size does not allow for separate tests across countries. As an alternative, country differences are tested using the pooled sample of European OECD countries by adding interactions with country dummies. This analysis shows that trends are statistically different for using banking facilities and shopping online in Belgium and the Netherlands, for which the disability digital skills gap is no longer significant. Canada, Norway and Switzerland are not included in the *EQLS* dataset.

⁴ The relatively small adult learning participation gap in Switzerland is also evident from national data for 2016. The adult learning participation gap is the largest among older persons (OFS Switzerland, 2018^[87]).

⁵ Older persons may have lower incentives to participate in training given the short pay-back time on investment. The disability adult learning gap is significant for the OECD countries and the five European country cases, with and without adjusting for age and education.

⁶ The disability adult learning gap is apparent in the *EQLS*, *EWCS* and the *EU-SILC* database. Comparisons are available upon request.

⁷ The disability adult learning gap for non-employed persons is significant for the pooled sample of European OECD countries and the five European country cases without controlling for age and education. When controlling for age and education, the gap remains significant for the pooled sample, as well as for Belgium and the Netherlands.

⁸ The disability adult learning gap for employed persons is only significant for the pooled sample of European OECD countries without controlling for age and education. It is not significant for the five European country cases with and without controlling for age and education. Restricting further to employees, the disability adult learning participation gap is also no longer significant across OECD countries on average and for the five country cases when taking into account a larger set of employee (education, age and gender), job (occupation, working part-time, type of contract) and firm characteristics (sector and firm size).

⁹ Persons on disability benefits, on workers' compensation, employees (unless on sickness or invalidity insurance or vocational rehabilitation) or persons on any other benefits (such as social assistance) are not included in the data from the Flemish (Belgium) PES. The Flemish PES has confirmed in personal communication that this is because very few of these groups register with the PES, rather than that many register but do not receive adult learning.

¹⁰ In the Norwegian PES system, no distinction is made between unemployed with and without reduced work capacity as is in the case in the Austrian and Flemish (Belgium) data. About one in four adult learners

has identified reduced work capacity on benefits other than unemployment insurance, the Work Assessment Allowance or Permanent Disability Benefits or on no benefits.

¹¹ Only about 1% of Permanent Disability Benefit recipients with registered reduced work capacity make use of PES adult learning. The figure would be even lower expressed as a share of all Permanent Disability Benefit recipients, with or without registered reduced work capacity (0.1%).

¹² In 2018, about 45% of the disability and illness benefit participating in training by the PES received the *Wajong*, about 30% in the *WGA* and about 25% in the *Ziektewet*. This amounts to about 1% of the benefit population for each benefit (UWV, 2020^[32]).

¹³ The data does not allow for a distinction between health and age barriers.

¹⁴ Further analysis is available upon request.

¹⁵ Calculations are based on EWCS 2015. Twelve percent of employees indicate that they asked their employer for training but did not receive it. For PWD, this number is about a quarter higher, even when accounting for their labour market position. The small sample size does not allow for a breakdown by countries. There is no indication that the pattern is different in Austria, Belgium, Switzerland and Norway. The pattern is significantly different for the Netherlands, where employees with disability do not indicate more often to have asked their employer for training without receiving it, conditional on their labour market position.

¹⁶ On the other hand, British *Unionlearn* participants more often state that they asked their employer (50% vs. 35%) and actually have taken further training (61% vs. 50%) after having completed a course (Stuart et al., 2016^[35]).

¹⁷ The Norwegian data may also be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, since the data measure entry into employment six months after having completed the adult learning course. Entry into employment in mid-2020, well into the COVID-19 pandemic, may have been particularly difficult for persons who participated in adult learning at the end of 2019.

¹⁸ Employees in Belgium and the Netherlands are less positive about the extent to which training helped them to have a more secure job (52% and 41% respectively) and for prospects of future employment (around 43%). The low number of observations does not allow for a breakdown by country for training outcomes for PWD. The training outcome gap pooled across European OECD countries is significant at the 1% level for each indicator (1) without controls, (2) when controlling for age and education and (3) when controlling for a larger set of controls (see footnote in Figure 6.10.). The gap decreases marginally when adding control variables (maximum 20% in the case of prospects of future employment). The training outcome gap to have a more secure job for Switzerland is significantly larger than the OECD average. The training outcome gap for all three outcomes for Norway is significantly smaller than the OECD average.

¹⁹ The indicator used here is self-assessed skills mismatch: whether individuals think themselves that they are underqualified (in need of further training to cope well with their job duties) or overqualified (they have the skills to cope with more demanding duties). This self-assessed indicator allows for a breakdown between persons with and without disability. The concept differs from the “objective” skills mismatch indicator generally reported in OECD reports, for which no breakdown between persons with and without disability can be made. The “objective” skills mismatch indicator defines mismatches on the basis of education levels of workers relative to the modal education level needed in their job (OECD, 2017^[3]). Statistical analysis shows that PWD significantly more often report skills mismatches. The skills mismatch gap pooled across European OECD countries is significant at the 1% level (1) without controls, (2) when

controlling for age and education and (3) when controlling for a larger set of controls, with little difference in the coefficient (about +5 percentage points). This is because PWD more often report being overskilled for their job (significant at the 1% level (1) without controls, (2) when controlling for age and education and (3) when controlling for a larger set of controls, with little difference in the coefficient: about +4 percentage points). The low number of observations does not allow for a breakdown by country for training outcomes for PWD. The skills mismatch gap is significantly less large for Belgium. A further breakdown by education shows that the skills mismatch gap is significant both among low-educated employees (around +9 percentage points) and high-educated employees (around +6 percentage points). In both groups this is because PWD report more often to be overskilled.

²⁰ For instance, art. 24-5 of the UN CRPD reads: “States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.”

²¹ Moreover, adult learning is often a responsibility for regional governments. This report does not aim to comprehensively review all regions, but shows information depending on availability and usefulness for other countries.

²² A further study shows that programme factors (access to mainstream programmes, possibilities of financial aid) rather than student factors (age, education, type of disability) explain enrolment into mainstream programmes by students with intellectual and development disability. This study also finds that students with disability taking specialised courses often stay in the specialised track, and do not find their way into the mainstream system (Papay et al., 2018^[86]).

²³ Canada has a number of federal skills programmes targeted to PWD. The Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities (USD 40 million per year) supports a wide range of programs and services, including job search supports, pre-employability services, wage subsidies, work placements and employer awareness initiatives to encourage employers to hire PWD. An evaluation showed promising results participants’ average annual earnings increased by 38% compared to non-participants with similar characteristics. Overall, USD 1 invested in the programme yielded USD 1.7 in return over a 10-year period (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2021^[89]). The Government of Canada announced a USD 65 million increase to the Opportunities Fund in the Fall Economic Statement 2020. Part of this funding will support PWD who are already employed to advance their careers. The Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities provides up to USD 4 000 means-tested financial support. The Repayment Assistance Plan for Borrowers with a Permanent Disability cancels student debt. Furthermore, the federal government provides funding to provinces and regions (around USD 3 billion per year) through Labour Market Development Agreements and Workforce Development Agreements to invest in skills and employment supports to help Canadians, including PWD. The Workforce Development Agreements include dedicated funding for PWD.

²⁴ Norway has recently approved a new action plan for 2021-25, which includes Universal Design measures for the education system and the workplace (e.g. accessibility of the digital and physical learning environment and workplace, interpreting services) (Norwegian Department of Culture, 2021^[88]).

²⁵ In the Netherlands, only those who have capacity to work can register with the PES. While benefit recipients of WGA (WGA 35-80 as well as WGA 80-100), Wajong and illness benefits (Ziektewet) can register, IVA recipients who have (almost) permanent disability cannot directly register, but generally first need to move to another benefit (UWV, 2020^[32]).

²⁶ The Swiss disability and accident assurances (IV and UV) also provide training and career guidance for their benefit recipients, mostly through contracted out services. Employed persons can register to the PES. However, they can only access counselling and placement services, as the focus on more intensive training measures lies on job search and placement. In British Columbia (Canada), adult learning by PES (“WorkBC Employment Services”) is principally targeted to unemployed or precariously employed persons who have made some attempt to have entered the workforce. While persons on different disability-related benefits can access the programmes, they may not have access to the more intensive training measures.

²⁷ This is laid down in parliamentary discussions on the 2017 Federal Adult Learning Act (*Loi fédérale sur la formation continue*); see *Message relatif à la loi fédérale sur la formation continue*.

²⁸ According to the *OECD 2020 Survey of Career Guidance for Adults* (SCGA), whilst the PES is the most used career guidance provider (24% of users), many make use of other career guidance service providers (OECD, 2021^[57]).

²⁹ Some groups of workers are also eligible to the career guidance voucher programme, including for instance persons on paid sick leave who still have a contract with their employer. Data by this breakdown are not available.

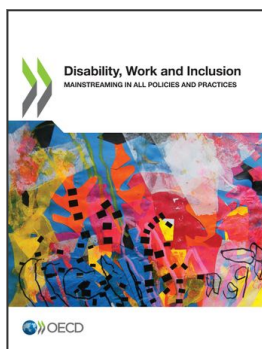
³⁰ Slightly more people participated in 2018 (4 007) and 2019 (4 601) (Flemish Parlement, 2021^[68]). According FOD Social security, 206.259 persons are entitled to disability payments, of which 51% is living in Flanders.

³¹ On average across European OECD countries, about three-quarters of adults not participating in training were not interested to participate, with even slightly higher rates for low-educated adults according to the 2016 *Adult Education Survey*.

³² More advanced adult learning courses in Flanders cost EUR 1.50 per course hour.

³³ More broadly, learning in schools and training facilities can be made more practical. This is all the more important throughout the COVID-19 pandemic when fewer firms provide work-based learning opportunities. Governments can provide guidance and teaching resources to support the adaptation of curricula, train teachers to equip them with practical learning skills and promote the engagement of social partners in the redesign and implementation of adjusted school-based programmes. Countries such as Denmark and Norway already provide alternative school-based vocational training and education (OECD, 2021^[90]).

³⁴ Data come from the *OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database*.



From:
Disability, Work and Inclusion
Mainstreaming in All Policies and Practices

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/1eaa5e9c-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2022), "Getting skills right for all", in *Disability, Work and Inclusion: Mainstreaming in All Policies and Practices*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/671c189a-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.