



**WORKING PAPER**

**No 21**

# Return to work

Work-based learning and  
the reintegration of unemployed  
adults into the labour market





# Return to work

Work-based learning and  
the reintegration of unemployed  
adults into the labour market

Cedefop working papers are unedited documents, available only electronically. They make results of Cedefop's work promptly available and encourage further discussion.

---

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet.

It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013

ISBN 978-92-896-1364-4

ISSN 1831-2403

doi: 10.2801/32083

Copyright © European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2013

All rights reserved.

**The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training. We provide information on and analyses of vocational education and training systems, policies, research and practice.

Cedefop was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75.

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE  
PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE  
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020  
E-mail: [info@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:info@cedefop.europa.eu)  
[www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)

James J. Calleja, *Director*  
Laurence Martin, *Chair of the Governing Board*



## Foreword

Unemployment is still on the rise in most European countries. Adults with low or no qualification comprise 30% of the unemployed and have experienced a greater rise in unemployment than any other group.

This trend is not solely a consequence of the recession. The level of qualification and, more generally, skills has always been a critical success factor for job-seekers. People with higher qualifications are more likely to be employed, and earn more, than those with low or no qualification. The crisis has, however, exacerbated the vulnerability of low-qualified adults and there is a risk of a large cohort of the population living permanently on the margin of the labour market.

As highlighted in the Bruges communiqué, vocational education and training (VET) is crucial in equipping people with the right skills and enhancing their employability; this is particularly true when it comes to the most disadvantaged. However, effective learning opportunities for low-qualified adults are limited, and their participation in lifelong learning (LLL) is low. The evidence on training interventions for low qualified adults out of work is scarce and it is not clear what works and what doesn't.

The Bruges communiqué has identified work-based learning (WBL) as one of the areas requiring greater political attention and strategic action. This publication investigates new responses to the current challenges of the high unemployment of low-qualified adults. It complements the work that Cedefop has done in adult and WBL over the previous years (Cedefop, 2011; 2012c).

WBL offers a way of learning which is more attractive, relevant and suitable than 'traditional' school-based forms for low-qualified adults, who are likely to have a history of failure and negative experience. This study shows that WBL programmes have several advantages over 'traditional' school-based learning in addressing the particular needs of this group. Its potential lies not only in the skills it can foster, but also the mode of delivery and a range of other factors, such as the opportunity to connect with potential employers and support for a gradual transition from training to work.

At present, few WBL programmes address the needs of low-qualified adults; of these, even fewer systematically develop key competences. Yet these are especially important for low-qualified adults seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market.

WBL programmes are effective instruments in active labour market policies (ALMPs) addressing the barriers that this target group is facing. Policies developing or encouraging programmes that make use of the full potential of WBL, including key competence development, are therefore an appropriate way to build the sustained labour market participation of the less qualified.

Christian F. Lettmayr  
*Deputy Director*



## Acknowledgements

This publication is the result of a team effort. Alexandra Dehmel has been responsible for the overall coordination of the research and for this publication. Valuable support was provided by other Cedefop experts, in particular senior expert Giovanni Russo, who gave constructive suggestions and contributed to steering the research throughout the whole process. Thanks are also due to Cedefop's senior expert Guy Tchibozo, for his valuable feedback in the review process of this publication, to senior expert Antonio Ranieri, and to Mara Brugia, Head of Area Enhanced Cooperation in VET and LLL, who supervised the work. Evangelia Bara provided technical support in preparing this publication.

The publication draws on the findings of Cedefop's study *Return to work: work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market* (\*). Cedefop is grateful to the team from Ecorys (Vicki Donlevy, Elizabeth Kwaw, Annemieke Pickles and Cristina Torrecillas) who worked on this study in collaboration with the University of Warwick (Julian Stanley, Centre for Education and Industry) and other experts (Andrew McCoshan, independent VET expert, and Jean Gordon, European Institute of Education and Social Policy, France). Thanks are also due to all national experts (Alessandra Cancedda, Hana Čiháková, Vicki Donlevy, Tim Grebe, Kristel Haiba-Rillo, Iwona Kania, Karel Kans, Elizabeth Kwaw, Andrea Laczik, Etienne Le Blanc, Valentina Patrini, Samo Pavlin, Barry Smith, Cristina Torrecillas and Mattias Wihlborg) who undertook field work in the individual countries, as well as to all interviewees and survey respondents who participated in the research.

(\*) Work was carried out under Cedefop's service contract  
AO/ECVL/ADEHM/ReturnToWork/004/11.

# Table of contents

Foreword.....	1
Acknowledgements .....	3
Executive summary .....	7
1. Introduction .....	14
1.1. Background .....	14
1.2. Aims, content and structure of the report .....	15
2. Definitions, conceptual framework and methodology .....	18
2.1. Low-qualified unemployed adults .....	18
2.2. Key competences .....	19
2.3. WBL .....	22
2.3.1. Key features and impact of WBL .....	23
2.3.2. Understanding WBL in teaching key competences .....	25
2.4. Actors in the labour market and ALMPs .....	27
2.5. Labour market barriers for low-qualified adults .....	28
2.5.1. Deficiencies in human capital .....	28
2.5.2. Weak or wrong labour market signals .....	29
2.5.3. Job matching difficulties .....	29
2.5.4. Personal barriers .....	29
2.6. Research approach and methodology .....	30
2.6.1. Literature review .....	30
2.6.2. Country studies and comparative overview .....	30
2.6.3. Case studies .....	33
2.6.4. Overall analysis .....	35
2.7. Challenges encountered .....	36
3. Context: labour market position and policy responses for low-qualified unemployed adults .....	37
3.1. Statistical portrait: the labour market situation for low-qualified adults .....	37
3.2. Overview of policy responses .....	40
3.2.1. EU policy responses .....	40
3.2.2. Policy responses in the Member States .....	42
3.2.3. Implications .....	49
4. Analysis of research findings .....	51
4.1. Overview of programmes .....	51
4.1.1. Types of programme .....	51

4.1.2.	Responsibility for programmes and stakeholder involvement.....	53
4.1.3.	Target groups .....	53
4.1.4.	Programmes focus on competences .....	54
4.1.5.	Intended benefits at policy level .....	55
4.2.	Key features of programmes .....	55
4.2.1.	Barriers to employment.....	56
4.2.2.	Programme recruitment and induction .....	62
4.2.3.	Mode of WBL used .....	68
4.2.4.	The role of key competences .....	74
4.2.5.	Pedagogy and support to learning.....	80
4.2.6.	Recognition of prior learning, validation, assessment and certification.....	85
4.2.7.	Role of employers .....	89
4.2.8.	WBL providers as labour market intermediaries .....	91
4.2.9.	Success of programmes .....	94
5.	Conclusions and key messages .....	100
5.1.	Conclusions.....	100
5.1.1.	Addressing human capital deficiencies .....	100
5.1.2.	WBL and labour market signalling.....	103
5.1.3.	Improving job matching .....	104
5.2.	Key messages.....	105
5.2.1.	Ensuring greater cooperation and coordination at policy level .....	105
5.2.2.	Developing holistic policy approaches to address all barriers faced by low-qualified unemployed adults .....	105
5.2.3.	Developing more systematic policy approaches to key competence development .....	106
5.2.4.	Improving monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance of policies and programmes .....	106
5.2.5.	Ensuring recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes.....	107
5.2.6.	Using key success factors for the programme design and practical implementation.....	107
5.2.7.	Supporting the employer involvement and the intermediary function of training organisations .....	108

List of abbreviations .....	109
References.....	110
ANNEX 1. European reference framework of key competences.....	120
ANNEX 2. Interviews.....	121
ANNEX 3. Case study information.....	128
ANNEX 4. Case study example.....	132

## List of tables and figures

### Tables

1 Integration of key competences in WBL programmes .....	26
2 Typical features in adult learning and active labour market measures of the country clusters .....	31
3 Member States selected for the comparative analysis .....	32
4 Selected country case studies .....	34
5 Variations across country clusters in relation to employment by qualification levels .....	39
6 Classification of case studies according to approach to key competences....	80
7 Strategic stakeholder interviews .....	121
8 Interviews conducted in case studies.....	127

### Figures

1 Share of EU Member State average expenditure per active labour market measure in 2009.....	44
2 Share of ALMP expenditure per measure and country cluster in 2009.....	45

## Executive summary

This publication draws on the outcomes of a Cedefop study that investigates how work-based learning (WBL) programmes, focusing on the acquisition of key competences, can contribute to getting low-qualified unemployed adults (international standard classification of education (ISCED) 0-2) back into the labour market. It is based on research across 15 European Union (EU) Member States <sup>(1)</sup>.

The report:

- (a) analyses such WBL programmes (in the report referred to as ‘return to work’ programmes), and the extent to which they are used in active labour market policies (ALMPs);
- (b) examines the key features and the design of these programmes, taking particularly into account:
  - (i) low-qualified unemployed adults and their specificity as regards teaching and learning;
  - (ii) the types of WBL (to be) used;
  - (iii) the key competences.
- (c) analyses the effectiveness of WBL programmes in overcoming potential barriers that low-qualified unemployed face in (re-)entering employment;
- (d) provides recommendations for policy- and decision-makers and for those who design and implement such programmes.

The above issues were explored through two main stages of research. First, a comprehensive comparative analysis of 15 EU Member States, focusing on policies for the return to work of low-qualified adults, based on literature reviews, secondary data analyses, interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. ministries, public employment services (PES)) and questionnaires to programme providers. Second, 10 in-depth case studies with interviews with those responsible for the design and delivery of the programme, participants and employers.

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, the United Kingdom.

## WBL programmes in active labour market policies

The EU-27 unemployment rate for low-qualified adults is considerably higher than for their higher-skilled contemporaries <sup>(2)</sup>. In 2012, the unemployment rate for low-qualified adults (25 to 64 years) was 16.8%, compared to 8.6% for the medium-skilled and 5.6% for the high-skilled group (Eurostat, 2013a). The Member States try to tackle unemployment through various measures in their ALMPs. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative Eurostat data on national labour market policies shows that the amount spent on training measures in national ALMPs, and the extent to which WBL is part of such measures, varies among the EU Member States. Excluding the expenses on PES, training represented an EU-27 average of over 40% of funds spent on ALMPs in 2009.

In Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries, WBL is a common feature of training measures for unemployed adults; it features to a lesser extent in the western European countries where it tends to address the young. Provision in some Mediterranean countries, such as Italy, depends strongly on regional priorities; this is due to VET system structure, which gives major responsibility to the regions. There are great disparities between central and eastern Europe, with Estonia and Poland providing more work-based programmes than the other countries in this group.

Across Europe, however, a single pattern emerges: people who face the greatest challenges, among them low-qualified unemployed adults, are often those to whom the fewest policy and programme options are addressed.

## WBL programmes: key features and success factors

WBL programmes are organised programmes that are wholly or predominantly based in a work setting, i.e. in a work-based context or in the workplace itself. They aim at developing knowledge, skills and competences that are – in a broad sense – relevant for the world of work. Work and work tasks are used as the predominant context for learning. The analysis showed different ways in which WBL is used in the programmes under investigation:

- (a) work placement or work experience schemes; all training and learning is on-the-job;

---

<sup>(2)</sup> In this study, low-qualified are defined as having ISCED levels 0-2, medium-skilled ISCED levels 3-4, and high-skilled ISCED levels 5-6.

- (b) work-located scheme; all training and learning is located at the workplace but there are distinct on-the-job and off-the-job elements (for example separate modules on key competences, taught off-the-job, but at the workplace);
- (c) mixed scheme which combines or alternates training and learning in a learning institution (e.g. vocational or technical school or college) with WBL (e.g. internship) in an enterprise;
- (d) scheme located entirely in a learning institution (e.g. a vocational or technical school or college) which includes WBL (e.g. in form of simulations).

Most programmes tend to be mixed, combining school and enterprise settings. At practical level, several key success factors were identified in the study:

- (a) involve employers and establish close cooperation and relationship of trust between them and the training centres;
- (b) provide thorough initial assessment of learner's needs, including assessment and validation processes for prior learning and monitoring of the learning process;
- (c) ensure that provision is tailored to the specific needs of the learner, including individual training plans, mentoring to accompany the learning process (foster motivation, development of self-confidence, etc.) and support to deal with practical obstacles (e.g. childcare);
- (d) provide close links between the learning in the different settings (e.g. in objectives), and 'scaffolding' approaches to aid transition from training to work over time;
- (e) focus on core key competences and attitudes (e.g. communication skills, confidence, reliability) combined with job-specific knowledge, skills and competences. To develop key competences, use work tasks and integrated learning (e.g. development of communication skills integrated in acquisition of job-specific competences);
- (f) use learning provision in the training centre to develop and assure learners' 'work-readiness' (e.g. awareness of workplace conduct) before they start in the enterprise;
- (g) provide opportunities for contacts with employers, for example through work placements in enterprises, study visits or employment fairs.

The way in which key competences are addressed in the programmes varies. The spectrum ranges from key competences as a distinct topic, delivered in separate, non-work-based modules, to key competences as an implicit, integrated part of the programme, sometimes even without being flagged as such.

Interviews with employers, training providers and low-qualified adults showed that deficiencies in key competences (especially literacy, numeracy, communication and digital competences), along with job search skills, workplace conduct, motivation, confidence and self-esteem are important obstacles to employment for this target group. Employers emphasised the importance of generic attitudes, such as a positive work ethic and motivation; learners considered their lack of self-confidence and job-seeking skills and, to certain extent, their deficiencies in particular key competences (literacy, numeracy and IT). Most training programmes, however, tend to focus on job-specific skills and do not target the development of key competences in a systematic way. The approach taken at policy level to integrate these competences in 'return to work' programmes seems to be implicit and lack comprehensiveness: the case studies appear to be rather isolated examples of interventions. However, they have the potential to show ways forward, i.e. to provide good practice examples.

## Barriers to (re-)entering the labour market and the potential of WBL programmes

The study identifies several key barriers faced by low-qualified adults in relation to (re-)entering the labour market and shows how WBL programmes focusing on key competences can contribute to alleviating them.

### **Addressing human capital deficiencies**

Low-qualified adults often lack not only job-specific but also other relevant knowledge, skills and competences, needed for successfully searching and applying for jobs, as well as for fulfilling requirements and staying in employment, and participating in lifelong learning (LLL). They have opted out of formal education and training early and might find it difficult to engage in traditional forms of learning. They also often lack relevant working experience.

Findings from the 10 case studies suggest that WBL offers a way of learning that is different from 'traditional' forms usually found in formal education and training; consequently it has the potential to be more attractive, relevant and suitable to the low-qualified. It aids learning from work experience, in the midst of action and from the unwritten practices and norms that can be observed in a work setting. WBL offers scope to integrate the learning of different knowledge, skills and competences only possible in real situations or in settings that replicate the way they are acquired at work. It also enables socialisation into the roles, behaviours and norms which together permit full participation within a workplace and which have the potential to help learners to acquire appropriate attitudes to



workplace conduct. Findings from the study interviews suggest that this is very important to employers. Many seem to be more interested in people who have the right attitudes and motivation to work, than those who lack it but have the ability to carry out specific tasks, since they could teach such job-specific skills at the workplace. Such programmes can also support the development of knowledge, skills and competences needed in searching and applying for jobs (e.g. job searching strategies, writing application letters and CVs, presenting oneself at job-interviews). Some programmes use the process of finding work placements for this purpose.

WBL programmes also provide the opportunity to update and gain working experience, through work placements among others. They can support orientation and reintegration into the world of work, for example through 'scaffolded' or staged transitions between training and the workplace.

### **Improving labour market signalling**

Employers tend to rely on specific signalling devices to assess the suitability of potential employees, e.g. formal qualifications, which the low-qualified unemployed typically lack. The lack of formal qualifications is often associated with a lack of readiness for work. Negative stereotyping based on factors such as ethnicity or geographical location might also play a role and could cause considerable disadvantage. Employers may also stereotype low-qualified adults with little work experience, assuming that they are more likely to lack appropriate conduct in the workplace.

As the findings of this study show, WBL can contribute to mitigating signalling barriers that the low-qualified unemployed face in (re-)entering the labour market. Some policy-makers interviewed emphasised the impact of interventions on changing employers' potential negative views/stereotyping, especially of the long-term low-qualified unemployed. Generally, the ability of WBL programmes to send out positive signals seems to depend largely on their local reputation and relationships of trust. As delivery organisations stated in the case study interviews, the fact that the low-qualified unemployed adults had been on their programme helped to make them more attractive – a 'safer option' – to employers. Employers often rely on providers to preselect and recommend suitable individuals who are thus 'certified' as job-ready. The existence of work placements, i.e. the fact that participants are sent to real workplaces, particularly seems to help in signalling that participants are job-ready. Generally, the work placements tend to be seen by employers as valuable recruitment tools, giving them the opportunity to assess the suitability of candidates in the workplace. Although successful participation in WBL programmes seems to be able to somehow compensate for the lack of formal qualifications or certificates, the

learners interviewed in the study stress the importance of getting their achievements certified, ideally in the form of formal qualifications, to use them for signalling purposes on the labour market. Learners interviewed in the study tend to see their employment difficulties as lying with themselves and not with employer stereotyping.

### **Improving skills matching**

Employers might have difficulties in sourcing suitable employees, while the low-qualified experience special difficulties in getting information about available jobs, for example because they lack access to networks of potential employers. Although PESs are available, recent Eurostat statistics indicate that these services are used by about 50% of the unemployed.

The case study interviews suggest that the use of WBL enhances intermediation on the labour market. Organisations delivering WBL programmes seem to play an important role as labour market intermediaries, sitting between employers and the low-qualified unemployed as potential recruits and aiding matching. They can play an important role in interpreting the needs of employers and participants and improve the quality and quantity of information flows. Participants usually get access to the providers' network of contacts and potential employers. Those interviewed in the study highlight the connection to employment opportunities as a major attraction of the programmes and particularly value programmes with work placements, as this would allow them to show their abilities to potential employers. Some delivery organisations use other means, such as organising employment fairs, to bring the two parties together, and actively support their participants in writing job applications.

The most commonly reported reason for employer involvement in the programmes analysed in the case studies is that they were looking for suitable employees, and therefore used the work placement scheme to test the suitability of potential candidates. Employers have often developed close relationships and trust with the delivery organisations and rely on them to make a preselection and to provide a steady stream of potential recruits.

To sum up, WBL can make an important contribution to reducing the barriers faced by low-qualified unemployed adults, not only due to the knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes it can foster, but also due to the mode of delivery, and other factors, such as the opportunity to connect with potential employers. However, while this potential is evident, more could be done both at policy and programme levels to deliver the clear benefits that are possible.

## Policy implications

The study findings lead to a number of policy messages, including:

- (a) ensure greater cooperation and coordination at policy level between the relevant ministries and national institutions responsible for employment policy, education and training and social affairs. Develop holistic policy approaches to address all barriers faced by low-qualified unemployed adults and to use the full potential that WBL has to offer;
- (b) develop systematic approaches to defining key competences that are most relevant for the target group and embed their development coherently in policies and concrete programmes for low-qualified unemployed adults. Focus on particular key competences such as literacy, numeracy, communication and digital competences, along with job search skills, workplace conduct, motivation, confidence and self-esteem;
- (c) improve the monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes and implement better quality assurance systems;
- (d) ensure recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning; this is important because learning among low-qualified adults often happens outside formal education. Use existing European guidelines and recommendations <sup>(3)</sup> and the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning <sup>(4)</sup> as a basis;
- (e) support the intermediary function of training organisations and the involvement of employers in the programmes, for example through the creation of tripartite bodies (firms, unions and training providers) which could coordinate and encourage the development of local networks.

---

<sup>(3)</sup> The common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2004), the European guidelines on validation (Cedefop, 2009a), the Council recommendations on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2012).

<sup>(4)</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory-scope.aspx> [accessed 1.8.2013].

## CHAPTER 1.

# Introduction

## 1.1. Background

The labour market situation among unemployed adults, particularly those with low qualification level (ISCED 0-2), has become of increasing concern, exacerbated over recent years by the economic crisis. Periods of unemployment for this group are becoming longer, while barriers to employment increase. In 2012, the unemployment rate for low-qualified adults (25 to 64 years) was 16.8%, compared to 8.6% for the medium-skilled and 5.6% for the high-skilled group (Eurostat, 2013a). Overall, the low-qualified have experienced a greater rise in unemployment since 2008 than any other group. This situation creates not only hardship for the adults concerned, but may also hinder economic growth and pose major challenges to society as a whole in terms of widening social divisions and increasing welfare payments at a time of shrinking public budgets. Low-skilled adults form a significant proportion of the workforce: in 2011, around 72 million of Europe's population aged 25 to 64, had no, or low, formal qualifications (Eurostat, 2013f).

Considerable effort is needed to meet these challenges and to raise employment rates substantially. One of the targets in the Europe 2020 strategy is achieving 75% employment for the working-age population (20 to 64 years) by 2020. The EU has taken systematic action within this context on various levels. The European employment strategy provides a common framework for the EU Member States to take coordinated action to promote employment. In the Europe 2020 framework, the European Commission has launched the Europe 2020 flagship initiative 'An agenda for new skills and jobs: a European contribution towards full employment' (European Commission, 2010b). This initiative proposes action across four main areas which emphasise that unemployment needs to be addressed from various angles, ranging from reforming labour markets to skills development of the workforce. Here, vocational education and training (VET) plays a key role. As highlighted in the Bruges communiqué, VET is crucial for equipping people with the right skills and contributing to their employability (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010). The Bruges communiqué stresses the need to target disadvantaged groups such as low-qualified adults, and the importance of WBL and continuing vocational education and training (CVET). The adult education survey reveals that the low-qualified are less likely to participate in LLL and thus do less to upgrade or broaden their

skills (Eurostat, 2013d). However, learning opportunities for low-qualified adults remain limited (Cedefop, 2010a; 2012e), and a considerable number lack key competences that are needed to find and stay in employment.

This Cedefop report explores to what extent and in which forms VET – in particular WBL programmes focusing on the acquisition of key competences – can be an important instrument for addressing the barriers to (re-)entering the labour market for low-qualified unemployed adults. It is of particular relevance for policy-makers who investigate new solutions for improving the labour market position of this group and for those who are at a more practical level involved in designing and implementing such programmes.

## 1.2. Aims, content and structure of the report

The study has several objectives. First, it aims at exploring the context, existence and spread of WBL programmes, focusing on the acquisition of key competences for low-qualified unemployed adults across 15 selected Member States (CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, ES, FR, IT, HU, MT, NL, PL, SI, SE, UK).

Second, it examines the actual and potential design of such programmes, taking into account:

- (a) the target group low-qualified unemployed adults, their specifics as regards teaching and learning and respective consequences;
- (b) the concepts of WBL that are (to be) used for the given target;
- (c) the key competences that are (to be) addressed.

The study also analyses the effectiveness of such programmes in overcoming potential barriers that the low-qualified unemployed face in (re-)entering employment. Based on considerations of the way in which the labour market functions, especially for factors which enable or inhibit the low-qualified to find and stay in employment, this study builds on the fact that low-qualified unemployed adults face several potential barriers in relation to (re-)entering employment. It investigates in how far WBL programmes can make an important contribution to reducing these barriers:

- (a) deficiencies in human capital: low-qualified often lack not only job-specific, but also other knowledge, skills and key competences, relevant for successfully searching for and applying to jobs, as well as staying in employment, and/or participating in LLL. The 2011 adult education survey (Eurostat, 2013d) and the EU labour force survey (Eurostat, 2013b) show that, across the EU, low-qualified adults are less likely to participate in LLL and thus do less to upgrade or broaden their knowledge, skills and competences (Cedefop, 2012e). Low-qualified adults have often opted out of

formal education and training early and might find it difficult to engage in 'traditional' forms of learning. They also often lack relevant work experience. Questions related to these issues include: what is the potential of WBL programmes in terms of their mode of delivery (it might be beneficial for those with negative experiences in 'traditional' learning settings) and in terms of the knowledge, skills, competences and experience they can foster?

- (b) weak or wrong signalling: employers tend to rely on specific signalling devices to assess the suitability of potential employees, for example on formal qualifications, which this target group often lacks. The lack of qualifications is often associated with the lack of readiness for work. Negative stereotyping based on other factors such as ethnicity or location might also play a role and could cause considerable disadvantage. In this context, questions investigated in this study include: what role WBL programmes can play as alternative signalling mechanisms? Do they provide a form of guarantee to potential employers that adults who have successfully completed the programme are ready to work and will deliver minimum levels of good conduct in the workplace?
- (c) matching difficulties: there can be particular problems due to ineffective flows of information between employers and potential employees. Employers might be reluctant to invest in expensive recruitment methods for low value vacancies and might have difficulties in sourcing suitable employees; the low-qualified might lack access to networks of potential employers. A crucial question in this respect is do training providers who deliver WBL 'return to work' programmes have the potential to act as labour market intermediaries, using their network of contacts with employers to open up employment opportunities for programme participants?
- (d) additional personal barriers: low-qualified unemployed adults often face difficulties in accessing employment, or the education and training that might lead to employment, which are not directly linked to the labour market. These include financial and other difficulties (e.g. health, housing, transportation).

Third, this study identifies key messages for policy-makers at European and national levels, and for practitioners involved in designing and implementing such programmes.

The report is structured as follows:

- (a) Chapter 1 sets out the background, the objectives and the structure of the report;

- (b) Chapter 2 defines the key terms and concepts used in the study and describes the conceptual framework, including the methodology and the main challenges encountered;
- (c) Chapter 3 provides an overview of the context of the study, highlighting the scale of the problem addressed. It shows a statistical portrait of low-qualified unemployed adults on the labour market, gives information on current and projected skills needs, and points to policy responses (including ALMPs, the role of WBL programmes in ALMPs, adult education provision);
- (d) Chapter 4 presents the key findings from the review of the 15 select Member States and the 10 in-depth case studies. It provides a general overview of programmes (types, responsibilities, etc.) and their key features (e.g. induction into programmes, assessment, mode of WBL, pedagogies, roles of employers);
- (e) Chapter 5 sets out the conclusions, focusing on the questions of whether and how WBL 'return to work' programmes actually help to overcome the above-mentioned barriers to (re-)entering the labour market, and which features of the programmes are most important in this respect. It provides key messages for policy- and decision-makers at European and national levels, and for those responsible for the actual design and implementation of such programmes.

The research approach for the study included:

- (a) literature reviews (including policy and research documents) and secondary data analyses of Eurostat data;
- (b) country studies of the 15 selected Member States with semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (e.g. ministries of education and/or employment, PES, national VET institutions) and electronic questionnaires completed by programme providers;
- (c) 10 in-depth case studies with interviews with those responsible for the design and delivery of the programmes, participants and employers.

## CHAPTER 2.

# Definitions, conceptual framework and methodology

### 2.1. Low-qualified unemployed adults

For the purpose of this study, 'low-qualified' are defined as those who have only basic educational levels, corresponding to the 1997 ISCED levels 0-2 (Unesco, 2006):

- (a) level 0: pre-primary education, the initial stage of organised instruction; this is school or centre-based and designed for children aged at least three years;
- (b) level 1: primary education, typically begins between five and seven years of age, is the start of compulsory education and generally covers six years of full-time schooling;
- (c) level 2: lower secondary education, continues the basic programmes of the primary level, although teaching is typically more subject-focused. Usually, the end of this level coincides with the end of compulsory education.

However, while this is the definition used throughout the study, it is important that defining 'low-qualified' using only the ISCED definition might be insufficient to capture the multifaceted nature of this population, and needs to be refined with other criteria to provide a more meaningful and comprehensive definition. ISCED focuses purely on formal education, while the low-qualified population also displays a range of skills levels in relation to personal and vocational skills acquired outside formal education and training: those, for example who have worked for 20 years in a specific occupation may have developed high levels of technical skills, yet remain lacking in, for example, basic literacy skills.

There are variations in the age-group used by policy-makers in different Member States to define adults of working age who can be targeted by particular unemployment and/or training policies. A pragmatic approach was adopted to the definition of 'adults' for the country and case studies: the research was not limited by any specific age range but, to ensure the focus on the adult population, studying any programmes targeting only the young (below 25) was avoided. For the purpose of giving a general overview of the labour market situation, the age group 25 to 64 was used, unless stated otherwise.

A similarly pragmatic approach has been taken to the definition of 'unemployed' for this study. The research is focused on the standard definition used in the European Union: 'an unemployed person is defined by Eurostat,



according to the guidelines of the International Labour Organisation, as someone (...) without work during the reference week who is available to start work within the next two weeks and who has actively sought employment at some time during the last four weeks'. The unemployment rate is the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labour force (Eurostat, 2012b) <sup>(5)</sup>. However, programmes or initiatives which include a wider target group, in particular the economically inactive population, have not been excluded from the research. These comprise, for example, those who are of working age but might not be looking actively for work for various reasons.

## 2.2. Key competences

'Competence' is defined as the 'ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development' (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2008). It goes beyond the cognitive aspects (e.g. using theory) and includes functional aspects (involving technical skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g. social skills) and ethical values (Cedefop, 2008) <sup>(6)</sup>.

Key competences are a particular set of competences. For the purpose of this study, the definition of key competences as outlined in the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning* (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006) is used. It sets out a European reference framework with eight key competences <sup>(7)</sup>.

The European reference framework explicitly requires that Member States should 'ensure that adults are able to develop and update the key competences

---

<sup>(5)</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics) [accessed 1.8.2013].

<sup>(6)</sup> In the literature, a distinction is often made '... between the term 'competence', which is given a generic or holistic meaning and refers to a person's overall capacity, and the term 'competency', which refers to specific capabilities' (Eraut, 1994, p. 179). This report does not make this distinction and uses only the terms 'competence/competences'.

<sup>(7)</sup> Communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006); see Annex 2.

throughout their lives, and that there is a particular focus on target groups identified as priorities in the national, regional and/or local contexts' (ibid.). Key competences are relevant to low-qualified unemployed adults because they are vital for employment, in particular supporting flexibility and adaptability, and also for personal, social and civic functioning.

The eight key competences of the reference framework are all interdependent, and the emphasis in each case is on critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem-solving, risk assessment, decision-taking and constructive management of feelings (European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006). The key competences have not, to date, been defined in terms of levels, except for languages and information and communication technology (ICT). They can be understood both as basic or entry level competences as well as the intermediate and higher levels that can be obtained through specialised study or LLL. Key competences can be divided into three groups (Cedefop, 2009b):

- (a) those associated with particular subjects or disciplines, e.g. mathematical and scientific competences;
- (b) cross-disciplinary competences, e.g. digital competence, social and civic competence;
- (c) transversal competences, e.g. creativity, problem-solving.

Within the European reference framework, we can also recognise a variety of other conceptualisations, for example basic skills and employability skills:

- (a) basic skills can be defined as 'the skills needed to live in contemporary society, e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing and mathematics' (Cedefop, 2008). In terms of key competences, basic skills particularly concern 'communication in the mother tongue' and 'mathematical competence' at a level which is understood to be the minimum required for participation in ordinary work and social activity. The volume of research into basic skills is relatively high and, although in many studies learners are low-qualified adult employees rather than unemployed adults, this work could be used for this study <sup>(8)</sup>;
- (b) employability skills are usually referred to as job – or work – readiness skills and defined as skills required for getting work, staying in work and progressing in work. They are particularly associated with the transition into employment, and hence are particularly relevant for the low qualified

---

<sup>(8)</sup> For example, Cranmer et al., 2004; Sagan et al., 2005; Evans and Waite, 2008; Levenson, 2001; Lord et al., 2010; Marr and Hagston, 2007; Shaw et al., 2006.

unemployed. For this study, employability skills are treated as a subset of the European key competences with a focus on particular key competences: 'digital competence'; 'sense of initiative and entrepreneurship'; 'communication in the mother tongue'; 'social competence' and skills associated with 'problem solving, decision taking and critical thinking'. There is increasing evidence that WBL is a good way to develop employability skills (e.g. Dench et al., 2006; Richardson and Storberg-Walker, 2006).

The EU definition of key competences was developed within the broad sphere of LLL, and hence might require some sort of 'translation' to apply to specific fields, such as the world of work, for this study.

How important are key competences to low-qualified unemployed adults in terms of impact on getting back into employment? Dench et al. have systematically reviewed 38 studies from different countries on the impact of learning on unemployed low-qualified adults (Dench et al., 2006) <sup>(9)</sup>. Of these 38 studies, 33 reported employment-related learning outcomes, 21 qualification-related and 17 soft outcomes (e.g. enhanced confidence). Additional evidence on employment effects is also found elsewhere, for example in another literature review by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (Department for education and skills, 2009) and in a study on basic skills in the UK (Vignoles et al., 2008).

However, other research did not notice any significant employment effect, but could identify a range of positive effects, for example increased self-esteem, which may improve employability, particularly in the longer term (Metcalf et al., 2009). This is in line with Hamilton et al. who found little impact on employment in the short term, but a significant impact (in comparison to the control group) after five years (Hamilton and Wilson, 2005).

---

<sup>(9)</sup> The studies reviewed comprised eight quantitative studies, mostly with control groups, which investigated if low-qualified out-of-work adults going through training programmes are more likely to progress to employment. Generally, of the 38 programmes reviewed, 28 provided skills for specific occupations (e.g. care, IT), 24 included general skills relating to returning to work (e.g. motivation, self-esteem, problem solving), 19 addressed basic skills, and 24 covered job search and application.

### 2.3. WBL

WBL is defined in the context of this study as intentional, organised learning which might be somehow broader than workplace learning. It does not necessarily take place in one's workplace, but generally in work-based contexts. It encompasses learning that takes place not only in real workplaces, but also in realistic work environments designed to have many of the characteristics of a real workplace; in this way work becomes the predominant context for learning.

Some key features of learning, against which WBL can be examined, include the following:

- (a) the purpose of learning, e.g. learning intended to qualify for entry to employment or for entry to higher or other forms of education;
- (b) the status of teachers or trainers, e.g. are they qualified teachers, supervisors in the workplace, or peer workers;
- (c) the character of the learning processes, e.g. does it consist of tasks defined in a text book or of authentic work tasks;
- (d) the conditions under which tasks are performed, e.g. are the tasks performed in work situations during normal working time or are they practised in training conditions;
- (e) the physical environment, e.g. in a school or at the work place.

Each of these dimensions is a spectrum which allows us to characterise, analyse and design forms of WBL (Stanley, 2012). There are different ways in which WBL can be used and structured in 'return to work' programmes. Different types of WBL have been identified, based on the location and conditions of learning <sup>(10)</sup>:

- (a) work placement or work experience schemes; all training and learning is on-the-job;
- (b) work-located scheme; all training is located at the workplace but there are distinct on-the-job and off-the-job elements;
- (c) scheme based in a learning institution (e.g. a vocational or technical school or college, further learning centre) which includes some simulated or real WBL;

---

<sup>(10)</sup> This typology focuses on only two dimensions (location and the conditions of learning). In our analysis of the different types of programme, we have nevertheless considered that the other dimensions, such as the characteristics of the teachers or trainers, are as important as the location or conditions of WBL.

- (d) mixed scheme which combines or alternates training in school/college with WBL in an enterprise.

Based on existing research, certain key features of WBL that are of relevance for the study and its conceptual approach were identified.

### **2.3.1. Key features and impact of WBL**

The European key competences explicitly include 'personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour' that enable individuals to participate in social and working life. This connects with a conceptualisation of WBL as a developing social participation rather than solely a form of acquisition of skills, and is thus highly relevant in the context of this study. The social character of WBL, with the idea that social interaction is a crucial part of the learning process, has been explored and elaborated by many researchers, building on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and their theory of situated learning. Fuller and Unwin (2004) have researched the way that the social and organisational structure of the workplace constrains and affords the learning of individuals. This approach explores the learning not only of skills but also of roles, behaviours and norms which together permit full participation within a workplace. It has led to thinking about how the workplace environment might be designed to maximise learning of all kinds (Evans et al., 2006, Skule, 2004), and so is relevant for the design of WBL programmes under consideration in this study.

Eraut and colleagues have carried out extensive research into professional learning, analysing the character of professional and practical knowledge and the way that personal capability develops over time (Eraut, 2007a; 2007b). Eraut emphasises the importance of tacit knowledge and practical know-how in combination with codified knowledge, documenting how different workplaces provide distinctive environments that afford and constrain learning in distinctive ways. He also considers how formal learning programmes may be complemented by different kinds of informal learning (Eraut and Hirsch, 2007). These works provide useful concepts to describe the way that occupational and key competences develop through WBL (Brown, 2009). They also encourage more sensitivity to the diversity of knowledge, skills and competences which individuals can develop through WBL.

The concept of being situated has led to an emphasis on how learning is shaped by context or, in some accounts, how learning is distributed through a context (Brown et al., 1989). It has drawn attention to the idea that learning must take place in real world situations. These studies are relevant for this research because they examine how learning in the workplace can be 'reapplied' from one

context to another and from one workplace to another (Beach, 2003; Institute of Education et al., 2009). WBL should not be restricted to the development of key competences in just one context, but should support the transformation and reintegration of key competences to suit a variety of contexts (Eraut, 2004). Collins et al. have stressed that the learning settings should be diversified 'so that students learn how to apply their skills in different contexts' (Collins et al., 1987, p. 5).

There are a number of other relevant lines of research which have explored the potentials of WBL and developed analytical models. The work-process-knowledge approach has drawn attention to the learning of non-codified, organisational practices in the workplace (Boreham et al., 2002; Cedefop et al., 2004). This line of research also emphasises social interaction in work contexts as well as trying to understand how implicit and explicit learning can be blended. It argues that 'due to the contextual and situated nature of the knowledge and competence required for working life, much greater emphasis must be placed on work-related learning' (Stavrou and Nyhan, 2004).

Learners within work-based environments learn from experience, through reflection, in action and from the unwritten practices and norms that they observe (Hager and Halliday, 2006). It is important to recognise that much of the power of the workplace as a context for learning is due to the scope for learning from participation as much as from instruction, and that it is possible to plan and organise this 'learning from participation'.

Researchers examining the question of how learning can be fostered, have drawn attention to the effectiveness of 'learner-centred' and active-learning pedagogies within WBL (Cedefop, 2010c). They have also explored how work situations can be structured to encourage learning and how WBL can be linked to school-based learning (e.g. QCA, 2008).

Billet (2004), among others (Evans and Kersh, 2006), has used socio-biographic methods to explore how the identities of workers develop and change alongside their practical capability and their occupation history. Although they focus on workers, these studies are particularly relevant for this research as they explore what experiences and capabilities individuals bring to WBL and the way different individuals learn from work. Illeris (2006) has reviewed a number of WBL programmes for low-qualified adults and identified some of the psychological barriers to LLL for this group. These researchers suggest that we need to understand an individual's education and career history if we are to make sense of the way they seize or reject opportunities for LLL. Low-qualified adults have often not been successful at school and have negative prior experience with formal education and training, i.e. more traditional learning settings. WBL might

offer a way of learning which is different and has the potential to be more attractive, relevant and suitable to them.

In their meta-review of studies on the impact of learning on employment outcomes for low qualified adults who are unemployed or at risk of losing their job, Dench et al. (2006) concluded that ‘...interventions with employer-placements and work-based training were more successful in leading to employment outcomes. These interventions put participants in contact with employers and help develop more general employability skills, as well as enabling the individuals concerned to demonstrate work experience to potential employers’ (Dench et. al 2006, p.3). This indicates the potential of WBL.

### **2.3.2. Using WBL to teach key competences**

Research into WBL is often concerned with the manner in which it contributes to the development of occupational competences; there is relatively little research which explores its use for the teaching and learning of key competences, especially in CVET.

Cedefop research into initial vocational education and training (IVET) has shown that key competences are recognised as an element of many European VET curricula, and that they are taught and learned both through informal interaction in enterprises and through formal tasks devised and carried out in schools (Cedefop, 2012d).

Although there is little research which explores the use of work-based approaches to the teaching and learning of the full range of key competences in CVET, there is more extensive research into basic skills. Its findings have relevance in understanding how WBL can benefit adults. Beach (1999) has researched the distinctive way that mathematical or computational tasks can be performed and learned in particular work environments, suggesting that work-based contexts provide alternatives for the development of key competences. Taylor et al. (2008) distinguished five different kinds of informal WBL that were used to develop literacy skills in UK and Canadian schemes, such as ‘observing from knowledgeable, for example learning a task in a different way from a more proficient colleague’.

Research by Mikulecky (1988), Askov and Aderman (1991) and O’Neill and Gish (2001) found evidence for the effectiveness of approaches that integrate basic skills learning in the workplace. Jurmo (2004), in an evaluation of the US national workforce literacy programme, attributed its effectiveness to learners’ perception that the skills they are developing are relevant to their work. An evaluation by Marr and Hagston (2007) found that most employees in Australia involved in a numeracy scheme preferred informal, immediate, on-the-job training, taught by supervisors or peers. However, other studies found that

informal training often worked best as a complement to formal options (Evans and Waite, 2008; Taylor et al., 2008) <sup>(11)</sup>. Evans and Waite (ibid.) and Levenson (2001) carried out research into the use of workplace-based learning centres to promote basic skills, finding that learners prefer such centres to colleges and that these programmes have the potential to compensate for previously negative educational experiences.

There are two dimensions to the position of key competences in the curriculum when integrating the development of these competences in WBL programmes:

- (a) the degree to which they are explicitly or implicitly identified within the provision. Are they systematically identified and explicitly aimed at, or are they not systematically identified and aimed at, but their development (e.g. communication skills) is somehow taken for granted during the process of learning with a work focus;
- (b) the extent to which they are embedded (essentially being taught and learned through WBL, blurring the learning of key competences and more job-specific skills) or treated separately (e.g. in separate modules at the beginning of the programme).

Table 1 **Integration of key competences in WBL programmes**

<b>Explicit</b>	Key competences explicitly defined and taught in an integrated way	Key competences explicitly defined and taught separately
	Key competences not explicitly defined, but assumption that they are anyway developed during the learning process (e.g. work placement)	
<b>Implicit</b>		
	<b>Embedded</b>	<b>Separate</b>

Source: Cedefop.

<sup>(11)</sup> For example, Evans and Waite (ibid.) found that a blended approach through which caretakers attended a communication course for three hours per week to learn how to write reports connected well to their work activity and aided informal mentoring and coaching by more experienced colleagues.



However, the *modus operandi* of integrating key competences into WBL programmes might depend on factors such as the target group, the pedagogical approach and the competences in question.

## 2.4. Actors in the labour market and ALMPs

The two main actors in the labour market are potential employees (the unemployed) and employers. However, the effectiveness with which employers and employees interact in the market also depends on a range of intermediaries. Labour market intermediaries help to improve the efficient functioning of the labour market and to correct disequilibria favouring particular groups (European Commission et al., 2012). Labour market intermediaries can be both formal and informal. The former include PES and private employment agencies. Informal intermediaries comprise personal contacts such as friends and relations. The most common methods of job search are through self-initiative and the use of personal contacts (European Commission, 2011a).

A trend across Europe in the last 10 to 20 years has been the development of the role of formal intermediaries such as the PES as an important component of ALMP. This trend has been accompanied by a significant increase in the number and variety of ALMP delivery mechanisms, which has led to the landscape of labour market institutions becoming more complex. To enable policies to be tailored to local needs, PESs have tended to be subject to decentralisation; this process has been accompanied by integration with other policies, including education and training (European Commission and Ecorys, 2011). Despite these trends, recent statistics indicate that PESs are used by about 50% of the unemployed (Eurostat, 2013c).

It is important to see WBL programmes for low-qualified unemployed adults within this context. They can be considered as active labour market measures since they actively intervene to make people more employable. As this report reveals, those who deliver WBL programmes also play a mediating role between employers and the unemployed, and can be considered as one of a number of labour market intermediaries. Their role is distinctive since they sit at the interface between two different institutional regimes: the labour market and education and training. Most participants of the programmes analysed in this study are referred into the WBL provision by PES.

## 2.5. Labour market barriers for low-qualified adults

Alongside those involved in the low-qualified segment of the labour market, consideration also needs to be given to the way in which the market functions, especially the factors that enable or inhibit the low-qualified to find and stay in employment. The unemployed should find employment if they have the skills for the jobs available, assuming that jobs are available <sup>(12)</sup>. But labour market functioning also depends on the ability of accurate information to flow between the various actors. One of the functions of the labour market intermediaries described above is to improve the volume, accuracy and flow of information so that they can function more efficiently. Some of the key barriers faced by low-qualified adults in relation to (re-)entering employment, linked to the functioning of the labour market, are summarised below. This study investigates how WBL programmes have the potential to address these barriers.

### 2.5.1. Deficiencies in human capital

Human capital refers to an individual's stock of knowledge, skills and competences which can be put to productive use through the labour market. But what knowledge, skills and competences are relevant for low-qualified unemployed adults? What role is played by key competences in particular and what role does work experience play?

It is important to examine whether low-qualified unemployed adults tend to experience employment problems because of a lack of key competences or of job-specific skills, or both. There is little research on the effect of different types of human capital deficiency on employment.

Whether low-qualified unemployed adults actually lack basic employability skills is a moot point that highlights the importance of perception and objective information within labour markets. Employers may simply perceive that certain groups of the unemployed lack such skills, stigmatising them in the process (Bonoli and Hinrichs, 2010).

There might be also other issues which disadvantage low-qualified unemployed adults. Low self-esteem and lack of confidence are often characteristics of people who have been out of employment, especially for a long time (McAleavy et al., 2004). This can be accompanied by negative attitudes to education and training.

---

<sup>(12)</sup> Labour economics also highlights other factors in the labour market, such as relative and efficiency wages.

### **2.5.2. Weak or wrong labour market signals**

Employers tend to rely on specific signalling devices, such as qualifications, to assess the suitability of potential employees. The possibility that employers may make assumptions about low-qualified unemployed adults stems partly from difficulties with labour market signalling mechanisms for low-qualified jobs. Low-qualified workers have low levels of formal education/certification. However, employers often rely on successful completion of education as a signalling device for job readiness, workplace conduct, etc. Although low-qualified adults often have considerable informal and non-formal learning/experience, their lack of formal certificates can be a disadvantage if employers stereotype certain groups of workers, based on factors such as geographical location, ethnic origins, or age-groups. Employers may also have concern about the likely behaviour of low-qualified adults with little work experience, fearing that they may have a greater likelihood of anti-social behaviour (e.g. addictions, fighting, inappropriate language) (Holzer, 1996).

### **2.5.3. Job matching difficulties**

Job matching can be a labour market issue for jobs requiring low qualifications, as there can be problems with effective flows of information. The low-qualified nature of work can mean that employers do not invest heavily in recruitment (e.g. advertising). Potential employees often lack well-developed networks which support contact with employers, or are unwilling or unable to search for jobs over wide geographic areas. Using the public employment office is often not appealing, for different reasons, to either employers or unemployed adults. Low-qualified adults can have difficulties in locating job opportunities, let alone in finding specific jobs that fit, while employers might have difficulties in sourcing suitable employees.

### **2.5.4. Personal barriers**

The unemployed often face difficulties accessing employment, or the education and training that might lead to employment, which are not directly linked to the labour market: financial difficulties and other forms of social disadvantage can make it difficult for them to access childcare or transportation. Further, they may be not incentivised by a benefit system where being in certain types of employment is financially less advantageous than being unemployed and in receipt of benefits (Oesch, 2010). These barriers provide important contextual factors for the labour market integration of low-qualified, unemployed adults, but are in themselves outside of the scope of exploration of our research.

## 2.6. Research approach and methodology

### 2.6.1. Literature review

To develop the conceptual framework which guides this study, an extensive literature review was carried out, focusing on academic literature, grey literature and publications from international organisations in the three key fields of the study: WBL, key competences and the needs of low-qualified unemployed adults. There is only limited research focusing on the intersection of these three key fields but the review helped assess what is already known and brought together knowledge from the different fields, orientating it in relation to the research focus and shaping the framework for the study.

### 2.6.2. Country studies and comparative overview

A comparative analysis of 15 EU Member States examined the role of WBL, focusing on the acquisition of key competences within the policies and programmes implemented to address the issues faced by low-qualified unemployed adults.

The 15 Member States for analysis were selected by geographic country clusters, with a range of criteria used in the selection of countries within these clusters, including the number of countries and the likelihood of finding effective policy and practice. The following main features of the country clusters were also considered: LLL culture/adult participation rates in LLL; and ALMPscope and general strategies <sup>(13)</sup>. Table 2 sets out the Member States in the different country clusters, and some of their typical characteristics in relation to these features.

---

<sup>(13)</sup> The first is relevant because it gives some indications on the broader context in which WBL programmes are taking place, and the attitudes towards LLL, as well as the participation rates, and generally also the opportunities for adults to participate in LLL. The second informs about the scope and general strategies the ALMPs are based on.

Table 2 **Typical features in adult learning and active labour market measures of the country clusters**

Country clusters	Countries	Typical features
Nordic	Denmark Finland Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong LLL culture with high adult LLL participation rates</li> <li>• High spend on ALMPs</li> </ul>
Continental	Belgium Germany France Luxembourg Netherlands Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LLL participation moderate to low</li> <li>• Moderate to high spend on ALMPs</li> </ul>
Anglo-Saxon	Ireland UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variable LLL culture with rates of adult LLL participation in the UK higher than in Ireland</li> <li>• Spending on ALMPs varies</li> </ul>
Mediterranean	Greece Spain Italy Cyprus Malta Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak LLL culture with low adult LLL participation rates</li> <li>• Spending on ALMPs varies across countries</li> <li>• Low-qualified population is a major issue.</li> <li>• Strong reliance on employment protection leading to rigidities in labour markets</li> </ul>
Central and eastern European	Bulgaria Czech Republic Estonia Latvia Lithuania Hungary Poland Romania Slovenia Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak LLL culture with low adult LLL participation rates</li> <li>• Low spend on ALMPs</li> <li>• Accession funding and latterly European social fund (ESF) has been a significant stimulus to development of training infrastructure for the unemployed</li> </ul>

Source: Cedefop.

To ensure that a large proportion of the EU population is covered, the six largest Member States were included in the 15 Member States analysed in this study.

Table 3 **Member States selected for the comparative analysis**

Country clusters	Countries
Nordic	Denmark, Sweden
Continental	Germany, France, Netherlands
Anglo-Saxon	Ireland, UK
Mediterranean	Spain, Italy, Malta
Central and eastern Europe	Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia

Source: Cedefop.

Country studies on each selected Member State included desk research, interviews with strategic stakeholders, collection of data on programmes delivered by training providers and data analysis.

- (a) During the desk research phase, experts examined key documents for their Member State, including policy reports, academic literature and programme evaluations. The topics covered in the desk research included information on:
- (i) the labour market;
  - (ii) ALMPs;
  - (iii) VET systems and their features;
  - (iv) WBL programmes developed at a Member State level;
  - (v) the role of WBL programmes/initiatives in addressing key competences that low-qualified unemployed adults lack;
  - (vi) an assessment of the effectiveness of WBL programmes, as well as key success factors and challenges.

The desk research provided an overview of the context, the key policies and programmes relevant for the specific aims of the study, as well as identifying key stakeholders and delivery organisations to address. It also included an in-depth analysis of the labour market position and national policy responses for low-qualified unemployed adults, building on data from Eurostat and on an analysis of Eurostat's qualitative labour market reports.

- (b) Semi-structured interviews were carried out with strategic stakeholders in each Member State. They explored the existence, design and effectiveness of WBL programmes that develop key competences as an approach to

helping low-qualified unemployed adults (re-)enter the labour market. Stakeholder interviews included ministries of employment and/or education, national VET institutions, PES and regional organisations where appropriate. Overall, 58 key stakeholders were interviewed (see Annex 2, Table 7).

- (c) Based on information gathered from the desk research and the stakeholder interviews, relevant WBL programmes were identified. Electronic questionnaires were then sent to delivery organisations implementing the programmes for self-completion, or were completed by the country experts via telephone conversations. These were used to collect descriptive information on programmes within the respective Member States.
- (d) Finally, the country experts analysed the data gathered from the three research phases, via an online country fiche.

Using the country fiches, an in-depth comparative analysis was carried out on the existence, spread and types of WBL programmes developed across the 15 Member States aimed at reintegrating low-qualified unemployed adults into the labour market through the development of key competences.

### **2.6.3. Case studies**

Based on suggestions from country experts and selection criteria, 10 case studies from across the different Member States were selected for in-depth analysis (Table 4; see Annex 3 for further information on the programmes/initiatives investigated in the case studies). The selection criteria included the level of implementation (national/regional), the target group, geography (country clusters), the focus on key competences (explicit/implicit, embedded/separate), the type of WBL (work-located scheme, work placement, etc.), and evidence of success <sup>(14)</sup> of the programmes.

---

<sup>(14)</sup> Number of adults who successfully completed the programmes and were reintegrated into the labour market or continued with education and training afterwards.

Table 4 Selected country case studies

Member State	Country cluster	Title of programme/initiative
Denmark	Nordic	Basic education for adults ( <i>Grunduddannelse for Voksne</i> ) (GVU)
Germany	Continental	Measures for activation and reintegration into labour ( <i>Maßnahmen zur Aktivierung und beruflichen Eingliederung</i> ) (*)
Estonia	Central and eastern Europe	Labour market training programme ( <i>Pikk ja kvaliteetne tööelu</i> )
Ireland	Anglo-Saxon	Traineeship programme
Spain	Mediterranean	Employment workshops ( <i>talleres de empleo</i> )
France	Continental	Integration workshops and worksites ( <i>ateliers et chantiers d'insertion</i> ) (ACI), one particular strand of the 'integration through work' programme ( <i>insertion par l'activité économique</i> ) (IAE)
Hungary	Central and eastern Europe	Springboard programme (Dobbantó)
Netherlands	Continental	Work training centre Rotterdam south ( <i>Arbeidstrainingcentrum Rotterdam Zuid – ATC Tarwewijk</i> )
Sweden	Nordic	Vocational adult education programme ( <i>Yrkesvux</i> )
UK	Anglo-Saxon	Sector route way programme (LOAN project)

(\*) Three out of the 15 programmes within this scheme were selected: activation of new clients (*Neukundenaktivierung*), activation centre (*Aktivcenter*) and practice centre (*Praxiscenter*).

Source: Cedefop.

The case study approach included an analysis of available information for the selected programmes and semi-structured interviews (see annexes). After exploring the available information for the selected programmes, the country experts conducted face-to-face interviews with organisations (minimum two or three per programme) involved in the delivery and/or design or implementation of the programmes/initiatives (i.e. employment centres, adult community organisations, training agencies) and adult participants (at least two to four per programme) of these programmes/initiatives. Where possible, at least one



organisation was an employer linked to the relevant programme (for example offering work placements). Interviews were conducted with 44 delivery organisations, 49 programme participants (or groups of participants) and 11 employers (see Annex 2). The interviews covered the following issues:

- (a) delivery organisations: the interviews explored the types of target groups supported under the programmes, their barriers and how these were addressed, recruitment practices, features of the programmes including the pedagogy, content including types of key competences addressed, how and why, the design of the WBL elements, and the reasons for using particular approaches. The interviews also explored the role of employers in the design and delivery of the programmes, and the delivery organisation perceptions of the effectiveness and success of the programmes in supporting the target group back into work. They also examined how delivery organisations felt employers perceived low-qualified unemployed adults and the extent to which this influenced provision of work placements;
- (b) employers: a core element of the case studies was to explore the perceptions of the employers who provided work placement on the programmes considered as well as their views on the low-qualified unemployed adults they supported <sup>(15)</sup>. The interviews also aimed to explore employer views on the barriers that prevent low-qualified unemployed from returning to work, and the extent to which key competences help in overcoming these barriers;
- (c) participants: the interviews explored the reasons why adults had joined the programme and whether participation was voluntary. They also aimed at gathering their views on the benefits of the programme and the role that key competences and the WBL elements played.

#### **2.6.4. Overall analysis**

An overall analysis of country study and case study findings was carried out in line with the key research questions set out in the conceptual framework. A workshop with high-level experts involved in the study was held to discuss and enrich the findings.

---

<sup>(15)</sup> Topics covered under this issue included their role in the programme, reasons for their involvement, selection criteria and the extent to which this was influenced by their views on the target group concerned, and their views on the programme in general.

## 2.7. Challenges encountered

The main challenges encountered in the study were:

- (a) solid data addressing all research questions for individual countries are scarce. Much of the information on issues such as the importance of key competences in the study context, and the advantages and disadvantages of WBL that supports key competence development, are subjective. Many informants appeared to find it difficult or were reluctant to express an opinion. Securing interviews with high-level, strategic stakeholders in some Member States in itself proved challenging;
- (b) quantitative data on the effectiveness of programmes were particularly difficult to obtain, partly due to the recent nature of some of the programmes examined and partly due to insufficiencies in monitoring processes in Member States. This study provides some qualitative insights into views on the effectiveness of programmes, but would require the availability of specific assessment exercises to produce a comprehensive quantitative assessment of effectiveness;
- (c) in Member States where there is a significant degree of decentralisation in policy decision-making and implementation of VET and employment policy (e.g. Italy), it was difficult to gain a national overview. Even in Member States where VET and employment policy is more centralised, there is often a high degree of flexibility and diversity at local – and even provider – level in terms of implementation (contents of training programmes, type of providers, profile of learners, etc.);
- (d) supporting adults to develop key competences through WBL has often been found to be implicit rather than explicit. It was difficult to find examples of WBL programmes which had a clear focus on attaining key competences. The case studies represent a mix of programmes, some of which explicitly focus on the acquisition of key competences, while others are more implicit.

## CHAPTER 3.

# Context: labour market position and policy responses for low-qualified unemployed adults

### 3.1. Statistical portrait: the labour market situation for low-qualified adults

A review of EU labour market statistics highlights the disadvantages faced by low-qualified adults on the labour market. The global economic and financial crisis has had a major impact on the European labour market with, unemployment in the EU peaking at 11% in May 2013 (Eurostat, 2013e). The dramatic rise in unemployment has also had a knock-on effect on long-term unemployment (ibid.) and a particularly detrimental effect on the most vulnerable groups: 'especially hard hit are the young, the low-skilled and migrants' (European Commission, 2011b).

Recent figures from Eurostat indicate that EU-27 unemployment for low-qualified adults is considerably higher than for their higher-skilled contemporaries. In 2012, the unemployment rate for low-qualified adults (25 to 64 years) was 16.8%, compared to 8.6% for the medium-skilled and 5.6% for the high-skilled group (Eurostat, 2013a). This trend is also increasing, highlighted by a disproportionately large rise in unemployment for the lower-qualified: between 2008 and 2011: the figure rose by 5%, compared to only 2% and 1.4% respectively for the other groups. According to Eurostat, 'educational qualifications are still the best insurance against unemployment, which clearly increases the lower the level of education attained' (Eurostat, 2012b). The European vacancy monitor also highlights that 'high skill levels remain important for employment opportunities' (European Commission, 2012b).

Employment among low-qualified adults is also significantly lower than that of higher-qualified groups and has also decreased more rapidly: between 2008 and 2012, it dropped by 4.3 percentage points, compared to only 2.1 for the medium-qualified and 1.9 for the high-qualified (Eurostat, 2012a).

These unemployment trends have contributed to a considerable increase in the risk of poverty and social exclusion for the low-qualified (European Commission, 2011a). When low qualifications also combines with other forms of social disadvantage (i.e. migrants, single parents or older people), the risk of unemployment and social exclusion increases further.

## Member State variations

An analysis based on Eurostat labour force survey data permits a comparative overview of the differing performance of the labour markets in the 15 EU Member States selected for this study. This analysis has been done on the level of the five country clusters (see Section 2.6.2). As the features of the clusters in relation to labour market performance were found not to have a clear explanatory power in terms of the approaches to WBL focusing on key competences, only a brief overview of differences is presented here to set the context.

The analysis shows that certain Member States – particularly within the Nordic, continental and Anglo-Saxon country clusters – are performing above the EU averages in respect of levels of adult employment, while others – particularly in the Mediterranean and central and eastern European clusters – have high unemployment levels. Labour market performance in all selected Member States has been negatively affected by the current economic crisis, with the exception of Germany, and has been particularly dramatic in certain Member States, for example in Ireland. Figures confirm that low-qualified unemployment is higher than unemployment of other qualification groups across all Member States, and that the rise in unemployment for this group has been higher than for other groups in the 2008-12 period. Some key nuances between Member States and country clusters are presented below.

## EU labour market skills supply and demand

A recent Cedefop report (Cedefop, 2012e) on skill mismatch and the role of enterprises highlights recruitment difficulties faced by employers across a number of Member States. Although depicting the pre-crisis portrait <sup>(16)</sup>, it shows that just over a third (36%) of enterprises in Europe experienced problems in finding staff for skilled jobs, while a smaller percentage (10%) had difficulty in attracting

---

<sup>(16)</sup> Using data obtained from the 2009 wave of the European company survey (ECS). There is an indication of a shift in the EU Beveridge curve between 2009 and 2010 (i.e. there were more labour shortages for the same level of unemployment, indicating that perhaps employers could not find the skilled people they needed to fill the vacant posts in some EU countries such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands etc.). The Manpower talent surveys (<http://www.manpowergroup.com> [accessed 1.8.2013]) show that, even though recruitment difficulties have been somewhat muted in the crisis period, a third of EU employers continue to experience some difficulty in finding skilled talent.

people for unskilled or low-skilled positions. However, shortages for low-skilled jobs varied considerably across Member States <sup>(17)</sup>.

Table 5 **Variations across country clusters in relation to employment by qualification levels**

Country cluster	Employment by skills levels
Nordic	In this cluster, the level of low-qualified unemployment is significantly lower than the EU average. However, there is a particularly acute difference with unemployment levels in other qualification levels: by 2012, the rate of low-qualified unemployment was twice as much as that of the medium- and high-qualified workforce.
Continental	All Member States demonstrate a high share of low- and medium-qualified unemployment in comparison to the high-qualified.
Anglo-Saxon	The unemployment level of the low-qualified population is a distinctive feature. In Ireland, nearly a fifth of low-qualified adults were unemployed in 2012. Although the labour market has proved more stable in the UK, the lower-qualified have also been affected at significantly higher rates than other qualification groups, reaching unemployment rates of over 10% by 2012.
Mediterranean	The lower-qualified workforce experienced the highest rate of unemployment, most notably in Spain, where over a quarter of the low-qualified working population was registered as unemployed in 2012.
Central and eastern Europe	Unemployment among lower-qualified adults exceeded the EU average in all countries except Slovenia. In the Czech Republic, the low-qualified unemployment rate was three times higher than overall unemployment and nine times higher than that for the high-qualified in 2012.

Source: Cedefop.

The European Commission's communication on new skills, new jobs emphasises the need to improve the matching of skills across Member States to tackle rising unemployment (European Commission, 2008a). A review of

---

<sup>(17)</sup> For example, around 60% of firms in Cyprus were cited as facing a shortage of skilled workers as opposed to only 18% in Ireland. The industry reported as experiencing the greatest difficulty in finding skilled personnel was the construction sector, followed by the hotels and catering and manufacturing sectors.

literature (e.g. European Commission, 2012a; European Commission, 2012b), as well as Cedefop's skills forecasts for current and projected skills needs in the EU labour market (Cedefop, 2012b; Cedefop, 2013), confirm the tendency for an increase in the demand for higher skills levels, as jobs are becoming more skills-intensive.

Cedefop's latest skills forecasts up to the year 2025 shows 'between now and 2020 [...] 44% of total job opportunities needing high-level and 46% medium-level qualifications' (Cedefop, 2013, p. 3). 'Job prospects for the low-skilled are likely to get worse (ibid., p. 4)'.

Although an increase in knowledge and skills-intensive occupations is expected, it is suggested that, partly due to the economic crisis, there is and will remain for a period an imbalance between supply and demand of higher- and medium-qualified workers compared with jobs requiring those levels of skills (Cedefop, 2010b; 2010d; 2010e; 2012b; 2013). As a consequence, we see higher-qualified unemployed taking jobs below their qualification and skills levels and pushing low-qualified workers further away from the job market (Cedefop, 2012b; 2013): this phenomenon is known as 'bumping down'.

Across all sectors, 'transversal and generic skills such as problem-solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, linguistic skills, digital competences are more and more valued on the labour market' (European Commission, 2008b). Often such skills are required due to the structural changes brought about by changes in work organisation, partly caused by the introduction and continuing development of technologies as well as other drivers of change (e.g. demography, globalisation). Demand for problem-solving and communications skills has also increased and will continue to do so in the future.

## 3.2. Overview of policy responses

The challenges involved in the (re)integration of low-qualified unemployed adults into the labour market have been exacerbated by the economic crisis. While the main responsibility for action in employment, VET and social policy lies with the Member States, the scale of the challenges faced by this group requires concerted action at European level.

### 3.2.1. EU policy responses

From its beginnings, the EU has played a role in developing a unique European social model, seeking to achieve harmonised development of the EU labour market, through a variety of strategies and policy impetus in employment, social policy and VET. It uses a variety of strategies, in particular the European

employment strategy <sup>(18)</sup> (1997 onwards; Council of the EU, 2010), and successive agendas for social policy (2000-10). Since March 2010, the key policy direction is provided by 'Europe 2020: a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (European Commission, 2010b). Targets have been set to deliver the Europe 2020 vision, including the goals that 75% of the population aged between 20 and 64 should be in employment, and that adult (age group 25 to 64) participation in LLL should reach 15% by 2020, providing fresh impetus for employment policy and upskilling of the population. The new strategy has also introduced a series of flagship initiatives to underpin policy goals, such as the 'Agenda for new skills and jobs' which seeks to equip people with 'the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow' (European Commission, 2010a) and underlines the importance of key competences.

Within the European policy context, there has been growing recognition of the importance of the role of VET, and in particular WBL, in supporting employment and social inclusion. An EC communication on VET and the Europe 2020 strategy, for example highlights that 'in order to maximise the relevance of VET provision to labour market needs, use of different forms of WBL should be strengthened. Research indicates that WBL tends to increase employment opportunities in early working life' (European Commission, 2010c). The latest communication *Rethinking education* (European Commission, 2012a) follows these lines, asking that particular attention should be given to 'promoting WBL including quality traineeships, apprenticeships and dual learning models to help the transition from learning to work' (ibid.). The Bruges communiqué underlines the importance of WBL and the potential it offers, particularly in terms of familiarising learners with working culture, developing a professional identity and boosting self-esteem (Council of the EU and European Commission, 2010).

We also see increasing emphasis on the value of key competences, particularly as a cornerstone for LLL but underlining the importance of combining such competences with job-specific skills: the Bruges communiqué states that 'we must empower people to adapt to new developments and manage change. This means enabling people to acquire knowledge, skills and competences that are not purely occupational. These broader competences – key competences – are important to succeed in life' (ibid.). The need to enable adults to develop and update key competences throughout their lives is highlighted (European Commission, 2006; European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006).

---

<sup>(18)</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=101&langId=en> [accessed 1.8.2013].

Finally, we see a growing focus on the needs of the low-qualified, with VET as a key vector for the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups: the 2011 Council resolution on adult learning highlighted that ‘in order to face the [...] consequences of the economic crisis, there is a need for adults regularly to enhance their personal and professional skills and competences. Given the current instability in the labour market and the need to reduce the risk of social exclusion, this applies particularly to the low-qualified and the low-qualified’ (Council of the EU, 2011).

Three key policy strands can be identified of relevance to the study:

- (a) there is growing recognition that if Europe is to experience economic growth, emerge successfully from the crisis, reach social inclusion and tackle increasing poverty, there is need to focus policy attention on the more disadvantaged groups in society, moving more people from unemployment (and inactivity) into the labour market, with greater focus on active, rather than passive, labour market policies;
- (b) EU policy also increasingly emphasises that, for people to remain within the labour market, a focus on LLL and skills renewal is crucial; key competences provide the foundation;
- (c) VET continues to play an important role and WBL is assigned growing importance. There is a policy concern with ensuring links between training and work through, among others, the mechanisms provided by WBL, and generally with using the potential of WBL.

### **3.2.2. Policy responses in the Member States**

#### **3.2.2.1. ALMPs**

The relatively high level of unemployment across the EU Member States in the past few years has primarily been addressed by the use of multiple active labour market measures. This section gives an overview of these policies, using the most recent data available from Eurostat’s qualitative labour market reports <sup>(19)</sup>.

A review of ALMPs across the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries concluded that all countries ‘now implement policies based on sticks (financial sanctions in case of non-compliance with

---

<sup>(19)</sup> All reports available at <https://circabc.europa.eu/faces/jsp/extension/wai/navigation/container.jsp> [accessed 1.8.2013]. At the time of this study, the most recent reports available for all Member States dated from 2009.



programme requirements) and carrots (financial incentives to get back into paid employment and supportive services for hard to reach groups' (Daguerre and Etherington, 2009) <sup>(20)</sup>). The review judged that ALMPs were most likely to succeed if:

- (a) they provided personalised support and early intervention for those most in need;
- (b) adequate staff/client ratios were achieved;
- (c) 'harder to help' people are supported with care to prevent them dropping out;
- (d) subsidised work placements are combined with on-the-job training and support to sustain employment.

ALMPs provide support to guide individuals to work and are 'aimed at closing the distance to the labour market, i.e. enhancing their employability, improving their chances at finding work and helping them to actually find work' (European Commission and Ecorys, 2008). In line with the classification of ALMPs used by the European Commission (European Commission and Eurostat, 2006), the types of measures used to provide such services and measures may be divided into the following categories:

- (a) PES,
- (b) job rotation and job sharing,
- (c) training,
- (d) employment incentives,
- (e) direct job creation,
- (f) supported employment and rehabilitation,
- (g) start-up incentives.

WBL programmes are usually funded through training measures, but may also fall under employment incentives and supported work and rehabilitation.

Between 1985 and 2009, EU Member States spent on average between 0.5 and 1% of gross domestic product annually on active labour market services and measures (European Commission et al., 2012). In 2009, continental countries <sup>(21)</sup>

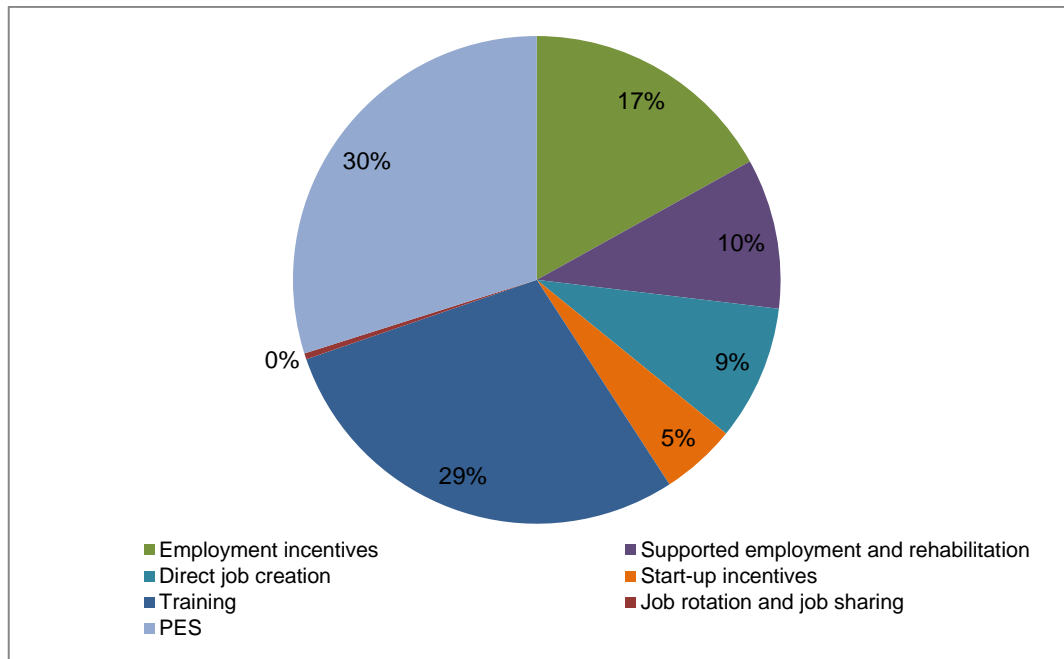
---

<sup>(20)</sup> De Koning studied the spending on different ALMP measures in 18 OECD countries from 1991 to 2003 and found a decline in the share spent on training and a rise in the share on counselling and job subsidies. He argued that this shift is broadly in line with what evidence shows about the effectiveness of each measure (De Koning, 2007). Kluve et al. compared the effectiveness of different ALMPs and found that training programmes reduced unemployment for target groups but wage subsidies, support and benefit sanctions are generally more effective (Kluve et al., 2007; Kluve, 2006).

<sup>(21)</sup> All countries in the cluster.

spent the largest amount on ALMPs, followed by the Mediterranean countries. Most funding during the period 1985-2009 was allocated to PES and training programmes. In 2009, nearly two-thirds of ALMP funding was diverted to these measures (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 **Share of EU Member State average expenditure per active labour market measure in 2009**



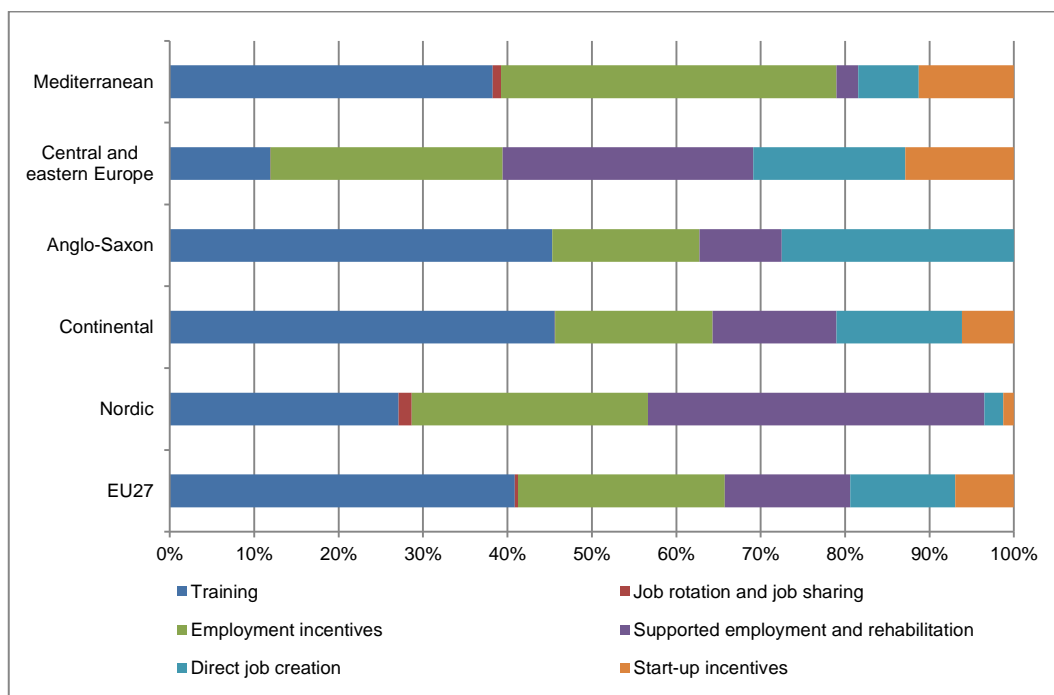
Source: Cedefop, using data from Eurostat <sup>(22)</sup>.

The provision of training accounts for over 40% of the EU-27 ALMP budget when the overhead costs and programmes of the PES are not included <sup>(23)</sup>. This implies a large funding potential for WBL programmes. Central and eastern European countries and Nordic countries spent a comparatively small share of their ALMP budget on training, while training makes up nearly half of the budget for Anglo-Saxon and continental countries. Although the total value of the budget varied greatly across the country clusters, Figure 2 demonstrates the priority focus in terms of expenditure per country cluster.

<sup>(22)</sup> Eurostat LMP expenditure by type of action (summary tables) (Imp\_expsumm); at the time of the study the most recent comparable and available data were for 2009.

<sup>(23)</sup> Based on calculations of Eurostat LMP expenditure by type of action (summary tables) (Imp\_expsumm).

Figure 2 Share of ALMP expenditure per measure and country cluster in 2009 <sup>(24)</sup>



Source: Cedefop, based on data from Eurostat <sup>(25)</sup>.

### 3.2.2.2. WBL in ALMPs

Training programmes and employment incentives provide opportunities for the low-qualified unemployed to (re)gain familiarity with the labour market <sup>(26)</sup>. However, the extent to which WBL is part of such programmes varies across Member States. Within WBL programmes, there is also significant variation in the focus on job-specific (and other) skills as opposed to key competences. Ascertaining the precise role and place of the role of WBL within ALMPs in the selected Member States is not straightforward. WBL in itself can take a variety of forms, and it can be very difficult to determine the proportion any form of WBL represents in programmes containing a variety of forms of intervention. The

<sup>(24)</sup> Calculations include the budget of all Member States within each cluster, including the countries that are not described at length in this study.

<sup>(25)</sup> Eurostat LMP expenditure by type of action (summary tables) (Imp\_expsumm).

<sup>(26)</sup> Supported employment and rehabilitation also provide WBL opportunities but specifically target individuals with a disability. Insufficient research on such programmes in the Member States exists to perform an analysis that would allow for distinctions to be made between low-skilled unemployed with and without a disability. For this reason, these programmes are not highlighted in this chapter.

following, nonetheless, provides an overview of the picture emerging from the analysis:

- (a) in the Nordic countries, WBL is a common feature of programmes for unemployed adults, with employment incentives an important part of the WBL opportunities in addition to standard training programmes that may contain work-based experience. Most provision is tailored to the low-qualified unemployed, although they are open to a wider audience. For instance, Danish programmes heavily involve the private sector, with subsidies for adult apprenticeships, practical training and wages to provide placements and training for the participant;
- (b) in the Anglo-Saxon cluster, there is also a relatively strong work-based element in labour market programmes. Both the UK and Ireland have a strong labour market focus in their education and training programmes, particularly for the lower skills levels. The UK's 'entry to employment' programme, for example, has elements of work/vocational tasters, specialised work-related learning and preparation for and transition to further learning opportunities and/or employment;
- (c) WBL is also a feature of training programmes in the continental countries, though to a lesser degree. WBL programmes in France are offered through private or public education institutes. Germany and the Netherlands also provide WBL opportunities, although they often tend to be for young people rather than adults;
- (d) there are a number of theoretical-style education courses available through the ALMP activities in Mediterranean countries, but WBL programmes are also available for the unemployed. In Spain, for example, the 'training at the workplace' programme allows participants to be trained through both education centres and work experience in activities of public interest. In both Spain and Italy, the extent of the work-based experience available can differ greatly across the regions, depending on regional priorities. This is mainly due to the structure of the systems which gives major responsibility to the regions;
- (e) only a small part of the ALMP funding in central and eastern European countries is allocated to training measures, but there are several direct job creation and employment incentive programmes that focus on providing a WBL experience for the unemployed. The degree of WBL within policy also varies across Member States in this cluster: Estonia and Poland provide more clearly work-based programmes than other countries in this group.

### 3.2.2.3. *Adult education provision and participation*

The nature and degree of adult participation in education and training provides significant context for this study, indicating the conditions (both positive and negative) which policy options based on WBL are likely to encounter. In terms of the context for adult learning, barriers to participation, socio-economic context, traditions of adult learning, and governance and funding issues were examined across Europe (European Commission and Research voor Beleid, 2010):

- (a) Nordic countries are experiencing minor barriers to participation in adult learning, while the majority of Mediterranean and central and eastern Member States experience severe barriers. Such barriers are defined as institutional (policies, organisational structure, culture), situational (cost of education, time, ability to balance work/life/study) and dispositional (prior experience with education, attitude to learning);
- (b) in relation to socio-economic context and established traditions for adult learning, Nordic countries again are in a strong position, while continental countries lack a well-developed tradition in adult learning, and Mediterranean countries (and certain central and eastern European countries) lack both a tradition in adult learning and are facing major socio-economic difficulties which will also hamper the development of such provision;
- (c) in terms of the effectiveness of adult learning governance, we see the most difficulties in certain Mediterranean countries (Greece, Spain, Italy) and central and eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania), while structures are more effective and funding more available in the Anglo-Saxon, continental and Nordic countries.

We examined Eurostat labour force survey data for the year 2010 (age group 25 to 64) (Eurostat, 2013b) for adult participation in education and training across all the selected Member States: overall participation rates, the percentage participation level by educational attainment (ISCED), and adult participation in education and training by labour market status (unemployed or unemployed):

- (a) We observe major differences across Member States and country clusters in relation to adult participation in education and training. Some countries display figures significantly above the EU average of 9.1%: both Nordic countries (Denmark at a chart-topping 32.5% and Sweden at 24.5%), the Netherlands (16.5%), Slovenia (16.2%) and the UK (19.4%). Only two other Member States come just above the EU average (Estonia (10.9%), Spain (10.8%)). Those below the EU average include continental countries (Germany (7.7%) and France (5%)), Mediterranean countries (Italy and

Malta, both at 6.2%) and central and eastern European countries (Czech Republic (7.5%), Poland (5.3%) and Hungary (2.8%)).

- (b) Higher educated adults participate in education and training programmes significantly more often than those with lower levels of qualifications. On average in the EU (in 2010), 3.8% of those with ISCED levels 0-2 participate in training, 8.0% of those with ISCED levels 3-4 and 16.7% of those with levels 5-6. This pattern is uniform across all the 15 Member States studied, whatever the level of overall participation. For example in Sweden, 15.8% of adults with ISCED levels 0-2 take part in education or training, compared to 33.8% of those with ISCED levels 5-6; in Poland, although the overall figures are much lower, the dramatic difference is also clear: only 0.9% of those at ISCED 0-2 participate in education and training, while 13.2% of those with ISCED 5-6 do so.
- (c) There are also significant differences as to whether adult participation rates are higher for employed or unemployed people. In certain Member States, participation is more common among employed adults, in particular in Spain and Sweden (with nearly 17 percentage points difference in favour of employed adults). In others the rates of participation for employed and unemployed adults are very close to being equal: Denmark, Ireland, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. In some Member States, there is a larger proportion of unemployed adults participating in education and training: the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia and the UK.

We have considered some overall characteristics of national adult education and training systems across the 15 Member States, which show the range of features of adult learning across Europe and provide an important backdrop to our findings. Key differences include:

- (a) the degree of distinction between IVET and CVET for adults. For example in many central and eastern European countries, adult education is often provided as part of the public education system, with no difference between youth and adults. In other countries, for example Ireland, there are specific separate provisions for young people and adults;
- (b) the location of adult learning. It can take place in public training colleges, private organisations, adult literacy centres, centres for learners with special needs and in the workplace. In Sweden, for example, IVET for adults is organised through municipal adult education centres. In Denmark, labour market training centres and vocational colleges are merged into single institutions that also address adults;

- (c) the distinction between provision for employed and unemployed adults. In Spain provision has recently been merged; similarly, in continental countries, CVET programmes often now target all working age individuals;
- (d) the distinction between different qualification levels in the provision for unemployed adults. In Italy, for example, no distinction is made at national programme level between the lower-qualified unemployed or medium and higher-qualified, but this distinction can be made at regional level. The UK focuses its attention on the low-qualified unemployed;
- (e) the recognition of prior learning, validation of learning outcomes and progress routes. For example, in Slovenia most adult training is provided in non-formal programmes and does not lead to higher formal qualifications, nor do they open access to formal education and training programmes. In continental countries, training often does not lead to a formal qualification, but there is increasing recognition of prior learning;
- (f) the degree of decentralisation of adult training policy, which is a feature in several Mediterranean countries including Spain and Italy, and also France;
- (g) the degree of cooperation between the employment services and education and training services. In the Nordic countries, for example, there is often close coordination between education and labour market organisations;
- (h) the extent of involvement of the social partners. For example, in continental countries, social partners play an important role in adult learning programmes, and also in the UK in those sectors that require specific qualifications. However, their role is weaker in provision in some other countries, for example in some of the eastern European countries;
- (i) the role of the private sector in adult training provision, compared to national public authorities. For example, in the Netherlands adult training provision is largely market driven and led by the private sector. In Germany, adult training also often involves private sector companies, chambers of commerce and employee and employer organisations.

### **3.2.3. Implications**

The above review has shown that while there are variations across Member States, the disadvantage of the low-qualified population in the labour market is a common feature across Europe. Data on ALMPs shed light on the policy responses and the nature of interventions to combat unemployment. A considerable part of ALMP spending is usually allocated to training measures. ALMPs overlap to varying degrees and in various ways with education and training provision in the different countries, and include different training measures, among them WBL programmes.

Consideration of the European context demonstrates that the idea of WBL focusing on key competences captures a variety of European policy priorities. However, one aspect of current implementation of WBL in ALMPs shows that its actual role may be limited and is sometimes difficult to identify: the focus on key competences, as opposed to, for instance, job-specific skills, is particularly difficult to assess without in-depth investigation of programme content.

Participation rates in adult learning give an indication of what we might call the 'culture of learning' in individual countries and the propensity to use learning to address economic and social issues.

While the above variables provide a useful context for the study, and in particular for the case studies, we have not found that they provide an explanatory framework for the differences in approaches to WBL focusing on key competences for low-qualified unemployed adults.



## CHAPTER 4.

# Analysis of research findings

The first part of this chapter gives an overview of provision of WBL programmes targeting low-qualified unemployed adults and focusing on the acquisition of key competences, derived from the reviews of the 15 selected Member States (Section 4.1). The second part (Section 4.2) draws primarily on the 10 in-depth case studies and examines the key features of such programmes to assess their specific potential contribution to solving the challenges faced by low-qualified adults.

### 4.1. Overview of programmes <sup>(27)</sup>

#### 4.1.1. Types of programme

The analysis of the country reviews shows that there is a wide variety of programmes. There are:

- (a) programmes to develop basic skills leading to a recognised qualification. Such schemes essentially provide participants with a second chance to obtain some form of qualification at lower or upper secondary level. In countries with well-developed adult education provision, such as Denmark, these programmes are part of national provision, sometimes linked to a right enshrined in law to education to a particular level. The curriculum of these programmes is naturally shaped by national qualification requirements, and participation is open to both the employed and unemployed. In these programmes, 'basic skills' usually refer to specific EU key competences, in particular communication in the mother tongue, mathematical and digital competences; the extent to which other key competences are explicitly identified as a focus depends on national qualification requirements. Provision is unlikely to take place just within the workplace, but tends to involve a mix of forms of learning. Programme duration is unlikely to be less than six months. Along with the Danish basic education for adults programme, examples include the Spanish employment workshops programme, which enables people to get a certificate of secondary

---

<sup>(27)</sup> Evidence for this section is taken from the country reviews.

- education through a programme of at least six months' duration, though most participants follow a one year course; France has the key skills (*compétences clés*) programme. In other countries, such as Ireland, programmes to develop 'foundation skills' have been developed specifically to target low-qualified adults;
- (b) programmes focused on rapid labour market re-entry. These are short-duration interventions, often with a focus on people who have recently lost jobs. Key competences are more likely to be narrowly defined as 'job-readiness' competences, with a focus on job search activities, networking with employers, and comparatively short work placements. Such interventions are likely to have a strong element of regional/local discretion, and be tailored to local labour markets;
  - (c) subsidised work placements and employment contracts. They provide opportunities for individuals to work within companies through the provision of public subsidy to companies. The duration of the placement can vary from a few months to up to two years, as in the case of the French ACI programme. The focus tends to be on job-specific competences: key competences are most likely to be narrowly defined and strongly integrated, as in the Italian 'insertion contract' which subsidises employment of certain disadvantaged groups and where key competences are defined in terms of health and safety, business organisation and the legal aspects of employment. A variant of the subsidised work placement/employment contract is the internship, which usually targets young adults, helping them to obtain initial work experience. However, rather than being employed on a contract, participants receive financial support, e.g. in the form of a scholarship. A further variant is the community work scheme which provides subsidised employment in the public or third sectors;
  - (d) programmes specifically focused on transversal or key competences. They appear to be quite rare. One example is the Estonian programme for adult education in non-formal education centres which is, however, open to everyone and take-up depends on individual initiative; low-qualified adults are not well represented;
  - (e) programmes devised to cater specific client groups, such as people with disabilities (e.g. the Netherlands' 'learning to work' (*Lerend Werken*) programme), and migrant communities (e.g. Sweden's vocational Swedish for immigrants). The content and structure of these programmes is variable: some programmes focus on specific key competences, as in the Czech Republic, where ESF-funded schemes on communication skills are targeted at particular groups and last 18 months.

In terms of duration, most of the programmes reviewed last between 6 and 12 months. Programmes which extend over a year usually lead to a formal qualification: general, such as ‘foundation’ courses designed to pursue further studies, or vocational, including apprenticeships. While the latter are typically targeted at young people, some countries such as Estonia, Sweden and the UK have removed age limits and opened them to unemployed adults.

Two features are especially noteworthy from this overview of programme types. First, many programmes are not specifically targeted at the low-qualified; but are open to everyone. Second, there is a significant degree of participation which is voluntary rather than compulsory <sup>(28)</sup>.

#### **4.1.2. Responsibility for programmes and stakeholder involvement**

In most of the countries investigated, the lead organisation responsible for design and implementation of the programmes is the ministry responsible for employment, labour or social protection. Education ministries usually do not play a key role, but are sometimes responsible in conjunction with one of those mentioned.

Employers and trade unions are often involved in programme design, normally in a consultative manner. Devolution of responsibility is also an important characteristic in many countries. In these circumstances, regional or local authorities have responsibility and tend to work in partnership with local labour offices, employers, trade unions and training providers.

In countries such as Italy, where the ESF is an important vehicle for provision, ESF partnerships play a lead role. Such partnerships can involve regional and local authorities, employer organisations, providers, PES and others. In general, third sector organisations tended to be mentioned less often than employers and trades unions, reflecting the use of established social partnership mechanisms in which the third sector tends to be less well represented.

#### **4.1.3. Target groups**

Policy-makers in nearly all countries reviewed confirm that the low-qualified are disproportionately affected by unemployment. Many also highlight the multiple

---

<sup>(28)</sup> In the context of this study, ‘compulsory’ means that adults face negative consequences (e.g. reduced unemployment benefits) if they do not participate in the programme.

obstacles faced by those who have been out-of-work for a long time, who suffer from prejudice because of their lack of education, age or ethnicity, etc.

At the same time, the analysis shows that the target groups for these interventions tend to be broadly defined. Most programmes for the unemployed differentiate between the short-term and long-term unemployed, but dedicated provision for more specific target groups beyond that is patchy. A specific focus on the low-qualified unemployed is rare at policy level, and identifying different groups among the low-qualified rarer still: many policy-makers highlighted the danger of stigmatising this group by creating specific labelled provision. It is more common for programmes to identify groups such as migrants, people with disabilities, older people or specific ethnic minority communities than the low-qualified *per se*.

Where the low-qualified are a focus, however, specific provision is in place. For the economically inactive or very long-term low-qualified unemployed, 'pre-insertion' programmes have been developed, for example in France and Italy, where the objective of returning to the mainstream labour market is a goal only in the medium to long term.

#### **4.1.4. Programme focus on competences**

From a policy level perspective, 'return to work' programmes typically aim to equip the beneficiaries with one of three main types of competences:

- (a) generic/transversal/key competences: those not restricted to a specific area, job or occupation, and which will allow people to gain confidence and have easier access to the labour market or to further training, which will in turn provide them with formal qualifications and easier access to the labour market. These skills include key competences as defined by the European Commission, with a special emphasis on learning skills ('learning to learn', which is the key to all further learning, and requires participants to overcome learning barriers), communication and numeracy;
- (b) job-specific competences: some programmes or parts of programmes focus on vocational skills which are specific to a job, occupation or sector (e.g. building industry). There is an effort to maximise the return on these activities by engaging with job agencies and employers to identify skills gaps in the labour market and define the sectors in which there are a large number of vacancies or where the workforce generally lacks a specific set of skills. Often, this dialogue is pursued at the local or regional level, to ensure training is relevant to the participants. Programmes which develop occupational skills often encourage the beneficiaries to obtain formal qualifications (often vocational), including by validating their work experience where relevant;

- (c) job search skills: helping unemployed people to find a job can be supported through teaching them how to search for a job, write a CV and application letter, prepare for an interview, etc. Job-search skills are taught separately or as part of a package of generic skills. They sometimes include more general activities such as ‘knowing yourself’ (in the Slovenian programmes for example) and networking workshops. In some instances, job agencies also take the initiative to organise discussion groups among jobseekers to share experience and discuss the common problems they face.

The dominant focus in most WBL programmes for the unemployed is job-specific competences. There is little evidence of discussion at policy level regarding key competences in the systematic way they are defined in the EU key competences for LLL. Instead, what are – in effect – subsets of these key competences are identified and are often referred to using terms such as ‘soft’ or ‘generic’ skills.

Whether this recognition translates into systematic approaches to embedding key competence development in ‘return to work’ programmes is questionable. The overall impression is that key competence development is mostly taken for granted, with the assumption that it will be achieved ‘naturally’ in an embedded way, and is therefore not approached in a systematic or structured manner. Many programmes permit a high degree of local discretion, and so the extent to which key competences are emphasised can be variable.

#### **4.1.5. Intended benefits at policy level**

Policy-makers expect multiple benefits from these programmes, including:

- (a) providing those who have never worked or have been out of work for a long time with working experience, and providing those further away from the labour market with ‘working habits’ and other behavioural and communication skills;
- (b) developing occupation-specific skills which will enhance participant employability, especially in the case of skills which are best developed on-the-job;
- (c) creating contacts with employers, valued by some policy-makers who emphasise the impact on changing employers’ negative views on the long-term unemployed and turning around their prejudices.

## **4.2. Key features of programmes**

The following core features of WBL programmes focused on key competences were examined in the case studies:

- (a) barriers to employment which programmes seek to address;
- (b) recruitment and induction into programmes;
- (c) mode of WBL used;
- (d) role of key competences;
- (e) pedagogy and support to learning;
- (f) assessment, certification and qualification;
- (g) role of employers;
- (h) WBL providers as labour market intermediaries;
- (i) the success of WBL programmes focused on the acquisition of key competences.

#### **4.2.1. Barriers to employment**

Low-qualified unemployed adults face a number of obstacles to employment which have implications for programme targeting. An important issue is whether particular types of barriers are more significant than others, and also whether employers, the unemployed and providers perceive these barriers in the same way. Due to the specific focus of the study, we have been especially concerned to see whether, and in which ways, deficiencies in key competences are perceived as a barrier to employment in three respects:

- (a) whether they are seen as somehow separate from – and more or less important than – deficiencies in more job-specific skills and knowledge;
- (b) whether the particular subset of key competences related to conduct in the workplace is seen as a particular barrier;
- (c) whether key competence deficiencies are seen as the core problem, or whether the more significant barriers lie in dysfunctions in the operation of the labour market (signalling and job matching effects).

##### *4.2.1.1. Key research questions on barriers to employment*

Three questions need to be considered:

- (a) what are the main barriers to employment for this target group, as identified by employers, the unemployed and providers? Do employers' perceptions tend to stereotype low-qualified unemployed adults, in particular in relation to preconceptions about behaviour and conduct?
- (b) are deficiencies in key competences perceived as a barrier to employment? Are they considered more or less important than job-specific skills?
- (c) are particular types of barriers more significant than others?

#### **(a) Main barriers to employment**

In the case studies, training providers, employers and programme participants were asked to describe the main barriers to employment for low-qualified adults.

## Attitudes towards employment

A major barrier to employment for low-qualified unemployed adults, often reported by delivery organisations and employers, was their attitude to work ('work ethic'), and their lack of interest or motivation to find work. In some cases this was related to the culture or the environment in which the adult lived.

In the UK sector routeway programme (LOAN project), some of the low-qualified unemployed adults came from the third or fourth generation of families who had never worked, with no role model to follow. A negative attitude to work, combined with a lack of work experience, meant that some participants lacked an understanding of work culture, which included, for example knowledge of what was appropriate in a work environment.

Lacking the right attitude to work was seen as a bigger barrier than the fact that the adult concerned was low-qualified. Especially for low-qualified jobs, many employers interviewed in the study prefer to employ a worker who demonstrates suitable attitudes, reliability and motivation over someone who lacks this but has the specific skills to carry out the job: 'with unmotivated workers, we cannot do much. All other barriers can be overcome', stated one of the employers interviewed.

Employer attitudes and perceptions of low-qualified unemployed adults were often negative. They often considered that this target group has a poor attitude to work, is unreliable and unlikely to be 'willing to try new things' or even 'willing to work'. In some cases, work placements were terminated when an employer's negative perceptions were confirmed, or believed to have been confirmed.

One employer stated 'adults from the target group often do not want to work. Low-skilled employment offers low salary. Very often low-skilled adults can get more money through social benefits. The biggest challenge for this target group will be to get into the routine of getting up in the morning, attending work at a given time, work for eight hours each day and do what the employer asks them to do'.

A number of employers who offered work placements highlighted that some basic competences such as reliability, punctuality and social behaviour needed to be addressed before a work placement phase. Training organisations, partially to safeguard their own reputation with employers but mainly to ensure the success of work placements, said they had to make sure that the adults could work independently and conduct themselves properly in the workplace before they could put them on a work placement. Their role in preselecting trainees for employers was shown to be particularly important in giving a 'second chance' to low-qualified unemployed adults, who otherwise would have been 'unlikely to be allowed through the door' by employers.

### **Self-image and perceptions of learning**

Low-qualified unemployed adults often suffer from poor levels of self-image which affect their chances of finding employment, but also entering training programmes. This issue was reported by both training providers and the adults themselves. Obstacles include:

- (a) lack of confidence/self-esteem; low-qualified unemployed adults, particularly the long-term unemployed, often struggled to see how they could fit into a job environment as a result of their long period of absence from the job market. The longer the unemployment period, the lower their confidence. For some, being away from the workplace for a long period had created a perception that the workplace was an unfamiliar environment; having the confidence to start meeting people again was often a psychological barrier they had to overcome;
- (b) low motivation; a lack of confidence often meant that low-qualified unemployed adults had no drive to search for jobs, often as a result of previous rejections of job applications. This phenomenon has been referred to in existing research as the 'discouraged worker' effect (Benati, 2001);
- (c) negative perceptions of learning, which often stemmed from negative experiences in the initial stages of education. Low-qualified adults had often not been successful at school and so had built up a resentment – and fear of – learning. This process had often led to a vicious cycle in which early failure prompted rejection of, and lack of engagement with, learning, leading to continuing failure and 'confirmation' of the negative views they expressed. Many of the low-qualified adults had left school early, before completion of schooling or attempting to gain qualifications.

### **Personal barriers**

The main personal barriers reported by delivery organisations, employers and low-qualified unemployed adults were similar, and included the following (see also Section 2.5):

- (a) human capital deficiencies, including:
  - (i) lack of or out-dated work experience, or obsolescent skills;
  - (ii) poor literacy/communication, IT and numeracy skills (often referred to as 'basic skills');
  - (iii) lack of self-confidence/self-esteem;
- (b) factors contributing to signalling issues, such as a lack of formal qualifications;



- (c) issues relating to job matching difficulties, including the lack of links to networks of employers, due to the lack of work experience and/or turbulent employment history;
- (d) other personal barriers including:
  - (i) a lack of finance, for example to travel to work or buy appropriate clothes;
  - (ii) other forms of social disadvantage, making access to services such as childcare, or even appropriate housing, difficult;
  - (iii) health issues including depression, especially among older adults with a long record of unemployment;
  - (iv) addiction (drug or alcohol-related) issues.

### **Situational barriers**

Situational barriers can arise from external factors over which unemployed adults have little or no control: training providers, in particular, reported that low-qualified unemployed adults face such external barriers. One is the current economic climate, which tends to saturate the market with medium- and high-qualified individuals chasing vacancies that may have been available to low-qualified unemployed adults in other economic conditions.

Programme participants of the UK sector routeway programme (LOAN project) reported that they had constantly been rejected at the application stages, and felt that the qualification requirements for some vacancies were unrealistic.

Other barriers include the loss of major industries (through closure or outsourcing/off-shoring), and a lack of investment in specific sectors which previously were the major source of employment.

In Hungary, delivery organisations of the springboard programme reported that a lack of investment in the region and a lack of capacity for existing companies to create new jobs meant there were limited job opportunities available, especially for the low-qualified.

This climate, together with employers' negative perceptions of this target group, contribute to the uphill struggle which unemployed adults face to maintain their enthusiasm and motivation to continue looking for jobs, and to find jobs at the end of their training period. It also provides a difficult environment for delivery organisations working with these adults, who are aware that – no matter how successful the programme – finding employment will be a major challenge.

**(b) Are deficiencies in key competences a major obstacle to employment?**

The role of delivery organisations is to interpret skills deficiencies among programme participants and seek to address them, also taking into account employer needs. Delivery organisations tended to stress the need for key competences, such as social, civic and communication competences, and, less often, learning to learn. Other skills viewed by delivery organisations as highly valuable to employers were enthusiasm, motivation and a sense of commitment to the business. Some organisations also noted that the lack of basic skills is an issue, reporting that the poor literacy skills of some low-qualified unemployed adults created a major barrier at the employer interview stage. The sets of key competences identified for treatment within programmes varied in small but significant ways depending on factors such as overall programme parameters.

Participants tended to talk about issues of self-confidence, and not knowing how to write a good CV or job application, rather than specific key competences, although some referred to basic skills (literacy, numeracy, IT) deficiencies which they recognised as a barrier to employment. This may also be due to difficulties in recognising personal shortcomings. There was, however, evidence that one of the key benefits of such programmes was increasing the target groups' understanding about the importance of key competences.

One former programme participant in the French ACI programme, now an employer himself in the decorating sector, highlights that he is now aware that conduct in the workplace is the main barrier to employment for many low-qualified adults: 'I can't bring someone into a client's house to decorate who is going to swear in front of their children, or turn up late'.

Although employers did not always distinguish key competences from job-specific ones, several highlighted their importance. Some stated that key competences were just as important as job-specific skills, while others saw them as more important because the job-specific skills required in the jobs for which low-qualified people are suitable meant that they could be easily taught on-the-job.

The key competences most cited as important from the employers' perspective were communication skills, literacy, motivation, reliability, punctuality, taking initiative, social behaviour and a 'good attitude to work'. These are closely linked to key competences such as communication in the mother tongue, social and civic competences, or sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

There is a convergence of views that, for low-qualified unemployed adults, the main barriers to employment in key competence terms are a lack of confidence and motivation and/or a lack of work-readiness (job conduct) and/or

lack of 'hard' skills related to the recruitment process. In terms of the eight EU key competences, these barriers correspond partly to social and civic competences. Organisations have reported that deficiencies in all these areas become more significant the longer an individual is without employment. For those furthest from the labour market, with the least work experience, the lack of work-readiness seems more likely to be a question of conduct in the workplace.

**(c) Which obstacles are more important?**

It is difficult to determine which single obstacle is most important for low-qualified unemployed adults, as many factors are interrelated and it is the interplay of all which is significant. The balance varies according to an individual's situation. For low-qualified adults who are frequently in and out of employment, the key issue may have more to do with how the labour market functions, as they may have considerable work experience. For those who have been made redundant after many years in work, a key issue might be skills obsolescence. For low-qualified individuals who are long-term unemployed or have never had any work experience, human capital deficiencies may be the main issue as they are not even at the point where signalling and job matching issues start to become obstacles; alternatively they may have considerable human capital but have never been given the opportunity to demonstrate it through employment. There is a minimum level of work-readiness which must be in place first. This pattern runs across every type of programme in every country observed.

Participants interviewed in the case studies rarely talked about key competence deficiencies in the way they are articulated in policy. They often emphasised their lack of formal qualifications, especially basic school certificates or vocational qualifications, or lack of work experience or lack of skills for specific jobs. Where they did talk about some more specific deficiencies, they tended to mention self-confidence, and the lack of 'job-seeking' skills needed to find work including CV writing, job applications and interview skills. Prejudice on the part of employers, such as sexism or racism, were noted by some respondents. Learners mentioned employers being critical or demanding qualifications (an increasing problem), but rarely suggested general stereotyping. Most learners considered stereotyping as not major but saw the problems as lying with themselves (replicating one of the findings of a study on second chance education by DG Education and Culture <sup>(29)</sup>), or the local labour market situation.

---

<sup>(29)</sup> Report forthcoming, <http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:100877-2012:TEXT:EN:HTML> [accessed 1.8.2013].

One of the benefits of WBL focused on key competences may be that it enables learners to understand their competence deficiencies better. This often happens as part of induction programmes (see Section 4.2.2.).

Within the programmes considered, signalling obstacles tend to centre on the question of qualifications. Participants frequently articulate their employment problems in terms of a lack of qualifications, rather than competences *per se*. No evidence has been found that participation in these programmes in itself sends out a negative signal to employers. However, delivery organisations may have to work hard to establish positive perceptions of their work among employers, in order that participation has positive effects in terms of signalling. Participation in programmes which involve a significant duration of WBL may send out a positive signal due to the successful completion of work experience.

Job matching obstacles primarily take the form of inadequate social capital/networks and mobility for participants, and lack of investment in job advertising and recruitment by employers. There is good evidence that programmes help connect these two groups, effectively subsidising employers' recruitment costs through preselection by training providers, and also providing a key bridge to employers for unemployed adults. Programme providers can have a crucial job brokerage role, allowing participants to make links with employers that would have been impossible before participating in the programme.

#### **4.2.2. Programme recruitment and induction**

How participants are recruited onto the programmes is considered from the perspective of both participants and training providers.

From the provider perspective, there are questions on the criteria used to allocate individuals to programmes, the relationship of programmes to benefits regimes, and the methods used to assess beneficiaries' needs. The balance of incentives and compulsion ('carrot and stick') is an important contextual factor given the increasing popularity of 'welfare to work' principles.

Where there is a degree of voluntarism about participation, the study analysed whether participants joined the programme because it had some inherent attraction for them, due to the work-based elements, the strong links to employers, or the focus on key competences as distinct from job-specific skills.

A further issue relates to how needs are assessed once trainees begin programmes.

##### *4.2.2.1. Key research questions on recruitment and induction into programmes*

Several questions need to be addressed:

- (a) what are the entry routes to programmes? What criteria are used to allocate individuals onto programmes? What is the relationship of programmes to

- benefit arrangements: do the participants, for example continue to receive unemployment benefits?
- (b) do programmes prioritise people with low qualification levels? Are providers more likely to select 'easy-to-place' participants who are more job-ready in terms of conduct, work experience and skills?
  - (c) what is the balance of incentives and compulsion ('carrot and stick')? How does this balance affect who participates and their motivation? Does compulsion appear to make a difference: are non-voluntary participants less willing to engage in learning?
  - (d) where there is a degree of voluntarism about participation, what attracted the participants to the programme? Did WBL have an inherent attraction for them? Is the focus on key competences as distinct from job-specific skills important to them?
  - (e) once participants are recruited, what methods are used to assess beneficiaries' needs? To what extent are deficiencies in key competences assessed in a detailed and systematic way?

**(a) Entry routes to programmes**

The country reviews suggest that the most common entry route is through a referral either from the PES or a third sector body which might be tackling specific social problems such as drug abuse. Most schemes are open for self-referral but, in practice, self-referrals are very much in the minority. In some countries it was noted that PES are hesitant to refer unemployed people to educational programmes (which tend to be relatively long) since their main objective is to get people into work as quickly as possible.

The case studies show more clearly the variations in recruitment practices. Most commonly, confirming the above findings, people are referred by other agencies, but several other models could also be found.

In the Estonian labour market training programme, recruitment is assisted through automatic selection via job-matching from an electronic database. Elsewhere, candidates must apply independently for programmes, and cannot be referred by an agency. In the Swedish vocational adult education programme, individuals apply to the local municipality which then allocates participants to providers to ensure a fair spread of participants by calibre, and to ensure providers do not discriminate in selection.

The recruitment process in the Hungarian springboard programme consists of three stages:

- (a) an application form has to be completed by the applicant. Support is offered and organised locally. Consortium members and other local professionals are involved in this support. The support sessions allow the delivery organisation to establish personal contact with potential participants early on and also provides further information about the applicant. Mentors play an important role at this stage;
- (b) those applicants who fulfil the criteria are invited to sit a test to measure basic skills and key competences;
- (c) participants are then invited to an interview. An interview schedule and template has been developed to ensure equal opportunities and to ensure objectivity in the decision-making. This offers information, for example about reasons for interest in the programme, interest in the offered occupations, applicants' future plans, family circumstances and the potential of the participant to complete the course.

In most cases, participants continued to receive either unemployment benefits or instead received a salary.

#### **(b) Degree of prioritisation of low-qualified adults**

There was evidence across the case studies that, with some exceptions, the most disadvantaged adults were often not given priority in programmes. Only a few programmes actually set a priority for specific disadvantaged groups, in particular those with low qualification levels, while, in addition, certain criteria in the recruitment process effectively meant that more 'easy to place' participants joined programmes.

Part of the recruitment procedure for the Hungarian springboard programme involved sitting a test to assess basic skills and key competences. In the Estonian labour market training programme, candidates are automatically selected via a management information system based on employer requirements.

Prioritisation of people furthest from the labour market appears to be rare, apparent only in three of the investigated programmes (Spain, France and Sweden).

In France, the people who are referred to the ACI are those facing the most severe disadvantages on the labour market. Most have no (or very few) qualifications, have never worked (or very little), and lack a variety of key competences, including literacy and numeracy. The legal text underpinning ACI provision highlights that 'priority should be given to ACIs that have a large proportion of people furthest removed from the labour market (in particular social minima beneficiaries and long-term unemployed) due to their social exclusion, very weak level of competences, illiteracy or behavioural or health issues' (Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Cohésion Sociale et du Logement, 2005) <sup>(30)</sup>.

The Spanish 'employment workshops' programme is available to all unemployed people over 25, but a minimum percentage of participants belonging to certain priority target groups is imposed in each call. Priority target groups are low-qualified people who are over 45, women over 35 and/or long-term unemployed, and those established in the annual national action plans.

There was little evidence that delivery organisations generally were selecting the more 'easy to place' participants. The profile of participants appeared to rather be a product of the characteristics of programmes, and a reflection of the nature of referrals from employment centres.

### **(c) Voluntary or obligatory participation and its effects**

The programmes investigated cover a spectrum in terms of the degree of compulsion placed upon participants. Some carry an obligation to attend linked to the receipt of benefits, an increasing practice. In others, such as the Swedish vocational adult education programme, unemployment benefits are not paid during participation.

For most of case studies, participation was voluntary except in Germany, France and the Netherlands, where specific target groups are obliged to participate to continue receiving state support.

---

<sup>(30)</sup> In a study on programme participants in the region Franche-Comté, nearly 75% of ACI participants were on social minima payments, which are paid to people over 25 (or under in very specific circumstances) who, if they are unemployed, do not have rights to unemployment benefit due to never having worked. A further 14% were recognised as disabled workers. Most participants are long-term unemployed (Conseil national de l'insertion par l'activité économique, 2009).

In Member States such as Germany, where participants were obliged to join the programme investigated, the delivery organisation felt this had negatively impacted on the motivation of the trainees. The trainees who were interviewed also indicated that they were unhappy about this approach; some felt the programme had not taken into account their personal interests.

Some programmes are voluntary but have such high perceived value that there is strong competition for places. Demand for places on the Spanish employment workshops programme has increased steeply in the current crisis and was described as 'like winning the lottery' since it is rare to get the opportunity to draw a salary and be in training at the same time.

**(d) Features of programmes which attracted low-qualified adults**

A range of similar reasons were identified across the case studies by low-qualified unemployed adults who had voluntarily joined the programmes:

- (a) connection to employment: they preferred to join a scheme which developed their skills in a particular area leading to employment;

In Estonia, the main reason cited by participants for joining the labour market training programme was that there were actual job vacancies available for those who successfully completed the training programme, therefore leading directly to employment. In Hungary, participants in the springboard programme felt that – by completing the programme – they would have better opportunities to enter the labour market since they felt that 'employers appreciate when a person completes the course', thus sending out positive signals to potential employers about their reliability and work readiness.

- (b) work-based character of the training: they were interested in the practical, work-based aspects of the programme;

For several participants in the French ACI programme, the work-based element was one of the key attractions: 'I did not see the point of going to sit in a classroom as I wanted to work – although now I understand that learning is important too!' In Spain, learners in the employment workshops programme pointed to the fact that they felt that 'learning by doing' was the best approach for them, due to previous negative learning experiences in classroom situations.

- (c) gaining a qualification/certificate: some were interested in getting a qualification that would stand them in good stead in the job market.



In Denmark, the main motivation of the interviewees for joining the basic adult education programme was to obtain a vocational qualification: 'whether the course focused on job-specific skills or key competences was not considered as important (by participants)'.

Overall, participants appeared to value most the WBL of the programmes and their connections to employment opportunities. Although the acquisition of key competences was rarely an aspect which attracted learners to programmes, many participants understood their importance through participating in the programme.

In Estonia, the learners interviewed in the labour market training programme did not consider the development of key competences apart from job-specific skills efficient and necessary, but did recognise that they were essential for effective work performance. In France participants came to understand the value of key competences through participating in the programme. As stated by one trainee: 'I didn't understand before the programme the importance of the focus on key competences as well as technical skills. I didn't realise, for example that reading and writing is so important for work... and life'.

#### **(e) Induction processes and needs assessments**

The induction processes for new participants vary substantially across the case studies. Some programmes simply introduce candidates to the programme, while others use more elaborated methods.

In Denmark, before starting on a basic adult education programme, an assessment of each eligible applicant's practical and theoretical competences is undertaken by the education institution, based on the documentation provided by the applicant (including evidence of previous qualifications/courses) and any references from previous employers. To determine the competences attained, applicants may also be offered practical tests and/or guidance talks (0.5 days to two weeks).

In the French ACI programme, an initial diagnosis of the person is carried out by the PES which has referred the person to the programme <sup>(31)</sup>. This diagnosis is not in-depth and mainly serves to determine which programme they should be oriented towards. However, when a person arrives in the ACI delivery organisation, a much more detailed initial diagnosis is carried out, using the tools (grids) developed by the *chantier école* (worksite schools) network. This diagnosis covers both the technical skills and capacities required for the work they will be carrying out (there are currently 56 different booklets for technical skills for different professions), and their key competences (conduct and basic skills). The process is clearly explained to the beneficiary, with the aim of assessing 'what they have forgotten or don't know yet' and which skills/competences they need to learn to get a job. An individual 'progress assessment booklet' with clear progression grids is set up for each participant covering these two types of skills/competences, which will stay with them throughout the programme and against which they will be assessed periodically.

An advantage of the more elaborated approaches to induction is that they enable delivery organisations to develop a thorough understanding of where participants are strong and weak in relation to the competences to be developed. They also enable individual tailoring of programmes, which can be particularly important for a target group with a complex set of barriers to employment where one policy or programme cannot fit all.

The analysis suggests that there is a lack of thorough needs assessment regarding key competences at the start of the programmes. The assessments were rarely in-depth, often consisting of quick 'tick-box' exercises by the PES, which then determined the training or employment programmes available to them but rarely led to an individual training plan. Such assessments also tended to focus on certain key competences such as literacy or digital competence, and it was rare to find assessments of others, for example 'learning to learn' or 'cultural awareness'.

#### **4.2.3. Mode of WBL used**

As described in Section 2.3 **Error! Reference source not found.**, available research indicates that WBL is distinctive from other types of learning, principally

---

<sup>(31)</sup> 'Pole emploi' for unemployed adults 25+, 'Mission-locale' for unemployed young people and 'CAP emploi' for disabled people.

in terms of the skills and competences it can develop and the ways in which it does so. The case studies allow us to explore these issues in more detail, focusing on the following aspects.

4.2.3.1. *Key research questions on the mode of WBL*

Three aspects are addressed:

- (a) which, if any, of the different types of WBL predominate in provision for the low-qualified unemployed?
- (b) what are the key features of the programme's work placement/experience component? How is it linked to other parts of the programme?
- (c) due to the multiplicity of problems faced by certain low-qualified adults, to what degree is individualisation apparent and appropriate?

**(a) Types of WBL which predominate for the low-qualified unemployed**

Drawing on existing research, a typology of WBL programmes was constructed as a theoretical framework for the study (see Section 2.3).

The country reviews showed that there are three main ways in which WBL programmes are structured across the EU.

- (i) Most commonly, programmes offer a combination of learning at a learning institution, for example a vocational school (with or without simulated work environments or other forms of WBL) and work placements. The balance of the two varies. Participants may spend most of their time in learning centres and undertake a short-duration work placement towards the end of the programme. Alternatively, they may spend up to 85% of their time at work. Programme guidelines often allow for considerable flexibility in the split of time at centres and work, as well as with regards to the content of training received, in an attempt to customise the programme to personal needs;

The Spanish employment workshops programme is an example of a mixed scheme. It targets unemployed adults (age 25+ years) who are facing particular difficulties in the labour market, and combines training in a learning institution with WBL in a public enterprise. The length of each part may vary, depending on individual needs and circumstances, but the total duration of the programme is one year.

The Estonian labour market training programme combines or alternates training in school/college/training company with WBL in an enterprise. The programme also involves traditional non-WBL in a classroom. The proportion of the different parts varies depending on the course.

Some schemes of the German 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme, begin with a centre-based phase in which basic competences are developed; a work-based phase, either in a real enterprise or in a 'training enterprise' in the training centre follows. The proportion of work-based and non WBL differs, but averages around 50/50.

- (ii) some of the programmes (although not the majority) are purely work-based or work-located: participants are offered a position by an employer participating in the scheme, under different arrangements which depend on national contexts and legislations. Special clauses built into the employment contracts under these arrangements may include enhanced training for participants, both on-the-job and off-the-job, or they can be more traditional internships/traineeships;

The French ACI programme is an example of a work-located scheme. Dedicated organisations give temporary work contracts of up to 24 months in a variety of sectors, mainly providing services to municipalities (e.g. gardening or laundry for care homes). Each work task is carefully designed and learning is reinforced through various measures, for example accompaniment from specialist trainers and tutors (usually one for every four participants).

- (iii) at the other end of the spectrum, some programmes are purely centre-based, i.e. general and occupation-specific training is delivered to participants at training centres and learning institutions, in settings that are sometimes similar to traditional classroom environments. Many policy-makers, however, recognise that low-qualified adults can have mixed feelings about 'going back to school'; as a result they have developed a variety of learning contexts, more adapted to their profile. Centre-based programmes often set-up simulated work environments and include WBL.

The Danish basic education for adults programme is usually based in a learning institution, but includes WBL. It allows low-qualified adults (25+ years) to supplement their previous qualifications and work experience to achieve a full vocational qualification (equivalent to IVET).

**(b) Key features of the work placement/experience component**

The work placement/experience element varies in length across the programmes and sometimes within programmes, from a few weeks (as in the UK sector routeway programme (LOAN project) up to 24 months (as in the French ACI programme). With a few exceptions (such as in the German, Spanish and Hungarian case studies) the work placement/experience element of the programmes considered was most commonly undertaken in private sector enterprises.

In the Spanish employment workshops programme, work placements are restricted to local public organisations (for legal reasons) which collaborate with the delivery organisation. Participants noted that a weakness in their work placement element was that there were no job opportunities attached to it, and felt that employers view it predominately as a training module, rather than a 'real' work placement.

In the Hungarian springboard programme, the work experience element is under the supervision of the learning institution and includes work in public parks and cemeteries, at campsites, swimming pools, schools, etc.

Delivery organisations in some of the schemes of the German 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme report that usually only those with a good level of social competences are placed in a real enterprise, while the others work in a training enterprise at the training centre. This case demonstrates the important role which the delivery organisation plays in preselecting trainees for employers.

In those cases where the work is based in a real enterprise, the work tasks are mostly similar to those of employees. Undertaking the work placement in a real enterprise was identified by many delivery organisations as important for a number of reasons. It may provide links to prospective employers, aiding job matching and overcoming some of the barriers faced by the unemployed adults. Equally, it allows participants to undertake work-related tasks in a real work context, providing an insight into what it is like to work in an actual working environment.

The role of employers, and the opportunities which they do – or do not – offer to trainees depends on the reason why they have engaged in the programme; it may be as a means to recruit or some other reason (contribution to the community, use of cheaper labour). The role of employers is explored in Section 4.2.7 below.

Work placements also play a key role in the selection process, overcoming some of the barriers which may exist on the open labour market. Providers tend to preselect participants for work placements; there is evidence that trust is built up between providers and employers, such that employers are content to consider providers' suggestions as to which candidates are most appropriate. Sometimes providers use the employer interview as an opportunity to teach candidates the value of presenting themselves well.

Employers regard the work placement as a vital part of judging the suitability of the candidates for employment: they tend to regard a single interview as insufficient to judge someone's competence, work attitude, etc. As one employer stated, 'candidates at this level need a chance to prove themselves'. The employers report that the work placement/experience element provides an opportunity to test the participants' ability to work and then hire successful interns (as seen in the case studies in Germany and the Netherlands). Here it can clearly be seen how the programme – through the work placement component – is able to overcome signalling barriers for low-qualified adults and aid matching.

The linkages between the work placement/experience component and other elements of the programme take on a variety of forms. In the Swedish vocational adult education programme, a representative from the delivery organisation visits the learners regularly at their workplace. In the Irish traineeship programme, employers are asked to designate another worker, with a sufficient level of seniority and understanding of the programme, to support the trainee in the workplace. Learners and providers highlight this as an important and valued aspect of the work placement/experience element. In other cases, specific attention is paid to the pedagogical design to make links between the work placement/experience component and other parts of the scheme, including the development of key competences. In some programmes (for example the Swedish vocational adult education programme and the Irish traineeship programme) a checklist of tasks to be undertaken is developed by the delivery organisation and the employer.

In the Hungarian springboard programme, there is a conscious link developed between the various training elements to make the learning experience more relevant and more understandable to the participants. For example, those who are learning to become builders learn about giving clients estimates for a specific assignment. They have to be able to calculate surface areas and how much material they would need for the work: so, to give an estimate to a potential client, participants have to develop numeracy skills. Similar methods are used in other programmes, for example the French ACI programme.

### **(c) Individual tailoring of provision**

The country reviews show that many policy-makers and programme delivery organisations recognise that failures to tackle long-term unemployment may be the result of the rigidity of 'return to work' programmes. Consequently, they have tried to move away from 'one-size-fits-all' approaches and to promote individualisation and customisation in the support offered to beneficiaries. This means that training and work placements may be defined individually with each participant at the outset of the programme, according to his/her own history (past qualifications and work experience), needs and aspirations. Individualisation may be achieved through measures such as guidance and counselling, thorough initial assessment, and the use of modular approaches. For many providers, however, there are limits to the possible degree of individualisation.

In the Hungarian springboard programme, individualisation and tailoring take place at various levels:

- the programme especially targets local residents in four different localities and was developed following a local needs analysis (the specific needs of participants and the labour market);
- mentors offer individual support to participants and help develop skills that support the individual not only in their professional, but also in their personal life (making official phone calls, completing forms, dealing with council departments, taking public transport, etc.).

In the French ACI programme, detailed needs assessment of each participant's level of key competences and technical/job-specific skills allows a high degree of individualisation based on each person's background, capacities and experience.

While most programmes are defined at national level, some are implemented at regional/local level, with national guidelines leaving room for local providers to tailor the programmes to local situations.

A Berlin programme made use of the 'free promotion' budget line, under which the national government allowed local job agencies to spend 10% of their budget on new initiatives, in an effort to promote innovative solutions to tackle unemployment, suitable for the local situation.

#### 4.2.4. The role of key competences

The integration of key competences into the curriculum has two dimensions: the degree to which they are explicitly or implicitly identified within provision, and the extent to which they are embedded or treated separately (for example taught in separate modules at the beginning of the training programme, not using WBL).

The question of explicitness is important since it indicates the extent to which key competences are systematically identified and aimed at, or whether their development is more likely to be taken for granted during the process of learning with a work focus. The issue of whether key competences are embedded or treated separately can also be significant. Embedding basic skills has been found to be an effective way of concealing them within curricula in situations where learners might be resistant to them on account of failing to see their relevance to employment (Marr and Hagston, 2007). But it has also been found that a 'front end' delivery model, where literacy, numeracy and key skills are provided at the outset of training, can support subsequent learning (Cranmer et al. 2004; Sagan et al., 2005). One of the accepted advantages of WBL is its ability to blur boundaries in relation to the teaching of specific skills or competences. Generally the *modus operandi* of key competences is likely to depend on a variety of factors, for example the key competence in question, the target group and the pedagogic approach.

It is also important to take into account the likely influence of assessment. It is recognised that there can be a strong – unintended – 'backwash' effect from assessment on curriculum structure and content (assessment requirements influence the curriculum), as well as intended effects (Cedefop, 2012d). Key competences such as literacy and numeracy may need to be assessed separately from more specific vocational skills, which might drive their separation in the curriculum. This might conflict with the fact that low-qualified unemployed adults might be challenged by conventional classroom-based teaching and learning in separate modules due to previous bad experiences in such settings.

The study sought to identify which types of key competence are prominent within provision for low-qualified unemployed adults, the relationship of key competences to job-specific competences, how key competences are incorporated in the curriculum structure, and whether there is any relationship



between the dimensions of implicit/explicit and embedded/separate and different types of target group (especially length of unemployment).

#### 4.2.4.1. *Key research questions on the role of key competences*

Several questions were addressed:

- (a) which key competences are targeted within the programmes examined? Is the targeting explicit or implicit? What is their relationship to job-specific competences?
- (b) how are key competences incorporated into the curriculum structure? Are they embedded in other learning or taught separately?
- (c) what other competences and support are provided to support job-seeking?
- (d) what are the overall patterns in the approaches to key competences?

#### **(a) Key competences addressed**

Most case study programmes address some or all of the eight key competences identified in the European reference framework, either explicitly, e.g. through distinct packages within the programme, or implicitly.

The case studies examined appear to focus on four key competences: communication in mother tongue, digital competences, social and civic competences and sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. Communication in mother tongue/the relevant national language has been identified by delivery organisations as most relevant. Key competences such as cultural awareness and expression and communication in foreign languages were not a priority in the programmes analysed.

The dominant focus in most WBL programmes for the unemployed is on job-specific competences. However, it is difficult to measure the focus on each, since key competences and job-specific competences are strongly interlinked and it is sometimes difficult to determine the weight attached to each, especially when they are implicitly embedded within the programmes. Nevertheless, both are considered to be necessary to integrate successfully in the labour market.

The Spanish employment workshops programme has a specific focus on key competences, especially on: digital competence, basic knowledge of English and Catalan. The local delivery organisation highlighted that 'the focus on key competences and transversal competences is often more important than/as important as the focus on hard skills'.

The French ACI programme also has a specific focus on key competence development. A total of 11 key competences are considered the most relevant for this target group (\*) corresponding to the following EU categories:

- communication in the mother tongue,
- mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology,
- digital competence,
- learning to learn,
- social and civic competences,
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

In the Irish traineeship programme key competences are embedded within the modules; key competences taught depend on the sectors: some traineeship programmes may require mathematical competences, others may not. There are also some key competences that are embedded in all programmes, mainly communication, literacy, team working and life skills competences (social and civic competences) and computer training (digital competence).

---

(\*) Developing the necessary behaviours/conduct to complete the programme; oral communication; reading and understanding written text; writing; understanding spatial dimensions; time organisation; using maths in a work situation; basic know-how of the chosen profession; carrying out the technical skills of a job; health and safety at work; using IT.

## **(b) Integration of key competence development in the curriculum structure and learning approaches**

It is clear from our research that key competences can be usefully taught in embedded or separate ways (e.g. 'front end' modules), using both non-work-based and WBL methods and approaches (separately or in combination).

As the examples from the case studies indicate, the integration of key competences depends also on the type of key competence in question. Existing research (Fettes, 2011; Gonczi, 2002; Gordon et al., 2009), as well as the findings of this analysis, suggest that key competences might be differentiated according to the way they are usually taught and assessed. It is possible to distinguish six groups of key competences in the programmes:

- (a) literacy, numeracy, digital competence: considered as fundamental basic skills which may be delivered as stand-alone modules with separate assessment procedures, usually more commonly taught in a non-work-based classroom setting;

- (b) social and civic competences, initiative and entrepreneurship, learning to learn: often embedded in other forms of learning, particularly WBL, and rarely assessed separately;
- (c) communication in foreign languages, cultural awareness and expression: very rarely delivered in curricula for low-qualified unemployed adults except where specifically necessary (i.e. learning English for the tourism industry), delivered as an integrated component of WBL or separately;
- (d) basic job conduct competences, positive work ethic: can be a critical area of deficiency for people most distant from the labour market; typically taught transversally;
- (e) 'hard' job application skills: includes how to write a CV, how to perform well at interview, how to write a good job application, etc.; taught separately, typically including use of role-play;
- (f) self-esteem, confidence and motivation: normally identified as key areas requiring attention; often addressed through the teaching methods used, and within which WBL is seen as a critical motivator.

One of the delivery organisations in the German 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme noted that 'different types of competences are taught in different ways – social competences are often developed either through work-based elements or role play, communication skills are often learnt in role play situations, while other competences – like digital competences – are taught using computers in a more standard classroom setting'.

Many delivery organisations felt that the most effective way to develop both key competences and job-specific competences was a combination of, and continuous interplay between, non-WBL and WBL (at the learning institution and/or through a work placement/work experience element), also trying to integrate the learning of key competences with the learning of more job-specific competences.

In Spain, a delivery organisation in the employment workshops programme noted that 'although the WBL is important, a first introduction and reinforcement of key competences needs to be introduced in the non-WBL. Nevertheless, the most effective elements are related to a comprehensive approach, where key competences are both taught in the theoretical part as well as embedded in the learning of job-specific skills, through the combination of specific modules on key competences; transversal training (key competences taught/reinforced explicitly with respect to job-specific competences); and extra exercises not directly related to the training, but which can create a positive starting point in terms of attitudes and behaviours that indirectly supports the learning of key competences'.

The value of teaching key competences in an embedded way, using work tasks to develop them, was highlighted.

The French ACI programme provides insights into how work tasks can be used to develop key competences. Mowing a lawn requires calculating the surface area and mixing fuels in appropriate amounts so that the motor works, which means working on percentages. Even activities such as completing and submitting holiday requests are treated as an important learning experience for participants since they teach the need to plan your time as an employee, completing a form, submitting it to the employer in an appropriate way, calculating holiday allowance, etc.

### **(c) Job-seeking skills and support**

In addition to key competences and job-specific skills, most of the programmes considered included measures to develop specific job-seeking skills and offered some form of additional support to help in the job searching and selection process, in particular in terms of job search strategies, CV writing and job interviews.

This support was sometimes individualised (as in the case studies in Spain, Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden) or provided in a group (as in the Irish traineeship programme). Participation in the programme was also designed specifically in some cases to lead to employer links being established (e.g. in the case studies in Estonia, France, Sweden). In some cases (e.g. in Sweden) participants are encouraged to find their own work placements so that they develop their skills in terms of approaching employers and presenting themselves.

One delivery organisation in the German 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme encourages participants to establish contacts with employers themselves. They support participants in writing applications, or by preparing them for job interviews. Sometimes they also assist by establishing a first phone contact with the employer, but their strategy is to enable participants to do necessary steps themselves. However, they recommend employers who are known to them and who regularly have vacancies. All of these steps are prepared by intensive training of job interview situations (role play) or classroom teaching (e.g. on how to write a good CV).

In the Swedish vocational adult education programme and the Irish traineeship programme, participants are encouraged to find their own work placements. This is considered to improve their sense of initiative and give them confidence in approaching employers. In Ireland the delivery organisation noted that the approach of empowering individuals to look for their own placement works, particularly as in the past when work placements were organised by the delivery organisation some participants rejected them on the basis that they were too far away or did not suit them.

**(d) Patterns in the approach to key competences**

It is possible to see a pattern in the approach to key competences according to the target groups of the programme. Broadly, the case studies can be divided into two groups:

- (a) programmes (the case studies in Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Sweden, UK) designed for the unemployed in general or the short-term unemployed and with no specific target groups. These programmes indicated that they had no explicit focus on key competences and job-specific competences were given most weight, although some key competences were taught in separate modules, typically literacy and numeracy. In one case study, the role of key competences was described as 'supporting' the development of occupation-specific competences. The definition of key competences in these programmes was noticeably less broad and deep than in the other group. The focus tended to be on job application skills such as interviewing, giving people the skills and confidence to look for work, and on basic literacy and numeracy;
- (b) programmes (in Spain, France and Hungary) designed for the long-term unemployed and/or the most severely disadvantaged. In these programmes, key competences tended to be regarded as being at least of equal importance as occupationally specific ones and sometimes of greater importance. Key competences tended to be defined more comprehensively and in greater detail, with instances where 11 key competences are systematically identified (France) and where detailed time allocations are assigned (Hungary). A higher level of awareness of key competences in

these programmes meant that, along with the existence of separate modules, it was said the key competences were included in every element of training or were reinforced by and through occupationally specific competence development. In the Hungarian case study there is a constant reiteration throughout the programme of what an employer wants in terms of professional knowledge and skills, but also in relation to other employability skills, such as punctuality, commitment, team-working skills, communication skills. These programmes share higher levels of both awareness and integration of key competences than the others.

Table 6 **Classification of case studies according to approach to key competences**

Group 1 (DK, EE, IE, SE, UK)	Group 2 (ES, FR, HU)
Targeted at the unemployed in general or short-term unemployed	Targeted at long-term unemployed and most disadvantaged
Less explicit focus on key competences	More explicit focus on key competences
Job-specific competences have most weight	Key competences just as important as job-specific and sometimes more
Narrower definition of key competences – depends on qualification or occupation	Broad definition
Focus on literacy, numeracy and job application skills	More comprehensive approach to key competences
Separate teaching and learning of identified key competences, others implicit in vocational training	Teaching and learning sometimes separate plus deliberate integration of key competences into vocational training

Source: Cedefop.

#### 4.2.5. Pedagogy and support to learning

A variety of pedagogical approaches, including project-based learning, role-playing and other experiential forms of learning, can support WBL and the learning of key competences. Researchers have drawn attention to the effectiveness of learner-centred and active learning pedagogies within WBL (Cedefop, 2010c), although they are not limited to WBL. Such methods are also linked to the idea that learners should take responsibility for their own learning, but this requires providers to create the right enabling environment. Most delivery organisations in our sample considered such learner-centred methods to be particularly suited to a low-qualified target group, with prior negative experiences

in initial, often more traditional, school-based education. However, such methods can be a challenge to training providers as they require the organisation of learning environments in appropriate ways.

It is possible to distinguish between centre-based and workplace-based teaching and learning methods, and how they are linked. Further, alongside pedagogical concerns, consideration also needs to be given to the wider support to learning that can be offered to programme participants.

#### 4.2.5.1. *Key research questions on pedagogy and support to learning*

Several questions can be addressed:

- (a) which teaching and learning methods are used in programme components based in a training centre?
- (b) which teaching and learning methods are used in programme components based in the workplace?
- (c) which pedagogical approaches are used to link centre and workplace elements of the programmes?
- (d) what types and benefits of support to learning can be found?

##### **(a) Centre-based pedagogies**

The delivery organisations examined tend to use a mix of methods in the centre-based elements of the programmes (e.g. role playing, group working, observations, study trips and individual project work). Role play is considered important for improving job interview behaviour. Group work helps develop competence in teamwork situations. Both of these methods help people to share ideas and experiences, and to realise that others may share their problems which can help with problems of self-esteem and lack of confidence. At the same time, however, group teaching can be problematic if disruptive behaviour is likely to occur among participants.

More traditional methods of classroom teaching are often used where subjects such as maths, languages and IT are taught separately, or for teaching participants how to prepare a job application or write a CV. These methods usually involve classroom teaching as traditionally used in schools, where subjects are taught by a single teacher to a group of trainees, using text books and explanations on a black/whiteboard. Due to the negative prior experience of some trainees with similar forms of teaching, providers often sought to make this method of learning more attractive by organising small-sized groups (maximum of five participants), or ensuring that the objective of the learning was fully explained in relation to the need for the work-based elements of the course. Some providers reported that, despite initial resistance to this form of learning, participants often ended up appreciating it.

Some schemes in the German 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme begin with a centre-based phase in which basic competences are developed; then a work-based phase either in a real enterprise or in a 'training enterprise' follows. Regardless of whether the training is undertaken in a real enterprise or a 'training enterprise', there are elements of practical work, but also elements of classical upfront teaching or group work, role play (considered important for improving behaviour in job interviews and in teamwork situations) and study trips (to firms or other work-related institutions).

**(b) Work placement pedagogies**

Learning during the work placement tends to be largely focused on providing work experience, learning appropriate conduct and behaviour, and developing job-specific skills on-the-job. There is often less explicit pedagogy; learning is experiential and partly depends on the individual company and their approach to training recruits, not least because it might be difficult for companies to take on the effort involved in conforming to all programme guidelines.

The French case study provides an opportunity to examine the strengths and weaknesses of a programme based completely in a workplace context where it has been possible to achieve high integration of curriculum, pedagogy and setting. It also demonstrates a strong learning outcomes approach, which may help the programme to move away from conventional school situations.



The IAE programme in France allows unemployed adults facing particular social and labour market difficulties to benefit from employment contracts with the aim of aiding social and labour market integration. It consists of four strands, including the ACI strand, which targets those furthest from the labour market, and which aims to provide social and vocational accompaniment for the programme participants, as well as useful services for the local community (renovation of buildings, laundry services, etc.). Adults can participate in the programme for a maximum of 24 months.

The programme is entirely work-based, although participants can spend part of the time on off-the-job training courses if deemed necessary. The work experience is designed to develop relevant skills and behaviours for participants, and training in the work situation, through reinforced accompaniment from specialised trainers/tutors/social assistants, is the fundamental underlying basis of the programme. The principle of the French delivery network *chantier école* is that 'all work experience should be used as a support for learning different skills and competences'. They refuse the notion that the work experience should just 'keep the beneficiaries off the street', committed to the notion that such experience should allow them to progress and increase their chances of social and labour market integration.

The *chantier école* ACI programme is composed of four main parts, of which the first two are most important: learning basic skills through work experience; learning appropriate workplace behaviours through work experience; basic introduction to IT; and health and safety at work. The programme has specific aims (using an individual 'progress assessment booklet' to set out the specific objectives for each participant) for how the different work tasks will help the beneficiaries to develop technical skills, behaviour and other key competences.

Various teaching and learning methods are used, always based on the work situation. For example technical fiches are produced for each activity, using pictures (due to the high level of illiteracy among participants) and are placed all around the workplace. They also promote the development of reading skills and the ability to follow instructions.

The work-centred approach has been adopted from the specific characteristics of the target group: very low levels of skills and competences, additional social problems, lack of work experience, lack of knowledge of appropriate conduct and behaviour as an employee, bad experiences of the formal education system, damaged self-confidence and poor self-image, lack of motivation to find work.

### **(c) Links between the different programme components**

In mixed schemes, the element based at the learning institution (which may be work-based – for example in a simulated working environment – or not) usually serves to prepare the participants for the work placement/experience element, by providing them with the necessary basic skills and competences (job-specific and other). The work placement/experience element then gives them the opportunity to use what they have learnt in the learning institution. It also provides the participants with valuable exposure to a real workplace, and the opportunity to develop other types of skills and competences, for example networking skills with employers and the development of social competences. Specific approaches

have been found for linking the different elements and ensuring close links between the different sites of learning (see also Section 4.2.3).

In Ireland, the traineeship programme is structured in two main parts, off-the-job and on-the-job training, and is targeted at a particular sector.

The off-the-job part involves structured training with different modules. It begins at the training centre where participants are provided job-specific training as well as key competences linked to the specific sector. The modules also include career planning and job-seeking skills. Teaching and learning methods comprise instruction, lectures/tutorials, discussion groups, role playing, one-to-one supported training, giving and receiving feedback.

The on-the-job element involves a 10-week placement on-site with an employer in a specific sector. One example is the 'pharmacy sales assistant' traineeship where trainees are placed in pharmacies. To instil a work ethic and a proactive mentality, participants are asked to look for their own work placements, and are supported in doing so. The employer is provided with different material (e.g. work placement assessment sheets) and has to offer each trainee a skills coach, usually an employee of the organisation. The work placement element is a key part of the programme, allowing participants to apply what they have learned in a classroom in a real-life work setting, and to become job-ready.

#### **(d) Types and benefits of support to learning**

Alongside considerations of curriculum and pedagogy, research highlights that low-qualified unemployed adults also benefit from wider support (e.g. European Commission and Ecotec, 2006; Ecotec, 2008).

The adults involved in many of these programmes are often facing many difficulties which can form a major stumbling block to participating on a day-to-day level in the training/work placement activities, and ultimately to completing the course and finding a job. Typical difficulties can include childcare or transportation issues. Further, self-confidence is a major barrier to employment identified by most of the delivery organisations interviewed.

Although the types and degrees of support to learning vary, its provision is a significant feature and could be found in almost all of our case studies. In some cases, such provision is structured and formalised, while in others the learning support is more ad hoc or needs-based.

- In the Spanish employment workshops programme, each participant is assigned a member of the teaching staff of the learning centre to support them during the entire length of the work placement. They are also supported psychologically by other dedicated support staff.
- In the Estonian labour market training programme, more experienced employees are appointed as mentors for the learners.
- In the Dutch 'work training centre Rotterdam south' programme, individual coaching has a key role to play in, among others, assessing progress, building portfolios, and tackling specific barriers such as administrative paperwork or childcare.

For the majority of delivery organisations interviewed, support to learning is absolutely crucial for low-qualified unemployed adults in order to, as one French trainer put it 'provide a security net to keep the participant on the course'.

#### **4.2.6. Recognition of prior learning, validation, assessment and certification**

Certificates and qualifications are considered important in the labour market, especially for signalling competences, skills and working experience to potential employers <sup>(32)</sup>. The structure and content of programmes can be affected by the assessment requirements of such certificates and qualifications. As low-qualified unemployed adults might already possess certain competences, skills and work experience, it is important whether, how and to what extent recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes is used, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning <sup>(33)</sup>.

---

<sup>(32)</sup> In the context of this study, certificates are defined as attestations issued by the training provider that participants have successfully completed individual modules or the programme as a whole. Qualifications refer to formal qualifications, for example vocational qualifications.

<sup>(33)</sup> 'Validation means a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases:

- (a) identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual;
- (b) documentation to make visible the individual's experiences;
- (c) a formal assessment of these experiences;
- (d) certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification; recognition of prior learning means the validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning, acquired before requesting validation' (Council of the EU, 2012, p. 5).

4.2.6.1. *Key research questions on assessment, certification, recognition of prior learning and validation*

The following issues are addressed:

- (a) how are competences and skills assessed? Is there a difference according to the type of competence and skills?
- (b) how is participation certified, and to what extent do WBL programmes lead to recognised qualifications?
- (c) to what extent is the recognition of prior learning and validation used?

**(a) Assessment**

The aims and objectives of the programmes are generally set out at the start of each programme. Participants may also be provided with a timetable outlining the modules to be undertaken (as in the traineeship programme in Ireland or the sector routeway programme (LOAN project) in the UK) or an individual study plan (as in the Swedish vocational adult education programme and the Danish basic education for adults programme). With a modular approach being adopted across most programmes, monitoring progress against learning objectives and outcomes is fairly straightforward, particularly if an assessment is undertaken for each module. Most learners also report that progress is monitored and assessed through regular meetings with trainers/tutors.

In programmes that include a work placement, participants may also be asked to complete a diary/checklist of tasks undertaken (as in the Hungarian springboard programme and the Irish traineeship programme).

In the French ACI programme, participants are encouraged to complete 'work experience fiches' (portfolios), which allow them to present their experience, including photos, using concrete examples carried out during the programme, highlighting the specific technical skills or key competences which the experience has helped them to gain. To assess progress more formally, the delivery organisation and the learner complete 'progress assessment booklets': one for the technical skills and capacities required for the work that they are carrying out and one for their key competences (conduct and basic skills).

While employers may provide references for participants and a statement of how the work placement has worked, generally they do not directly assess participant learning outcomes. This assessment is usually undertaken by delivery organisation tutors/trainers, although in liaison with employers where relevant.

In the Swedish vocational adult education programme, where the participants gain a full vocational qualification on completion of the programme, the work placement element is not nationally regulated. Though part of the programme, it is understood that the work placement element does not contribute to the final mark (or 'points' achieved).

The manner in which key competences are assessed depends on the way they are integrated in the programme. Where key competences are taught separately and perhaps linked to national qualifications, they tend to be assessed both formatively and summatively and in formal ways, as in the case of mathematics, language and IT.

For social and civic competences or initiative and entrepreneurship, assessment is more likely to take place in an informal and formative manner, unless they are linked to national qualification modules. With competences such as having a positive work ethic and behaving appropriately in the workplace (social and civic competences), assessment takes place through continuous feedback, using relatively informal criteria in most cases. Here training providers take on a role of labour market intermediary with prospective employers, reassuring them of the presence of this type of competences: as trust is built up over time and through experience, employers increasingly rely on delivery organisation assessment.

Job application skills – interview techniques or how to write a good CV or job application – are also likely to be assessed in a formative way. Providers typically make sure that participants leave the programme equipped with good examples they have written, with varying degrees of assistance. Self-esteem, confidence and motivation are least likely to be assessed in any formal way.

Overall, our findings suggest a need for improvement towards more transparent, comprehensive and structured systems for measuring participant progress on attaining key competences. Assessing certain key competences poses a major challenge that needs more attention in policy, research and programme implementation.

#### **(b) Certificates and qualifications**

Participants usually receive a certificate for having completed individual modules or the programme as a whole, but most programmes under investigation do not lead to a formal qualification. There are some exceptions, such as the Swedish vocational adult education programme and the Danish basic education for adults programme, where participants gain a full vocational qualification (equivalent to IVET). In Denmark and Sweden, attainment of a full formal vocational

qualification is regarded as one of the most important strengths of the programme, both by the delivery organisation and the learners.

The importance of a formal qualification is highlighted in Spain. At the end of the employment workshops programme, participants are given a certificate, which is helpful in proving a professional level or experience directly to the employers. However, this cannot be validated in the formal education system. The delivery organisation notes a lack of interaction between the three pillars: vocational education, training for employment (into which the programme falls) and continuing education.

Several learners also acknowledge the importance of a formal qualification as opposed to a programme-based certificate. Delivery organisations and learners alike reported that employers often require formal qualifications when hiring. Nevertheless, learners still valued the certificates gained through the programmes, particularly if they set out the components completed and, in particular, the learning outcomes/competences gained.

In France, even when participants did not achieve a formal vocational qualification, learners reported that receiving a certificate detailing the competences and skills learned was very important, both for their self-esteem and for preparing job applications and interviews. One learner from a Roma community who had had no formal schooling at all, proudly showed her CV with a list of skills and competences which she now had and which 'before this programme, would have been completely empty. Seeing me participate in the course and acquire skills and competences has inspired my daughter too to go into training'.

### **(c) Recognition of prior learning and validation**

Recognition of prior learning and validation is undertaken only in a few of the programmes under investigation, such as the German 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme, the Swedish vocational adult education programme, and the Danish basic education for adults programme. The recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes is particularly important in terms of being able to tailor the programme to individual needs. In Denmark and Sweden it is frequently used to shorten the length of the vocational education required to gain a full formal qualification. This aspect of the programmes is highly valued by learners and also considered as very important by the delivery organisations, especially for foreign participants, because they often do not have their knowledge, skills and competences certified in forms that are recognised in Denmark. However, while it is considered as one of the main success factors, it is equally seen as one of the most challenging aspects of the programme.

The Danish basic education for adults programme offers low-qualified adults (25+ years) with a minimum of two years of relevant work experience and compulsory school education the opportunity to supplement previous qualifications and work/learning experience to achieve a full vocational qualification (equivalent to IVET). Recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes is a crucial element in this process. It is carried out by the education institution delivering the programme, and is based on documentation provided by the participant (e.g. evidence of previous qualifications and courses), references from previous employers, talks and practical tests.

#### **4.2.7. Role of employers**

Recruitment difficulties are likely to be the main driver for employer involvement, but such difficulties can take different forms. Employers may perceive the problem to be a lack of the right skills or competences and/or inappropriate workplace conduct. Alternatively, the problem may be one of communication within the labour market and an inability to match the right people to the right jobs. The issue may be a failure of signalling mechanisms: low-qualified unemployed adults often lack certificates or qualifications that also act as proxy indicators for likely general conduct in the workplace. WBL, if carried out in the employers' workplace or if employers build a close relationship of trust with the provider, has the potential to provide additional 'guarantee'.

These motivations may not be sufficient to spur employers into participation, and some incentives may be necessary. It is likely to be easier for providers to find employers who are willing and able to supply work placements for the most job-ready low-qualified unemployed adults than those who might need intensive support.

It is clear from our research that employers have a key role to play in WBL, with varying forms and degrees of engagement.

##### *4.2.7.1. Key research questions on the role of employers*

Two questions are asked:

- (a) what are the main forms of involvement of employers? To what degree are they engaged?
- (b) why do employers choose to get involved in the programmes?

#### **(a) Types of employer involvement**

The main role played by employers in the programmes considered was providing work placements, either during the programme or afterwards. Some of those involved in providing work placements had established close relationships with the delivery organisations and regularly offered work placements. Others had



offered placements in the past, and had been contacted again, in an ad hoc arrangement. Building and sustaining good relationships with employers was considered crucial by the training providers.

In the Dutch 'work training centre Rotterdam south' programme, the delivery organisation reported that good service and attention to employer needs are key success factors for sustaining good relationships with employers. This is crucial as getting employers involved in the programme is very time-consuming.

In the UK sector routeway programme (LOAN project), employers are recruited either through the organisation's own marketing or based on long-standing relationships. Local job centres also make the delivery organisation aware of employers who are advertising for employees.

The degree of employer involvement in learner assessment varies, as does the extent to which the work placement is structured and the collaboration with the delivery organisation, but the most commonly used measures are provision of tutors/mentors at the workplace, work placements schedules, progress booklets, etc.

In the Hungarian springboard programme, the employers offer six-month work experience for 24 participants at the end of the programme. During the training, the employers offer periods of work practice to participants.

In many schemes of the 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme in Germany, delivery organisations have long-term partnerships with local or regional employers, who offer internships and are often generally interested in recruiting some of the participants for regular employment afterwards.

There were programmes, particularly those linked to specific sectors, which had been designed in consultation with employers (as in the Irish traineeship programme), while in other cases consultations took place in the framework of formal committees at national level (in Denmark, some 50 committees have been set up representing a particular occupation or sector). Other types of employer involvement included offering visits to enterprises to give the participants a better opportunity to understand the sector they may choose to work in (UK sector routeway programme).

#### **(b) Rationale for employer involvement**

Delivery organisations often felt that one of the main incentives for employers, particularly smaller ones, providing work placements was that they offered a source of 'free labour', a sort of guarantee of suitability, and support in case of difficulties. However, the delivery organisations also recognised that employers became involved because they were looking to find suitably trained employees.



The reasons for involvement provided by employers differed from those reported by the delivery organisations. The most commonly reported reason was indeed that they were looking for suitable employees, and therefore used the work placement scheme to test the suitability of potential candidates.

In Germany, the employers and delivery organisations interviewed considered this to be a typical approach to work placements. The employers offered work placements mostly in areas where the required level of qualification was low and used these work placements to test the trainees' ability to work and, where successful, hire them at the end of the training period.

Among the case studies there was also evidence that some employers chose to become involved in these programmes mainly because they wanted to help low-qualified adults to overcome their difficulties on the labour market, having a deep understanding of the issues faced by this particular target group.

In Spain employers were aware that there are many stereotypes associated with low-qualified people and they strongly believe that their participation in the programme will help them get a better 'image' for potential employers, and will also benefit them in terms of social integration in the local community.

#### **4.2.8. WBL providers as labour market intermediaries**

Training providers delivering WBL might have the potential to act as labour market intermediaries using their network of contacts with employers to open up employment opportunities for programme participants (Benner et al., 2001; Kazis, 1998). The assumption is that delivery organisations do not only provide training to participants, but that they also potentially 'lubricate' the labour market, helping to address some of the issues related to signalling and job-matching.

##### *4.2.8.1. Key research questions on providers as labour market intermediaries*

Two issues are addressed:

- (a) to what degree do training providers help to articulate the skills needs of employers with the skills deficiencies of their unemployed clients?
- (b) to what extent do training providers use their networks of contacts to refer suitable applicants to employers?

It is evident from the case studies that delivery organisations have an important role to play as intermediaries between participants and employers. This manifests itself in a number of ways.

**(a) Skills brokerage**

The case studies have shown that training providers play an important role in interpreting the key competence deficiencies of participants. Delivery organisations seem to know the barriers for their clients in terms of their competence deficiencies; they take pragmatic steps to tackle them and to collect them together into a vocational package to attract participants. At the same time, these organisations have to meet the needs of employers, which appears to give rise to a paradox. Employers are often quite willing to train new employees into a job, since it is comparatively easy to do this for low-qualified work; what they need is a pool of motivated and work-ready potential recruits. At the same time, delivery organisations tend to emphasise the job-specific aspects of provision to programme participants. How can this apparent paradox be explained? One reason may be that designing and positioning the training in this way helps to motivate programme participants (more than it meets the needs of employers). It may also be that the emphasis on occupation-specific elements is a 'Trojan horse' pedagogy for teaching key competences, acting as a method for encouraging participation.

**(b) Access and referrals to networks of employers**

Providers also help participants to address their deficiencies in respect of social capital by plugging them into their network of local employers. They build up relationships with employers based on trust, contributing to overcoming job matching issues: the difficulties faced by low-qualified adults in finding and being selected for available jobs and the challenges for employers to find suitable candidates. The programmes act as an alternative marketplace for labour, with the delivery organisations at its heart.

- In the UK, local job centres also make the delivery organisation of the sector routeway programme (LOAN project) aware of employers who are advertising for employees.
- In the Spanish employment workshops programme, the delivery organisation organises an employment fair, where it brings together all the relevant job offers/vacancies related to the job-profiles developed under the programme.
- In Sweden, the employer interviewed suggested that job-matching at their local job centres had not worked effectively in the past, and therefore felt that participation in the programme was the best way to get appropriately skilled labour.
- Since the delivery organisation in the French ACI programme is technically the employer of the participants for the duration of the programme, there are no outside employers involved. However, the delivery organisation has actively sought to develop relationships with other employers and some workshops work with local employer groups.
- One employment workshop in the north of France focusing on interior maintenance cooperates with the local branch of the building employers' organisation. In another workshop in the laundry business, the clients of the laundry (guest houses, hospitals, care homes, etc.) are considered potential employers for the programme participants, who are encouraged and supported to contact them to find employment. At national level, the network has signed an agreement with the French metallurgy employers' confederation, who are interested in finding potential recruits since they have trouble recruiting staff for low-skilled jobs.

Although not very common, some employers asked delivery organisations for further information such as attendance records and personal feedback about the prospective employee's conduct, including commitment to the training, before providing work placements or employment. Where the delivery organisation had a long established relationship with employers, the latter were assured of the calibre of the adult proposed for the work placement (often due to the reputation of the delivery organisation) and therefore were unlikely to request additional information outside a CV <sup>(34)</sup>.

Many employers consider training as an ideal situation in which to assess potential candidates; delivery organisations see successful programme participants as a 'safer option' for employers. In some of the programmes, there is also a clear potential pathway to employment offered by the employers involved.

---

<sup>(34)</sup> This also underlines the important role as labour market intermediary played by the training providers.

In the Netherlands 'work training centre Rotterdam south' programme, the training provider has a network of employers where work placements take place. A work placement means the learner leaves the programme, first for a one month internship. If that goes well, the learner leaves the programme definitively and joins the employer as a staff member.

#### **4.2.9. Success of programmes**

A vital issue for the study is the extent to which WBL for low-qualified unemployed adults is considered successful by the adults themselves, employers and training providers, and how this 'success' is defined. The effectiveness of different programmes was defined by interviewees mainly in terms of access to employment or further training, acquisition of formal qualifications or certificates, increased self-confidence and motivation, better understanding of the labour market or the importance of work, or links to relevant employers in the local area.

Research suggests that, as the interaction with the world of work rises, the positive effect of intervention in terms of accessing employment increases (e.g. Dench et al., 2006; Vignoles et al., 2008). It also suggests that the more specific the links made between potential jobs and the unemployed, the more likely it is that work will be found. Some studies indicate that subsidised work experience produces better outcomes than classroom vocational training (Carling and Richardson, 2004), and subsidised temporary employment in the private sector better outcomes than similar subsidies in non-profit employment programmes (Gerfin et al., 2002). Schemes with a very close fit with specific employment opportunities work well because they reduce the costs and risks for employers.

The benefits of key competences in employment terms are harder to determine since little research has been done into the topic. Some studies report a variety of benefits (Dench et al., 2006), while others have not found significant employment effects (Metcalf et al., 2009) and others have found effects after a number of years rather than immediately (Hamilton and Wilson, 2005).

##### *4.2.9.1. Key research questions on the success of programmes*

Within the scope of this research, we have focused on the following issues in relation to the programmes explored, building on the views of training providers, employers and participants.

- (a) what is the effectiveness of the work-based element of these programmes?
- (b) what evidence is there of impact on participants?
- (c) what were the key success factors of the programmes examined?
- (d) what were the limitations and challenges of the programmes examined?

**(a) Effectiveness of the WBL element of the programmes**

The WBL elements examined in the case studies were considered integral and important by all interviewees (delivery organisations, employers and learners).

Programmes involving actual work placements were considered by the delivering organisations and employers interviewed to be more successful in helping participants to become job-ready, and in offering specific benefits such as improved team-working and communication skills. It was also felt that work placements helped participants to develop a sense of motivation.

WBL in learning institutions, for example in training enterprises, was seen by some as important in developing skills and knowledge around employer expectations, such as punctuality and reliability. A number of employers also felt that centre-based training helped participants to develop competences that were important for successful entry into work placements, such as self-presentation and performing well in job interviews.

The general impression was that training programme participants could not be classified as being job-ready until they had experienced a real work placement. Many also considered that there was a direct link between the duration of the actual work placement and the job-readiness of the participant. The general view was that personal barriers (e.g. social issues, conduct) had to be addressed before providing an actual work placement for this group in order for the placement to be effective.

A further important issue for effectiveness was the way in which many of the programmes are structured to provide a 'scaffolded' or staged transition between training and workplace environment. WBL is used in a developmental way to set learning goals for the occupational and generic requirements of employment, increasing the challenge over time by moving them into actual work placements.

**(b) Impacts on participants**

Programmes involving actual work placements were valued more highly by the low-qualified unemployed adults. Those who were involved in work placements in enterprises felt the experience had moved them closer to the labour market.

The key benefits for low-qualified unemployed adults from participating in the programmes, as cited by both learners and delivery organisations, lie in overcoming some of the labour market difficulties identified for this group, particularly in terms of human capital deficiencies, signalling and job matching. Some examples are provided below.

**Overcoming deficiencies in human capital**

Findings suggest that participation in the programmes aids acquisition of key competences and an understanding of their relevance to work.

A participant of the French ACI programme, now running his own decorating business, said that he had learned the importance of basic skills, such as spelling – ‘if you write a quote for a client full of spelling mistakes, they won’t take you seriously’.

Programmes can also provide experience – often for the first time – of work situations and the constraints and expectations associated with working, including appropriate conduct and behaviour.

In the German ‘measures for activation and reintegration into labour’ programme, the delivery organisation highlighted that one of the most important benefits for participants was ‘getting used to regular work and regular day routines including mobility (daily commutes)’.

One of the former participants of the French ACI programme underlined that he had understood that ‘it is not enough to know how to do a job – if you don’t behave properly (i.e. speak rudely to a client, smoke marijuana outside a client’s house, swear, leave the worksite in a mess or with dangerous objects overnight), then no one will employ you’.

There is also the development of job-specific skills and familiarity with specific sectors and industries.

In the Irish traineeship programme, one of the key benefits for participants cited by the delivery organisation was that ‘it is closely linked to the sector. The industry gets people who are trained to deliver in their business area’.

### **Overcoming signalling issues**

Findings suggest that participation in the programmes helps to overcome signalling issues in various ways. It sends out positive signals to employers (e.g. about willingness to engage, job-related conduct, acquisition of skills). It can lead to the achievement of formal vocational qualifications, and the ability to present knowledge, skills and competences in appropriate ways to employers.

For participants in the Danish basic education for adults programme, gaining a full vocational qualification that can be used on the labour market was considered very important.

In the Hungarian programme, learners stated that 'any paper proving our participation in the programme and outlining what we have learned during the training will be beneficial. Even if we may have been working in the industry for many years previously, a formal letter/proof/certificate will make a difference. This will give us a good reference for future work'.

One participant in the laundry workshop of the French ACI programme said that one of the key benefits for her was 'understanding how to express what I know how to do for employers'.

### **Overcoming matching difficulties**

The case studies show that programmes contribute to overcoming matching difficulties through the development of job-searching strategies and providing support with writing job applications and preparation for job interviews. They also contribute through developing links with potential employers, and facilitating matching of participants with relevant jobs, especially via work placements and other measures such as networking fairs.

Some participants in the German 'measures for activation and reintegration into labour' programme highlighted the development of skills needed to search for jobs, and generally the support provided for finding job offers, writing applications and also the help received in establishing first contact with employers.

One former participant emphasised how important the work-based element of the programme had been in terms of establishing contacts with his current employer, trying out a new sector of employment which he would 'never have considered without the support of the delivery organisation' and 'showing (to himself) that he was able to perform in the workplace and thus boosting (his) self-esteem'.

### **Overcoming other personal barriers and wider impact**

Findings suggest that programmes have the potential to contribute to developing self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation and improving self-image. In addition, they can have positive impact on the participants' life skills and their home or local environment, including better integration into the community.

A participant in the French ACI programme said that she had gained confidence in herself through experiencing that she has the ability to achieve tasks: 'I know how to do things, I am useful for producing things, I did it...' She also stated that it showed her family (spouse, children) that she can succeed and get a job, which encouraged them, too: 'it has led to my children wanting to learn and go back to training, get diplomas, get a career'.

In the Hungarian springboard programme, many participants were members of the Roma minority and often experienced additional disadvantage because of their ethnicity. Participants benefited in many ways and could share their positive experiences with their families and friends. They were taught how to make official phone calls, to fill out forms, to take public transport, etc.

### **(c) Success factors**

All programmes defined the highest degree of success as moving the adult participants into sustainable work. Interviewees highlighted a number of key factors contributing to success, including:

- (a) initial needs assessment;
- (b) individual training plans offering staged development with clear goals and progression and continuous monitoring;
- (c) ensuring learners are equipped with key competences, and a certain 'work-readiness', before going into real work placements, especially for the long-term unemployed and/or most disadvantaged;
- (d) learner support, to deal with practical obstacles, such as financial difficulties or childcare, and to develop confidence, for example by using mentors and systematic guidance throughout the programme;
- (e) close cooperation with employers.

A delivery organisation emphasised the importance of having a dual approach to supporting this target group. They considered the ideal formula to be six months within the delivery organisation with a combination of theoretical and practical learning of job-specific skills and key competences, plus six months of training or work placement in a local company. Following that there had to be another six months of labour contract in the same company (paid by the company). However, the delivery organisation recognised that such a scheme would require a commitment of at least a year from the employers offering work placements which would be difficult to negotiate.

### **(d) Challenges and limitations of programmes**

Challenges highlighted by organisations delivering the programmes were often linked to specific characteristics or barriers of the target groups they worked with. Male low-qualified unemployed adults between the ages of 40 and 50 were highlighted by one organisation as presenting particular challenges, due to the



psychological barriers they needed to overcome, as this target group in that specific area was likely to have worked in industries that no longer existed and therefore considered themselves as having no or very limited opportunities.

The economic crisis and its impacts were also highlighted as challenges by some delivery organisations. Those whose programmes included actual work placements reported that they now often struggled to find and secure such placements for their participants. A number of programmes that offered qualifications or certificates were also starting to question their value in a job market with high unemployment, where the lowest level of qualification required for certain positions was much higher than the norm. This was mainly due to saturation in the market with job applicants who have higher qualification status than the target group they were supporting. Adults who were unable to move into employment after completing their training were often moved from one programme to another so that the organisation could continue to provide support and to maintain the learner's enthusiasm.

There was a perception by delivery organisations that employers generally favoured those who were closer to the labour market. When provided with a list of CVs for work placements, employers would usually select the short-term unemployed for interviews. This often impacted on the success of the programme in helping the long-term unemployed acquire the necessary skills to move them back into employment.

Other challenges highlighted included lack of confidence and self-esteem of participants, awareness and commitment of participants to follow the programme for a certain length of time, and the links between the work-based and non-work-based elements of the training.

## CHAPTER 5.

# Conclusions and key messages

## 5.1. Conclusions

Three main clusters of problems faced in the labour market by low-qualified unemployed adults have been identified (see Section 2.5): human capital deficiencies, weak or wrong signals in the labour market, and job matching difficulties. Evidence collected in this study allows assessment of whether, to what degree, and how WBL focused on the acquisition of key competences can help to tackle these problems.

### 5.1.1. Addressing human capital deficiencies

The study has highlighted that, for low-qualified unemployed adults to move into sustainable employment, it is important to focus on deficiencies in two broad groups of skills and competences:

- (a) technical/vocational (job-specific) skills;
- (b) key competences in a broad sense, comprising also 'employability skills', including job-seeking skills and others such as behavioural skills, attitudes towards work, motivation, self-esteem, work ethic, etc.

#### 5.1.1.1. *How important is the lack of key competences as an obstacle to employment for low-qualified adults?*

There is variation in the degree to which deficiencies in key competences are perceived by the interviewees as being more or less important than a lack of job-specific ones. In the low-skilled segment of the labour market, the chances of finding work are significantly reduced when individuals lack other skills and attitudes such as confidence, motivation and job-seeking skills. These deficiencies become more important the longer someone is without work. Issues related to appropriate conduct in the workplace are most important for people with the least work experience.

Employers interviewed in the study emphasised the need for potential employees to have some generic attitudes, such as a positive work ethic and strong motivation. They noted that these factors could pose a greater barrier for many people than being low-qualified *per se* or lacking job-specific skills, arguing that low-skilled jobs are more easily learned. Many employers see a shortage of motivated recruits with a positive work ethic at the low-skilled end of the labour market.

Low-qualified unemployed adults emphasised their lack of self-confidence and job-seeking skills, with some also referring to deficiencies in literacy, numeracy and IT. However, providers noted that participants often have difficulties in recognising and articulating their shortcomings. Some low-qualified unemployed adults highlighted that participation in the programmes had helped them to understand the critical importance of key competences in the workplace, which adds an important aspect to the benefits of such programmes.

Providers interviewed recognised lack of key competences as a barrier to employment for low-qualified unemployed adults, although to varying degrees, depending upon their programme, participants and wider context. Key competence development tended to be seen as especially important for the long-term unemployed and people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. In contrast, where providers provided training for the unemployed in general or the short-term unemployed, the greatest need was seen to be job-specific competence development.

#### 5.1.1.2. *To what extent do programmes explicitly target key competences?*

The findings indicate that, while there is awareness that the lack of key competences is a problem, translation of this awareness into programmes is variable. The focus of most interventions for the low-qualified unemployed is on job-specific skills; there is little evidence of systematic approaches to key competence development. The most immediate key competence needs tend to be identified, such as communication, numeracy, and other transversal competences such as job search skills. Issues of attitudes to work, conduct in the workplace and motivation are less prominent. There is often an assumption that some key competences, such as social and civic competences, will be acquired as a matter of course during a training programme.

At the same time, local discretion, i.e. training provider autonomy, is a prominent characteristic of many programmes, and it is frequently at this level that the most sophisticated and thorough approaches to key competence development are found. The collected evidence points to substantial potential to make systematic and comprehensive approaches to key competence development more widely available, and calls for respective action at policy level.

Among the case studies, four key competences were prominent: communication in mother tongue, digital competence, social and civic competences, and initiative and entrepreneurship. There is variation by target group in how key competences are dealt with in programmes. Where the long-term unemployed and people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are the focus of attention, a more comprehensive approach to key competences tends to be taken. Where provision is designed for the unemployed in general or the

short-term unemployed only, the focus tends to be on literacy, numeracy and job application skills, with an implicit approach to other key competences.

5.1.1.3. *How does WBL contribute to overcoming human capital deficits?*

The findings show that low-qualified unemployed adults consider WBL programmes an attractive option, mainly due to their links to employment, their work-based character, and their links to qualification and certification. These three features encourage them to participate in programmes and to take up learning, i.e. to address their human capital deficits.

The potential of WBL is mainly due to the mode of learning, and the types of knowledge, skills and competences that it can foster.

In terms of mode of learning:

- (a) it offers a way of learning that is different from the traditional classroom-based mode that is usually found in the compulsory phase of education. As many low-qualified adults may have previous negative experience with such traditional forms of learning, WBL seems to be particularly beneficial for them;
- (b) it offers scope to integrate the learning of different knowledge, skills and competence based on the work situation, also replicating the way competences are acquired at work;
- (c) it supports both informal and formal learning, i.e. learning from experience, through reflection, in action and from the unwritten practices and norms that learners can observe and experience.

In terms of types of knowledge, skills and competences, WBL enables socialisation into the roles, behaviours and norms which permit full participation within a workplace and which have the potential to help learners to acquire appropriate attitudes to workplace conduct.

Depending on how the programmes are organised and which types of WBL are used, the participants also gain working experience in enterprises.

Most programmes offer a mix of learning based in education/training centres (with or without WBL elements) and with real employers through work placements. The evidence strongly points to the value of this mix in enabling a range of competences to be acquired in different settings. Typically, off-the-job learning is seen as providing a foundation of knowledge, skills and competences before learners progress to their work placements. It offers an opportunity for a wide variety of methods such as role-play and group work. Most commonly, traditional classroom-based learning is used to teach mathematics and language skills. Pedagogies such as role-play and group work tend to be used to develop social and civic competences, as well as self-esteem, confidence and motivation,

and positive attitudes to work. These collective learning activities help participants to share experiences.

Experience in the workplace is particularly important for consolidating learning acquired off the job, and also for the development of appropriate conduct in the workplace and motivation. Further, it can enable programme participants to see the value of key competences in the workplace. WBL located entirely in 'real' workplaces offers the opportunity to achieve a very close integration of curriculum, pedagogy and setting but requires strong employer commitment.

Along with these core elements of WBL, there are other aspects which contribute to its effectiveness for the low-qualified. Together, these components help provide a 'scaffolded' or staged transition between training and the real workplace. They include initial needs assessment linked to individual training plans, the availability of learning support which can also help with specific problems (e.g. childcare), and the provision of mentors to build confidence and motivation.

#### **5.1.2. WBL and labour market signalling**

Low-qualified workers have low levels of formal education and/or certification, but employers often rely on specific signalling devices such as successful completion of formal education to assess the suitability of candidates. Employers may also stereotype low-qualified adults with little work experience as more likely to lack motivation and appropriate conduct in the workplace. To what extent can WBL 'return to work' programmes address these issues?

The first issue we have addressed is the extent to which stereotyping by employers acts as an obstacle to employment. Providers interviewed in the study often reported that employers in general – not necessarily those involved in the programmes – have negative attitudes towards low-qualified unemployed adults. Learners tend to see their employment difficulties as lying with themselves and not with employer stereotyping. What they did note, however, was that employers were critical of their lack of qualifications/certificates.

At policy level, the interview results showed that the scarcity of programmes exclusively focused on the low-qualified is partly attributable to policy-makers' concerns that such programmes would stigmatise people and send out negative signals to employers. However, some policy-makers emphasised the impact of programmes in changing employers' negative views, especially of the long-term low-qualified unemployed.

This leads to the second issue: the extent to which, and how, WBL programmes can help to counter employers' negative views. No evidence was found that participation in these programmes sends out negative signals to employers. The ability of programmes to send out positive signals depends on

their local reputation and relationships of trust. The evidence from both providers and employers suggests that providers build close relationships with their clientele, so that employers come to trust providers to supply them with reliable individuals for work placements, making the training provider a labour market intermediary. The existence of real work placements also helps to signal that participants are job-ready, and the work placements tend to be seen by employers who offer them as indispensable recruitment tools: they give employers the opportunity to assess the suitability of potential employees in the workplace.

It is evident from the collected data that participation in WBL programmes often compensates for low-qualified adults' lack of qualifications/certificates. Learners stress the importance of getting their learning outcomes certified, ideally in formal qualifications, to use them for signalling purposes on the labour market. However, many programmes do not lead to – or even contribute to – a full qualification, although participants usually receive some sort of certification on completion of the course.

In terms of the role that key competences play in signalling, providers typically ensure that participants have developed basic key competences, job readiness skills and attitudes sufficiently before taking part in a work placement. In this way, the training provider plays a pivotal role in this process, signalling to employers that the trainee is job-ready.

### **5.1.3. Improving job matching**

WBL programme delivery organisations seem to play an important role as labour market intermediaries, sitting between the employers and the low-qualified unemployed as potential recruits, and aid matching. They can play a key role in interpreting the needs of employers and participants, and improve the quality and quantity of information flows in low-skilled labour markets.

The study shows that participants get access to the providers' network of contacts and potential employers, and see the connection to employment opportunities as a major attraction of the programmes. They particularly valued programmes with work placements, as this would allow them to show their abilities to potential employers. Many programmes emphasise developing job-seeking skills as part of the training. Some use the process of finding work placements as an opportunity for the development of such skills, and generally actively support trainees in writing CVs and job applications, and preparing for job interviews. Some delivery organisations even organise employment fairs to bring together the employers with relevant job vacancies and the programme participants.

The most commonly reported reason for employer involvement in the programmes was that they were looking for suitable employees, and therefore used work placement to test the suitability of potential candidates. Several of the employers had developed close relationships and trust with the delivery organisations and rely on them to make a preselection and to provide a steady stream of potential recruits.

## 5.2. Key messages

While WBL programmes have the potential to play a key role in addressing the barriers that low-qualified unemployed adults face in (re)entering the labour market, the extent to which current policies and programmes are organised to enable them to deliver the potential benefits seems limited. Based on the study findings, some key messages for policy- and decision-makers, European and national, for those responsible for the actual design and implementation of programmes and for further research can be identified.

### 5.2.1. Ensuring greater cooperation and coordination at policy level

This study has highlighted that national policies tend to remain too fragmented in their approaches, with insufficient crossovers and joint policy-thinking between the relevant ministries and national institutions responsible for employment policy, education and training and social affairs. Policy approaches should be designed and implemented in a more coherent and inter-departmental manner.

### 5.2.2. Developing holistic policy approaches to address all barriers faced by low-qualified unemployed adults

At strategic level, more efforts should be made to develop policies and programmes which use the full potential that such programmes have to offer (not only in terms of the knowledge, skills and competences they can foster, but also the opportunity to connect with potential employers and the mode of delivery). They should address the three issues identified (human capital deficiencies, labour market signalling and matching problems) more coherently, for all categories of low-qualified adults. Otherwise, efforts risk remaining patchy and isolated.

Clearly, the different needs of those who have worked more or less regularly and those who have never worked should be taken into account. Those facing the most challenges, and thus furthest removed from the labour market, are often those for whom the least number of policy and programme options exist. Policy-making at all levels requires more nuanced assessments of the specific issues facing low-qualified unemployed people, developing tailored and targeted

approaches, and implementing holistic and integrated strategies to address the full range of problems they encounter.

### **5.2.3. Developing more systematic policy approaches to key competence development**

At policy level the approach taken to key competences as part of WBL 'return to work' programmes tends to be implicit and to lack comprehensiveness. Policy-makers interviewed were aware of key competences and their importance, but many were unable to state precisely how they were taken into account in policies or programmes. Where key competences are identified they tend to be narrowly defined and it is often assumed that some will be acquired by participants as a matter of course, not requiring any particular effort from the programmes. There also seem to be deficits in the systematic assessment of key competence acquisition.

Although there is a common EU definition of key competences, little evidence was found on their acquisition through training or employment initiatives, or sophisticated thinking in terms of their notion and integration into training or employment policies for adults. More attention has to be given to key competence development for adults in general and to approaches to how to use the EU framework for this purpose. This study showed that deficiencies in a particular cluster of competences – which include many of the eight key competences as defined by the EU – are important obstacles to employment in this segment of the labour market: literacy, numeracy, communication and digital competences, along with job search skills, workplace conduct and – especially for the long-term unemployed and significantly marginalised – motivation, confidence and self-esteem.

### **5.2.4. Improving monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance of policies and programmes**

Policy-makers and delivery organisations alike should implement more effective mechanisms for monitoring the impact of policies and programmes for the low-qualified unemployed adult population. While there were exceptions in the case studies, in most countries examined, monitoring was found to be piecemeal, inconsistent, short-term and – where it existed – rarely nuanced for different target groups and expected outcomes. To form a more precise picture of the effectiveness of different approaches, more investment is required in monitoring outcomes over a longer period.

Similarly, findings highlighted a general lack of quality assurance mechanisms within programmes and policies. The European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training (EQAVET) could be



used as a basis, but may also need to incorporate methodologies more adapted to employment policy.

#### **5.2.5. Ensuring recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes**

It is crucial that the low-qualified obtain proper credit for their learning, not only for signalling purposes on the labour market, but also to enable them to progress to other education and training options. Further attention should also be given to the recognition of prior learning and the validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning. This is particularly relevant for this target group, because the learning of low-qualified adults often happens outside formal education, but was rarely found in the Member State policies or programmes examined. The common European principles on identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2004), the European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2009a) and the Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2012) could serve as a basis for developments, together with the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning <sup>(35)</sup>, which provides an overview of initiatives to identify, assess and validate the learning taking place outside formal education and training institutions.

#### **5.2.6. Using key success factors for the programme design and practical implementation**

WBL is clearly a promising approach to learning for low-qualified unemployed adults since it provides a context for learning which is very different from traditional styles, often associated with failure for this population. It also provides valuable work experience and links to employers for those who have been removed for a significant period from employment. However, to make it most effective, learning needs to be structured and not considered as implicit through the completion of work tasks. Careful analysis of work tasks should be undertaken to determine where and how learning of specific skills and competences can take place. Findings of this study suggest that, at a practical level, key elements of successful interventions include:

- (a) close cooperation and relationship of trust between delivery organisations and employers;

---

<sup>(35)</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-cedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory-scope.aspx> [accessed 1.8.2013].

- (b) thorough initial assessment of learner's needs, including assessment and validation processes for prior learning, and continuous monitoring of the learning process;
- (c) provision tailored to the learners' specific needs, including individual training plans;
- (d) mentoring to accompany the learning process (foster motivation, development of self-confidence, etc.) and support to deal with practical obstacles (e.g. childcare);
- (e) close links between learning in the different settings (as regards objectives, etc.), finding the right balance between theoretical and practical learning and 'scaffolding' approaches to support the transition from training to real workplaces over time;
- (f) focus on key competences and attitudes for employment (e.g. communication skills, confidence and reliability) combined with job-specific knowledge, skills and competences. Integrated learning (e.g. development of communication skills integrated in acquisition of job-specific competences);
- (g) use learning provision in the training centre to develop and assure learner 'work-readiness' (e.g. awareness of workplace conduct) before they start a work placement in the enterprise;
- (h) providing opportunities for contacts with employers, through work placements in enterprises, study visits or employment fairs.

#### **5.2.7. Supporting employer involvement and the intermediary function of training organisations**

The study has shown that employers' involvement in the programmes is important, and is not only beneficial for the learners, but also for the employers themselves. The case studies highlight that training providers not only help learners to develop knowledge, skills and competences and to gain working experience, but also work at the interface of learners and employers and often function as labour market intermediaries. They help circumvent the signalling problems faced by low-qualified adults who lack qualifications, acting as a source of reliable information and as 'filters' for employers in search of new recruits. They also establish cooperation and relationships of trust with employers so that a closer fit can be achieved between the jobs available and the skills of learners, and provide access to networks of employers for learners who would otherwise struggle to find employment opportunities. Employer involvement in programmes needs to be supported, for example through the creation of tripartite bodies (firms, unions and training providers) that could coordinate and encourage the development of local networks.

## List of abbreviations

ACI	<i>ateliers et chantiers d'insertion</i> [integration workshops and worksites]
ALMP	active labour market policy
ANPE	Agence nationale pour l'emploi [National Agency for Employment]
CCP	certificate of professional competence
CV	curriculum vitae
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
ESF	European social fund
EU	European Union
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair [Irish Training and Employment Authority]
GVU	Grunduddannelse for Voksne [basic education for adults]
IAE	<i>insertion par l'économique</i> [integration through work]
ICT	information and communication technology
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LLL	lifelong learning
PES	public employment service
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
VET	vocational education and training
WBL	work-based learning

## References

[URLs accessed 1.8.2013]

- Askov, E.N.; Aderman, B. (1991). Understanding the history and definitions of workplace literacy. In: Taylor, M.C.; Lewie, G.R.; Draper, J.A. (eds). *Basic skills for the workplace*. Toronto: Culture Concepts, Inc., pp. 3-6.
- Beach, K. (1999). Consequential transitions: a sociocultural expedition beyond transfer in education. *Review of research in education*, 1999, Vol. 24, No 1, pp. 101-139.
- Beach, K. (2003). Consequential transitions: a developmental view of knowledge propagation through social organisations. In: Tuomi-Gröhn, T.; Engeström, Y. (eds). *Between school and work: new perspectives on transfer and boundary crossing*. Bingley: Emerald, pp. 39-61.
- Benati, L. (2001). Some empirical evidence on the 'discouraged worker' effect. *Economics letters*, 2001, Vol. 70, No 3, pp. 387-395.
- Benner, C.; Dresser, L.; Leete, L. (2001). Staircases and treadmills: the role of labour market intermediaries in placing workers and fostering upward mobility. Paper presented at *The industrial relations research association annual meeting, New Orleans, LA, 4 to 8 January 2001*.  
<http://www.researchgate.net/publication/228857522>.
- Billet, S. (2004). Learning through work: workplace participatory practices. In: Rainbow, H.; Fuller, A.; Munroe, A. (eds). *Workplace learning in context*. London: Routledge, pp. 109-125.
- Bonoli, G.; Hinrichs, K. (2010). *Statistical discrimination and employers' recruitment practices for low-skilled workers*. Working papers on the reconciliation of work and welfare in Europe; REC-WP 10/2010.  
<http://www.oecd.org/els/47089328.pdf>.
- Boreham, N.; Samurçay, R.; Fischer, M. (eds) (2002). *Work process knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, A. (2009). *Developing expertise: moving beyond a focus on workplace competence, assessment and qualifications*.  
[http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ch4\\_brownalan\\_developingexpertisenatureofcompetence20090116.pdf](http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/ch4_brownalan_developingexpertisenatureofcompetence20090116.pdf).
- Brown, J.S.; Collins, A.; Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational researcher*, 1989, Vol. 18, No 1, pp. 32-42.
- Brun, F.; Pelisse, J.; ANPE (2006). L'insertion par l'activité économique: entre deux logiques parfois contradictoires [Integration through economic activity: between two logics sometimes contradictory]. *L'essentiel*, 2006, No 9, pp. 1-4.

- Carling, K; Richardson, K. (2004). The relative efficiency of labour market programmes: Swedish experience from the 1990s. *Labour economics*, 2004, Vol. 11, No 3, pp. 335-354.
- Cedefop (2008). *Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 100 key terms*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4064\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4064_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2009a). *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2009b). *The shift to learning outcomes: policies and practice in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop Reference series; No 72.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3054\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3054_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2010a). *A bridge to the future: European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop Reference series. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3058\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3058_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2010b). *Skills supply and demand in Europe: medium-term forecast up to 2020*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3052\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3052_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2010c). *Learning outcomes approaches in VET curricula: a comparative analysis of nine European countries*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 6.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5506\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5506_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2010d). *The skill matching challenge: analysing skill mismatch and policy implications*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3056\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3056_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2010e). *Jobs in Europe to become more knowledge- and skills-intensive*. Briefing note; February 2010.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9021\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9021_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2011). *Learning while working: success stories on workplace learning in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3060\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3060_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2012a). *Skill mismatch: the role of the enterprise*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 21.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5521\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5521_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2012b). *Future skills supply and demand in Europe: forecast 2012*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 26.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5526\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5526_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2012c). *Learning and innovation in enterprises*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 27.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5527\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5527_en.pdf).
- Cedefop (2012d). *Curriculum reform in Europe: the impact of learning outcomes*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 29.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5529\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5529_en.pdf).

- Cedefop (2012e). *Lifelong learning for adults with a low level of education: any recent progress?* <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/articles/19739.aspx>.
- Cedefop (2013). *Roads to recovery: three skill and labour market scenarios for 2025*. Briefing note; June 2013.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9081\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9081_en.pdf).
- Cedefop et al. (eds) (2004). *European perspectives on learning at work: the acquisition of work process knowledge*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop Reference series; No 56.  
[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/3033\\_EN.PDF](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/3033_EN.PDF).
- Collins, A. et al. (1987). *Cognitive apprenticeship: teaching the craft of reading, writing, and mathematics*. Technical report; No 403.  
<http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED284181.pdf>.
- Conseil National de l'insertion par l'activité économique [French National Council of Integration through Economic Activity] (2009). *Synthèse des études territoriales: résultats et perspectives* [Synthesis of territorial studies: results and perspectives]. [http://avise.org/IMG/mediatheque/2009-08-20\\_Synthese\\_des\\_etudes\\_regionales\\_mars\\_09.pdf](http://avise.org/IMG/mediatheque/2009-08-20_Synthese_des_etudes_regionales_mars_09.pdf).
- Council of the European Union (2004). *Draft conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning*. Brussels, 18 May 2004.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/validation2004\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/validation2004_en.pdf).
- Council of the European Union (2008). Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on adult learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 140, 6.6.2008, pp.10-13. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:140:0010:0013:EN:PDF>.
- Council of the European Union (2010). Council decision of 21 October 2010 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 308, 24.11.2010, pp. 46-51.  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:308:0046:0051:EN:PDF>.
- Council of the European Union (2011). Council resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 372, 20.12.2011, pp. 1-6. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:372:0001:0006:EN:PDF>.
- Council of the European Union (2012). Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 398, 22.12.2012, pp. 1-5. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF>.

- Council of the European Union; European Commission (2010). *The Bruges communiqué*. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf).
- Cranmer, S. et al. (2004). *Putting good practice into practice: literacy, numeracy and key skills within apprenticeships. Part 1*. [http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications\\_details.asp?ID=26#](http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=26#).
- Daguerre, A.; Etherington, D. (2009). *Active labour market policies in international context: what works best? Lessons for the UK*. Department for work and pensions working paper; No 59.
- Dench, S.; Hillage, J.; Coare, P. (2006). *The impact of learning on unemployed, low-qualified adults: a systematic review*. Department for work and pensions research report; No 375.
- Dorival, C. (2010). Au cœur des politiques de lutte contre l'exclusion [At the heart of policies fighting exclusion]. *Alternatives économiques poche* [Economic alternatives pocket edition], May 2010, No 44.
- Ecotec (2008). *Beyond the Maastricht communiqué: developments in the opening up of VET pathways and the role of VET in labour market integration: consolidated final report*. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/vetreport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/vetreport_en.pdf).
- Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. London: Falmer Press.
- Eraut, M. (2004). Informal learning in the workplace. *Studies in continuing education*, 2004, Vol. 26, No 2, pp. 247-273.
- Eraut, M. (2007a). Learning from other people in the workplace. *Oxford review of education*, 2007, Vol. 33, No 4, pp. 403-422.
- Eraut, M. (2007b). Theoretical and practical knowledge revisited. Paper presented at the *12th biennial conference for research on learning and instruction, Budapest, 28 August to 1 September 2007*. <http://old.mofet.macam.ac.il/iun-archive/mechkar/pdf/Theoreticalandpractical.pdf>.
- Eraut, M.; Hirsch, W. (2007). *The significance of workplace learning for individuals, groups and organisations*. <http://www.skope.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Monogrpah%209.pdf>.
- European Commission (2006). *Adult learning: it is never too late to learn: communication from the Commission*. COM(2006) 614 final. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006\\_0614en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0614en01.pdf).
- European Commission (2008a). *New skills for new jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs. Commission staff working document: accompanying the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. SEC(2008) 3058. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/sec3058\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/sec3058_en.pdf).

- European Commission (2008b). *New skills for new jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs: communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. COM(2008) 868 final. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0868:FIN:EN:PDF>.
- European Commission (2010a). *An agenda for new skills and jobs: a European contribution towards full employment: communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. COM(2010) 682 final. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6328&langId=en>.
- European Commission (2010b). *Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: communication from the Commission*. COM(2010) 2020. <http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/docs/en/investing-in-research-european-commission-europe-2020-2010.pdf>.
- European Commission (2010c). *A new impetus for European cooperation in vocational education and training to support the Europe 2020 strategy: communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*. COM(2010) 296 final. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0296:FIN:EN:PDF>.
- European Commission (2011a). *EU employment and social situation quarterly review: December 2011*. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1157&furtherNews=yes>.
- European Commission (2011b). *Mobility in Europe 2011*. <http://www.mobilitypartnership.eu/Documents/Mobility%20in%20Europe%202011.pdf>.
- European Commission (2012a). *Assessment of key competences in initial education and training: policy guidance. Rethinking education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes. Commission staff working document: accompanying document to the communication from the Commission*. SWD(2012) 371 final. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking/sw371\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking/sw371_en.pdf).
- European Commission (2012b). *European vacancy monitor*, January 2012, No 5. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7314&langId=en>.
- European Commission; Ecorys (2008). *Benefit systems and their interaction with active labour market policies in the new Member States: final report*. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=3193&langId=en>.
- European Commission; Ecorys (2011). *Intralab: in search of inspiring policy practices: final report*.



- [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/final\\_report\\_27\\_May\\_2011.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/final_report_27_May_2011.pdf).
- European Commission; Ecotec (2006). *A study on policies for involving the social partners in the integration of people at a disadvantage in the labour market: final report*. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2072&langId=en>.
- European Commission; Eurostat (2006). *Labour market policy database: methodology. Revision of June 2006*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-BF-06-003/EN/KS-BF-06-003-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-BF-06-003/EN/KS-BF-06-003-EN.PDF).
- European Commission; Research voor Beleid (2010). *Impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on the adult learning sector (2nd phase): final report*. [http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2011/adultreport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2011/adultreport_en.pdf).
- European Commission; Ecorys; IZA (2012). *Analysis of costs and benefits of active compared to passive measures: final report*. [http://sozialstaat.ids-web.at/get\\_file.php?id=1222](http://sozialstaat.ids-web.at/get_file.php?id=1222).
- European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2006). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 394, 30.12.2006, pp. 10-18. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:EN:PDF>.
- European Parliament; Council of the EU (2008). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 111, 6.5.2008, pp. 1-7. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF>.
- Eurostat (2012a). *Employment rate by highest level of education attained: % of age group 20-64 years*. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsdec430>.
- Eurostat (2012b). *Unemployment statistics*. [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics).
- Eurostat (2013a). *Unemployment rates of the population aged 25-64 by level of education: annual average*. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00066&plugin=1>.
- Eurostat (2013b) *EU labour force survey*. [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/EU\\_labour\\_force\\_survey](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey).

- Eurostat (2013c). *Methods used for seeking work: percentage of unemployed who declared having used a given method, by sex (%)*.  
[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa\\_ugmsw&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_ugmsw&lang=en).
- Eurostat (2013d). *Participation rate in education and training by highest level of education attained*.  
[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=trng\\_aes\\_102&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=trng_aes_102&lang=en).
- Eurostat (2013e). *Unemployment statistics*.  
[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Unemployment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics).
- Eurostat (2013f). *Population by education attainment level, sex and age groups*.  
[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq\\_pgaed&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_pgaed&lang=en).
- Evans, K.; Kersh, N. (2006). Adults learning in, for and through the workplace: the significance of biography and experience. Paper presented at the *British Educational Research Association annual conference, University of Warwick, 6 to 9 September 2006*.  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/157527.htm>.
- Evans, K.; Waite, E. (2008). *Adult workers' engagement in formal and informal learning: insights into workplace basic skills from four UK organisations*.  
<http://www.nald.ca/library/research/interplay/insights/insights.pdf>.
- Evans, K. et al. (2006). *Improving workplace learning*. London: Routledge.
- Fettes, T.L. (2011). Generic skills. In: Huddleston, P.; Stanley, J. (eds). *Work-related teaching and learning: a guide for teachers and practitioners*. London: Routledge, pp. 116-132.
- Fuller, A.; Unwin, L. (2004). Expansive learning environments: integrating personal and organisational development. In: Rainbird, H.; Fuller, A.; Munro, A. (eds). *Workplace learning in context*. London: Routledge.
- Gerfin, M.; Lechner, M.; Steiger, H. (2002). *Does subsidised temporary employment get the unemployed back to work? An econometric analysis of two different schemes*. IZA discussion paper series; No 606.  
<http://ftp.iza.org/dp606.pdf>.
- Gonczi, A. (2002). Teaching and learning of the key competences. In: SFSO; ESSI; AIR (eds). *Contributions to the second DeSeCo symposium Geneva, Switzerland, 11 to 13 February 2002*. Neuchâtel: Swiss Federal Statistical Office, pp. 117-131.
- Gordon, J. et al. (2009). *Key competences in Europe: opening doors for lifelong learners across the school curriculum and teacher education*. Warsaw: CASE. CASE network reports; No 87.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/keyreport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/keyreport_en.pdf).
- Hager, P.J.; Halliday, J. (2006). *Recovering informal learning: wisdom, judgement and community*. Dordrecht: Springer.

- Hamilton, M.; Wilson, A. (eds) (2005). *New ways of engaging new learners: lessons from round one of the practitioner-led research initiative*. London: NRDC. [http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc\\_2990.pdf](http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_2990.pdf).
- Holzer, H.J. (1996). *What employers want: job prospects for less-educated workers*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Illeris, K. (2006). Lifelong learning and the low-skilled. *International journal of lifelong education*, Vol. 25, No 1, pp. 15-28.
- Institute of Education et al. (2009). *Putting knowledge to work: integrating work-based and subject-based knowledge in intermediate level qualifications and workforce upskilling*. London: Institute of Education.  
<http://wbl-ipd.uwe.ac.uk/FileStore/LearningObjects/LearningObject378/Book%20of%20Exemplars.pdf>.
- Jurmo, P. (2004). Workplace literacy education: definitions, purposes and approaches. *Focus on basics*, 2004, Vol. 7, No B.  
<http://www.ncsall.net/index.html?id=629.html>.
- Kazis, R. (1998). *New labour market intermediaries: what's driving them? Where are they headed? A background paper*.  
<http://www.jff.org/sites/default/files/Newlabormarket.pdf>.
- Kluve, J. (2006). *The effectiveness of European active labour market policy*. IZA discussion paper series; No 2018. <http://ftp.iza.org/dp2018.pdf>.
- Kluve, J. et al. (2007). *Active labour market policies in Europe: performance and perspectives*. Berlin: Springer.
- de Koning, J. (2007). Is the changing pattern in the use of active labour market policies consistent with what evaluations tell us about their relative performance? In: de Koning, J. (ed.). *The evaluation of active labour market policies: measures, public-private partnerships and benchmarking*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 23-45.
- Lave, J.; Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levenson, A.R. (2001). *Investing in workers' basic skills: lessons from company-funded workplace-based programmes*. CEO publication; G 1-18 (408). <http://ceo.usc.edu/pdf/G0118408.pdf>.
- Lord, P.; Hart, R.; Springate, I. (2010). The impact of adult basic skills development on individuals and employers. In: Macleod, S.; Straw, S. (eds). *Adult basic skills*. Reading: CfBT Education Trust, pp. 12-42.
- Marr, B.; Hagston, J. (2007). *Thinking beyond numbers: learning numeracy for the future workplace*. Adelaide: NCVET.
- McAleavy, G.; Collins, K.; Adamson, G. (2004). Adult learning in Northern Ireland: investigating further education policies for widening participation. *Research in post-compulsory education*, 2004, Vol. 9, No 1, pp. 83-104.

- MEDEF et. al. (2008). *Entreprises et insertion: collaborer et coproduire sur le territoire* [Businesses and insertion: collaborate and coproduce in the territory]. Paris: ALPE. [http://portail-iae.org/IMG/Vademecum\\_Entreprises\\_et\\_insertion\\_collaborer\\_et\\_coproduire\\_sur\\_le\\_territoire.pdf](http://portail-iae.org/IMG/Vademecum_Entreprises_et_insertion_collaborer_et_coproduire_sur_le_territoire.pdf).
- Metcalf, H. et al. (2009). *Evaluation of the impact of skills for life learning: longitudinal survey of adult learners on college-based literacy and numeracy courses: final report*. <http://www.researchonline.org.uk/sds/search/go.do;jsessionid=4EEA38B7854202025B75C9307262AD53?action=document&ref=B13883>.
- Mikulecky, L. (1988). *Literacy for the workplace*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Cohésion Sociale et du Logement [French Ministry of Employment, Social Cohesion and Housing] (2005). *Circulaire DGEFP No 2005/41 du 28 novembre 2005 relative aux ateliers et chantiers d'insertion* [Circular DGEFP No 2005/41 of 28 November 2005 on workshops and integration projects]. [http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/files/files/Circulaire\\_n2005-41\\_du\\_28\\_novembre\\_2005-ACI.pdf](http://www.emploi.gouv.fr/files/files/Circulaire_n2005-41_du_28_novembre_2005-ACI.pdf).
- Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Santé [French Ministry of Labour, Employment and Health] (2011). L'insertion par l'activité économique en 2008 [Integration through economic activity in 2008]. *Dares analyses*; 19. <http://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2011-019-2.pdf>.
- Ministère du Travail, des Relations Sociales et de la Solidarité [French Ministry of Labour, Social Relations and Solidarity] (2008). *Circulaire DGEFP No 2008/1 du 3 janvier 2008 relative à la politique d'intervention du ministère chargé de l'emploi en faveur de l'accès aux compétences clés des personnes en insertion professionnelle* [Circular DGEFP No 2008/1 of 3 January 2008 on the intervention policy of the Ministry of Employment in favour of access to key skills of people entering the job market]. [http://circulaire.legifrance.gouv.fr/pdf/2009/04/cir\\_1219.pdf](http://circulaire.legifrance.gouv.fr/pdf/2009/04/cir_1219.pdf).
- Oesch, D. (2010). What explains high unemployment among low-skilled workers? Evidence from 21 OECD countries. *European journal of industrial relations*, 2010, Vol. 16, No 1, pp. 39-56.
- O'Neill, S.; Gish, A. (2001). *Apprentices' and trainees' English language and literacy skills in workplace learning and performance: employer and employee opinion*.
- Ouestfrance-emploi.com (2012). *Un certificat, première marche vers l'emploi* [A certificate, first step towards employment]. <http://www.ouestfrance-emploi.com/actualite-emploi/un-certificat-premiere-marche-vers-l-emploi>.
- Pluricité; Comité interministériel des villes [Interministerial committee for cities] (2010). *Analyse de l'impact de l'IAE dans les quartiers prioritaires* [Analysis of the impact of the IAE in priority areas]. [http://i.ville.gouv.fr/index.php/download\\_file/4133/6330/analyse-de-l-impact-de-l-iae-dans-les-quartiers-prioritaires-rapport-final](http://i.ville.gouv.fr/index.php/download_file/4133/6330/analyse-de-l-impact-de-l-iae-dans-les-quartiers-prioritaires-rapport-final).

- QCA (2008). *The diploma and its pedagogy*. QCA/08/3908.  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20081112162229/http://qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/The\\_Diploma\\_and\\_its\\_pedagogy.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20081112162229/http://qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/The_Diploma_and_its_pedagogy.pdf).
- Richardson, A.; Storberg-Walker, J. (2006). Instructional design in job skills training for welfare recipients and displaced workers. Paper presented at the *Academy of Human Resource Development international conference, Columbus, OH, 22 to 26 February 2006*, pp. 280-287.
- Sagan, O. et al. (2005). *Putting good practice into practice: literacy, numeracy and key skills within apprenticeships. Part two: revisiting and re-evaluating*.  
[http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications\\_details.asp?ID=96](http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=96).
- Shaw, N. et al. (2006). *Evaluation of the Union learning fund (2001-05)*. Department for education and skills research report; RR789. Nottingham: DfES Publications.  
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR789.pdf>.
- Skule, S. (2004). Learning conditions at work: a framework to understand and assess informal learning in the workplace. *International journal of training and development*, 2004, Vol. 8, No 1, pp. 8-20.
- Stanley, J. (2012). What is work-related learning? In: Huddleston, P.; Stanley, J. (eds). *Work-related teaching and learning: a guide for practitioners*. London: Routledge, pp. 11-28.
- Stavrou, S.; Nyhan, B. (2004). Preface. In: Cedefop; Fischer, M. et al. (eds). *European perspectives on learning at work: the acquisition of work process knowledge*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop Reference series; No 56, pp. 6-7. [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/3033\\_EN.PDF](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/3033_EN.PDF).
- Taylor, M.; Evans, K.; Mohamed, A. (2008). *The value of formal and informal training for workers with low literacy: exploring experiences in Canada and the United Kingdom*.  
<http://www.nald.ca/library/research/interplay/value/value.pdf>.
- Unesco (2006). *International standard classification of education (ISCED) 1997*. Paris: Unesco Publishing.  
<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/isced97-en.pdf>.
- Vignoles, A.; de Coulon, A.; Marcenaro-Gutierrez, O. (2008). *The value of basic skills in the British labour market*. London: NRDC.  
[http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc\\_4315.pdf](http://www.nrdc.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_4315.pdf).

## ANNEX 1.

# European reference framework of key competences

- **Communication in the mother tongue**, which is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts.
- **Communication in foreign languages**, which involves, in addition to the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue, mediation and intercultural understanding. The level of proficiency depends on several factors and the capacity for listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- **Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology**. Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking to solve a range of problems in everyday situations, with the emphasis being placed on process, activity and knowledge.
- **Digital competence** involves the confident and critical use of information society technology and thus basic skills in ICT.
- **Learning to learn** is related to learning, the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities.
- **Social and civic competences**. Social competence refers to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour that equips individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential.
- **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** is the ability to turn ideas into action. It involves creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects to achieve objectives. This should include awareness of ethical values and promoting good governance.
- **Cultural awareness and expression**, which involves appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts).

---

Source: European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2006.

## ANNEX 2. Interviews

As described in Chapter 2, various research tools were used in the study, including semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted at different levels:

- (a) interviews with strategic stakeholders in each Member State;
- (b) interviews in the case studies with delivery organisations, employers and programme participants.

### (a) Strategic stakeholder interviews

At least two strategic stakeholders (minimum of three for larger Member States) working in organisations whose remit was to develop unemployment and/or education and training policies in their Member State. In Member States where there were separate organisations responsible for developing unemployment and education/training policies, at least one representative from each organisation was interviewed. To ensure consistency, interviews were carried out with stakeholders who performed similar functions or worked in organisations that had similar responsibilities.

Table 7 **Strategic stakeholder interviews**

Member State	Role/responsibility of stakeholder	Organisation of the stakeholder	Number of interviews
Czech Republic	Head of adult and tertiary professional education unit	Ministry of Education	3
	Department of employment policy	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	
	Department of active employment policy	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	
Denmark	Special advisor	National Labour Market Authority	2
	Senior advisor	National Education Agency, department of vocationally oriented education	

Member State	Role/responsibility of stakeholder	Organisation of the stakeholder	Number of interviews
Germany	Director	National Employment Agency	8
	Head of department IIc4	Services for activation and reintegration, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	
	Head of department IIc5	Social assistance and employment creation, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	
	Counsellor	Future in the Center (Zukunft im Zentrum) gGmbH (large delivery organisation in the state of Berlin)	
	Chief executive officer	Tanmed GmbH, (a smaller, private delivery organisation, implementing measures within the programme 'measures for activation and reintegration')	
	Coordinator	Charitable Society for Vocational Training (Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft für berufsbildende Maßnahmen) gGmbH (a non-for-profit delivery organisation, implementing, among others, measures within the programme 'measures for activation and reintegration')	
	Head of department labour market and migration	Worker's welfare (Arbeiterwohlfahrt) (one of the largest non-for-profit delivery organisations in Germany, providing services to the National Employment Agency nationwide, among others implementing measures in the work opportunities programme)	
	Programme manager for work opportunities and measures for activation	International Confederation (Internationaler Bund)	



Member State	Role/responsibility of stakeholder	Organisation of the stakeholder	Number of interviews
	and integration	(one of the largest non-profit delivery organisations in Germany, providing different services, in several of the programmes)	
Estonia	Chief specialist of vocational and adult education department	Ministry of Education and Research	4
	Member of the board	Estonian unemployment insurance fund	
	Head of vocational education quality and information centre	Foundation Innove	
	Chief specialist of labour market department	Ministry of Social Affairs	
Ireland	Director of training and curriculum	Training and Employment Authority	3
	Training centre manager	Training and Employment Authority	
	Adult education officer	Limerick City Adult Education Service	
Spain	Technical advisor	Ministry of Education	3
	Coordinator of international relationships	Public employment service	
	Head of department for LLL	Ministry of Labour and Immigration	
France	Deputy director of vocational training/technical advisor on schools-vocational training-apprenticeships-alternating training	Ile-de-France Regional Council (Conseil Régional de l'Ile-de-France)	7
	Head of department and team members of the department of the definition of needs and evaluation in the directorate of careers guidance and training	French public employment service (Pole emploi)	
	Project design manager in the design/engineering	National Vocational Training Association for	

Member State	Role/responsibility of stakeholder	Organisation of the stakeholder	Number of interviews
	department	Adults (Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes)	
	Careers engineering manager	National Vocational Training Association for Adults (Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes)	
	Project officer (insertion par l'activité économique), training and qualification policies mission	Delegation for employment and vocational training of the Ministry of Employment	
	Deputy director of the training and qualification policies mission	Delegation for employment and vocational training of the Ministry of Employment	
	Director	National Association for Fighting Illiteracy (Association nationale de lutte contre l'illettrisme)	
Italy	Officer – DG active labour market policies	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies	6
	Manager Ufficio IV – DG for higher VET and for relations with regions' training systems	Department for education, Ministry of Education, Scientific Research and University	
	Director-general for training	Toscana region, currently in charge of coordination of regions on ESF	
	Area manager – evaluation of human resources development programmes and policies	Toscana region, currently in charge of coordination of regions on ESF	
	Area manager – evaluation of human resources development programmes and policies	ISFOL	
	Responsible methodological coordination unit for surveys on training	ISFOL	

Member State	Role/responsibility of stakeholder	Organisation of the stakeholder	Number of interviews
Hungary	Head of education	Budapest chambers of commerce	3
	Head of department	Regional employment services/labour centre	
	Senior counsellor	Department of VET and adult education, Ministry for National Economy	
Malta	Chief executive officer	Employment Training Corporation	4
	Permanent secretary	Ministry of Education, Employment and Family	
	Director	Directorate of lifelong learning	
	Principal	Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology	
Netherlands	Director reintegration and participation, analysis and vision development	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment	4
	Manager employers' organisation reintegration companies	Employers organisation reintegration companies	
	Senior business consultant policy development	National Employment Agency	
	Manager work and reintegration	Rotterdam Municipality	
Poland	Director	National centre for supporting vocational and continuing education subordinated by Ministry of National Education	3
	Head/Chief specialist	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	
	Director	Job office, Mazowieckie Voivodship	
Slovenia	Deputy general director	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Directorate for labour market and employment	2

Member State	Role/responsibility of stakeholder	Organisation of the stakeholder	Number of interviews
	Assistant for employment and vocational guidance	Employment service of Slovenia	
Sweden	Director of education, unit for adult education	National Agency for Education	2
	Strategic advisors	Swedish public employment service	
UK	Assistant director of skills, skills and funding policy	Scottish Funding Council	4
	Head of partnership and skills strategy	Department of work and pensions	
	Head of a partnership area team	Skills Funding Agency	
	Head of youth engagement and employment unit	Department for education and skills, Welsh government	

Source: Cedefop.

## (b) Interviews in case studies

The case study work involved interviews with a sample of the organisations that delivered the programmes, employers that offered work placements, and low-qualified unemployed adults who were or had been involved in the programmes. Table 8 sets out the numbers of interviews carried out for each case study. It should be noted that the table does not reflect the total number of participants consulted via focus groups and so the actual number of those consulted is higher; for example, in France four participants were interviewed in-depth and one focus group was conducted on-site with a group of 10 programme participants.

Table 8 Interviews conducted in case studies

	Delivery organisations	Programme participants	Employers	Total
DK	4	4	1	9
DE	3	4	2	9
EE	1	2	2	5
IE	6	2	N/A	8
ES	2	4	2	8
FR	7	5	N/A	12
HU	10	17	1	28
NL	2	5	1	8
SE	9	7	2	18
UK	4	3	N/A	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>112</b>

Source: Cedefop.

## ANNEX 3. Case study information

This annex provides some basic information on the programmes/initiatives investigated in the case studies.

Country	Title of programme /initiative	Short description
Denmark	Basic education for adults	<p>The GUV was implemented in 2001 and allows low-skilled adults (25+ years), with a minimum of two years of relevant work experience, to supplement their previous qualifications and work experience to achieve a full vocational qualification (equivalent to IVET) in various fields, e.g. retail or logistics.</p> <p>The GUV programme uses a modular approach and individual training plans, offering a range of courses from vocational education programmes, adult vocational training programmes and/or general adult education programmes. Most of the training is provided at the education institution but includes simulated WBL and sometimes practical training in enterprises. Some programmes are structured as ‘sandwich programmes’ (i.e. students alternate between studying at the educational institution and working in a company).</p> <p>The Ministry for Children and Education is responsible for the GUV. It sets the framework for the competence assessment and the curriculum development, and the rules on which courses may be included in the overall qualification. The programme aims and the framework for the teaching content is determined by occupational/sectoral committees (around 50) consisting of trade unions and employer organisations. The committees also decide on the course length and structure and ensure that the programme meets business and labour market needs.</p>
Estonia	Labour market training programme ( <i>Pikk ja kvaliteetne tööelu</i> )	<p>The labour market training programme was introduced in the early 1990s, with various changes in the format since then. It is implemented under the Estonian unemployment insurance fund under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs.</p> <p>The training targets the development of key competences and job-specific skills. Each training programme is negotiated individually between the fund advisor and the client (i.e. unemployed person). Employer cooperation is a feature (for example employers can be involved in the selection process of the person(s) to be trained for specific vacancies and ensure that actual labour need is taken into account). Training is provided through two different means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) ‘training card’: the client may participate in training at different education centres, schools or training providers;</li> <li>(b) ‘procurement of training’: training services are commissioned by the fund.</li> </ul>

<p><b>France</b></p>	<p>Integration workshops and worksites, one particular strand of the 'integration through work' programme</p>	<p>See Annex 4</p>
<p><b>Germany</b></p>	<p>Measures for activation and reintegration into labour (<i>Maßnahmen zur Aktivierung und beruflichen Eingliederung</i>)</p>	<p>The 'measures for activation and occupational integration' (<i>Maßnahmen zur Aktivierung und beruflichen Eingliederung</i>) programme is the largest programme for reintegrating unemployed adults into work in Germany. It is administered by the National Employment Agency.</p> <p>The programme consists of 15 'basic instruments' or schemes, many of which include work-based elements (mostly in the form of practical training provided by the delivery organisations, and/or work placements with regional employers). They can be adapted to regional requirements by the local employment agencies and the delivery organisations.</p> <p>The case study covers two delivery organisations who offer three out of the 15 'basic instruments':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) activation for new customers (<i>Neukundenaktivierung</i>): this scheme is aimed at persons who have either become unemployed recently and need support or are preparing to re-enter the labour market after a longer period of inactivity. This scheme has various components (e.g. workshops on how to improve the CV, courses on new information technology, internships with employers). The length of participation varies (normally three to six months), according to the needs of the participants;</li> <li>(b) activation centre (<i>Aktivcenter</i>): this scheme is aimed at long-term unemployed persons with multiple restraints. The duration of participation is six to nine months. Work-based phases are the rule; they are carried out either as an internship (four weeks) in a company or as practical modules at a vocational training centre. The scheme aims at developing a wide array of key competences, primarily social competences;</li> <li>(c) practice centre (<i>Praxiscenter</i>): this scheme is also similar to the above, but has a specific focus on the long-term unemployed and work-based training. It has a longer duration than many other measures (up to six months).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Hungary</b></p>	<p>Springboard programme (Dobbanto)</p>	<p>The Dobbanto programme has been developed in north Hungary under the social renewal operational programmes, which are decentralised programmes aimed to promote the employment of the disadvantaged.</p> <p>The programme consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) vocational training including theoretical and practical (WBL) elements;</li> <li>(b) additional training, addressing key competences and other skills (e.g. job searching skill);</li> <li>(c) six months work experience (for some participants; the number of work placements is limited).</li> </ul> <p>The programme is run by a consortium whose members are regional national institutes, non-governmental organisations and local authorities and other local interest groups. The National Training and Research Centre ensures quality control and coordinates the work of the consortium partners.</p>
<p><b>Ireland</b></p>	<p>Traineeship programme</p>	<p>The Irish Training and Employment Authority (Foras Áiseanna Saothair) (FÁS) traineeship programmes are occupationally specific and industry endorsed training programmes that contain FÁS training in training centres and work placements. There is a high level of involvement with employers and programmes are aligned with labour market trends. Key competence development is embedded in the programme.</p> <p>The training content and occupational standards for traineeships are developed in consultation with employers, trade union, regulatory bodies and interest groups. The programme is delivered in partnership with private training providers and employers who provide work placements.</p>
<p><b>Netherlands</b></p>	<p>Work training centre Rotterdam south (<i>Arbeids training centrum Rotterdam Zuid</i> – ATC Tarwewijk)</p>	<p>This ‘work training centre Rotterdam south’ programme started in 2010 and is part of the ‘national work first’ programme of labour market activation. It is a neighbourhood-based programme which is targeted at low-skilled unemployed.</p> <p>The programme focuses on employability skills and providers function as brokers to help participants gain employment with local businesses. WBL is provided in the training centre (usually simple production work) to acquire work rhythm and other key competences (communicating with colleagues and managers, accepting authority/hierarchy). Job-specific skills are not specifically addressed. The provider actively recruits employers to offer employment to participants and selects candidates for the employers.</p> <p>The programme is implemented under the responsibility of the municipality.</p>



<p><b>Spain</b></p>	<p>Employment workshops (<i>Talleres de empleo</i>)</p>	<p>The employment workshops programme (<i>talleres de empleo</i>) was introduced within the 1998 national action plan for employment and targets unemployed adults (25+ years). The participants receive theoretical and practical training, and carry out jobs and services in local public companies that are publicly or socially useful; the duration is one year. It is a mixed scheme which combines training in a learning institution with WBL in a public enterprise.</p> <p>Implementation and management of the programme is the joint responsibility of the public regional employment services and the provider organisations. The regional employment services manage the employment workshops programme at regional level; they are responsible for drawing up the programmes and approving, coordinating, monitoring and financing the projects. The provider organisations are responsible for implementation at municipal level. They develop the initiatives and have responsibility for managing the project. They organise the theoretical part and build partnerships with public companies which provide work placements.</p>
<p><b>Sweden</b></p>	<p>Vocational adult education programme (<i>Yrkesvux</i>)</p>	<p>The Swedish government committed additional funding for 2009-13 to municipalities to provide vocational adult education.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education, together with the National Agency for Education, sets out the framework for the vocational adult education programme, while the municipalities apply for grants and cooperate with the PES, trade unions and employer organisations to determine the need for vocational adult education (number of places, type of courses, etc.). The design of the provision is up to the individual delivery organisations.</p> <p>The length of the course is generally around 40 to 50 weeks, with most of the education and training being provided at the education institution (but including simulated WBL), using modular approaches. An important part of the course is the work placement element which accounts for approximately 5-10 weeks. Following completion of the programme, participants are awarded a full vocational qualification (equivalent to IVET). The most popular vocational area in the scheme is health and social care.</p>
<p><b>UK (Scotland)</b></p>	<p>Sector routeway programme, LOAN project</p>	<p>The LOAN project is part of the sector routeway programme. The sector routeway programme is a form of support offered to unemployed people to give them the skills and confidence to move into entry level jobs in a particular sector. Key competences such as communication are addressed. A key part of the sector routeway programme is a 60-hour training; some also include work placements.</p> <p>LOAN has been developed in west Dunbartonshire, based on local partnership. It targets two sectors: medical administration and hospitality. The aim of the medical administration programme is to provide the participants with a range of national certificate modules covering topics such as word processing, IT, medical reception/records, medical terminology. Key competence development (e.g. communication skills) is embedded in the programme. It involves a work placement in hospitals or general practitioner surgeries.</p>

## ANNEX 4. Case study example

The analysis of the 10 in-depth case studies is presented in Chapter 4. This annex provides an example of one.

Case Study: France	
<b>Name of programme</b>	ACI one of four strands of the IAE programme
<b>Name of Member State</b>	France
<b>Name of delivery organisation(s) visited</b>	National network of worksite schools ( <i>réseau national chantier école</i> )
<b>Context of the programme</b>	<p>The IAE programme emerged in France in the late 1970s, and today has an annual budget of around EUR 600 million. It was set up to provide an alternative solution to schemes based purely on vocational training in traditional classroom situations for unemployed people facing particular difficulties on the labour market, as a response to rising unemployment and the increasing challenges faced by this target group.</p> <p>The IAE programme is delivered via four strands, which target publics with differing degrees of labour market and social difficulties and provide different types of services. Today, there are some 4 000 approved IAE organisations in France, employing nearly 200 000 unemployed people per year.</p> <p>The ACI strand was introduced in 2005 and targets those furthest from the labour market, providing temporary employment with enhanced personalised support for around 30 000 participants per year via 1 500 dedicated organisations across France.</p> <p>One of the major networks implementing the ACI programme is the <i>chantier école</i> network, which runs over 1 000 ACIs (600 organisations) across France. The network recently implemented a major programme to reorganise and improve the ACIs through training for staff and new tools, with a new focus on improving the technical skills and key competences which can be developed through participating in ACIs.</p>
Programme design and implementation	
<b>Overview of the programme</b>	<p>The IAE programme aims to provide work experience to unemployed people facing particular social and professional difficulties, to improve their employability and aid labour market integration.</p> <p>The ACI programme strand targets those furthest removed from the labour market, in particular the long-term unemployed and those on social minima payments, those who are socially excluded, those with</p>

## Case Study: France

very low levels of skills and competences, literacy problems and/or health or behaviour problems (Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Cohésion Sociale et du Logement, 2005, p. 30). In a study on IAE programme participants in one French region (Franche Comté), nearly 75% of ACI participants were on the social minima payments and 14% were recognised as disabled (Conseil national de l'insertion par l'activité économique, 2009, p. 14). The participants are referred onto the ACI programme due to the multiplicity of the difficulties they face.

The *chantier écoles* are accredited by the regional directorates of the Ministry of Employment for delivering the ACI programme. They have sole responsibility for delivering the ACIs they are accredited for, but often set up partnerships with external training organisations to help participants to reinforce certain skills and competences. They sign contracts with external employers (e.g. public rail network, municipalities, hospitals) to deliver services, and such relationships sometimes allow the possibility for participants to carry out work placements with these external employers.

Under the programme, dedicated organisations provide temporary work contracts of up to 24 months in a variety of economic sectors, often producing services of social utility. For example the three *chantier écoles* examined for the case study provide laundry services (Atout Linge in South Vendée), painting/decorating and interior maintenance (ARIES in the Parisian region) and services (gardening, cleaning, interior maintenance) for municipalities and associations, as well as a workshop producing clothing, toys, leather and wooden objects (manual creation workshop integration project) (*atelier de création manuel chantier d'insertion*) (DEFIS in Haute Marne).

The *chantier école* ACI programme aims to develop job-specific skills and key competences (basic skills and conduct), as well as employability skills (writing CVs and job applications, expressing their skills and competences) and other personal attributes such as self-confidence.

It defines 11 key competences to address, which are considered most relevant for this target group:

- (a) developing the necessary behaviour/conduct;
- (b) oral communication,
- (c) reading and understanding written text,
- (d) writing,
- (e) understanding spatial dimensions,
- (f) time organisation,
- (g) using maths in a work situation,
- (h) basic know-how of the chosen profession,
- (i) carrying out the technical skills of a job,
- (j) health and safety at work,
- (k) using IT.

These correspond principally to six of the eight EU key competences:

- (a) communication in the mother tongue,
- (b) mathematical competence and basic competences in science and

<b>Case Study: France</b>	
	<p>technology,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(c) digital competence,</li> <li>(d) learning to learn,</li> <li>(e) social and civic competences,</li> <li>(f) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.</li> </ul> <p>Throughout the programme, participants are encouraged to complete ‘work experience fiches’, which allow them to present the experience and skills gained during the programme, using concrete examples and even photos. At the end of the programme, the participants receive an ‘attestation of professional competence’ which they can use to prove to employers that they have acquired certain skills and competences. Some ACI participants also attempt to attain a formally recognised French vocational qualification, the certificate of professional competence (CCP). The acquisition of three CCPs is one of the routes to gaining a ‘professional title’ (i.e. licence to practice).</p> <p>Participation in the ACI programme not only provides beneficiaries with work experience and a minimum wage (proportionate to the hours worked), but also allows them access to unemployment benefits after the programme and to vocational training for workers (a legal right in France).</p>
<b>Implementation of the programme</b>	<p>Participants are referred to the ACI programme via the PES. For some, participation is voluntary, while others are obliged to participate to continue receiving benefits. There are no entry restrictions in terms of qualifications or skills, since participation is reserved for those facing the most serious difficulties on the labour market. Although ACIs have employment targets for beneficiaries (typically around 25%), there are no consequences if targets are not met.</p> <p>The ACI programme is entirely work-based. The work tasks carried out are exactly those from a ‘real’ workplace, since the ACIs provide real services. The lower productivity of the ACI participants is compensated for by the high levels of public subsidies. Each work task is carefully designed (through breaking down each activity) to develop specific technical skills, key competences and behaviours, with intensive support from specialised trainers/tutors/social assistants (there is approximately one support staff member for every four participants). However, the programme is also flexible: if deemed useful, participants can spend part of the time on off-the-job training courses and, where possible, carry out work placements with other employers.</p> <p>The programme is individually tailored to each participant, based on the initial assessment of their technical skills and key competences, and monitored through the two distinct ‘progress assessment booklets’, one for technical skills and one for key competences. Participants are fully involved in assessing their own skills and competences at all stages. Every work activity is broken down into the required skills, competences and behaviour; participants are assessed against these and then accompanied to develop those which are lacking.</p> <p>Various teaching and learning methods are used to develop skills, key</p>

## Case Study: France

competences and behaviour, always based on the work situation. Work tasks are used as the support for learning key competences, for example understanding mathematical percentages can be taught through calculating the surface area required for mowing a lawn or mixing fuels in appropriate amounts so that the lawn mower motor works. Technical fiches are produced for each work task, using pictures (due to the high level of illiteracy) and are placed all around the workplace, so that they can be consulted at any time. The fiches not only provide guidance on tasks for the participants, but also allow them to develop reading skills and the ability to follow instructions. Support staff is constantly on hand to help out and explain. Semi-formal assessments of progress (with in-house juries) are also carried out regularly to accustom participants to presenting their experience and skills, and to formalise progress. Even activities such as submitting holiday requests are treated as important learning experiences for participants since they teach time planning, completing a form, appropriate relationships with employers and calculating holiday allowance.

Due to the multiplicity of barriers to employment faced by participants (e.g. childcare, transport, debt, addiction), social assistants are on hand to 'secure' their participation in the programme, through helping them to resolve other issues which otherwise may cause them to drop out or not participate fully.

A key challenge encountered in delivering the programme is that, despite the progress made, some participants are still not ready for labour market integration or for more conventional forms of training after 24 months, but cannot be retained in the programme. There are also drop-outs during the programme, even though everything possible is done to avoid this situation.

## Effectiveness of the programme

### Impact of the programme

A study carried out on all ACIs in three regions showed that, after completing the programme, 25% to 32% of participants went into employment (although mostly temporary employment: only 5% to 12% had permanent jobs), and 5% to 11% entered further training (Conseil national de l'insertion par l'activité économique, 2009, p. 19).

In the three *chantier école* ACIs interviewed for the case study, the outcomes for 2011 participants were as follows:

- (a) ARIES: 46% went into employment, 30% went into other positive outcomes (i.e. further training) and 24% dropped out or were unemployed;
- (b) DEFIS (53 participants): 25% went into employment 4% went into further training, 17% were unemployed and 34% were inactive;
- (c) Atout Linge (32 participants): 22% went into employment, 13% went into further training, 13% went into specialised employment for disabled workers, 6% went into other unemployment programmes and 38% were unemployed.

The higher rate of employment outcomes for ARIES can be partly

Case Study: France	
	<p>attributed to its geographical location in the Parisian suburbs, where there are greater employment opportunities than the other two <i>chantier écoles</i>, located in rural areas.</p> <p>Some ACI participants manage to obtain one or more French vocational qualifications: the CCP. In Atout Linge, 11 participants managed to achieve a CCP in the social and healthcare sector, a major achievement celebrated in the regional press (Ouestfrance-emploi.com, 2012). In ARIES, the aim is for the participants to achieve the three CCPs necessary to gain the title of painter/decorator: in 2011, five out of the seven participants who attempted were successful: one achieved the full 'professional title' (as a painter-decorator) with all three CCPs, three obtained two CCPs and one participant got one CCP.</p> <p>Several employers have recognised that the programme corresponds to their needs. At national level, the <i>chantier écoles</i> have signed an agreement with the Metallurgy Employers' Confederation and there are also local level agreements, for example with one of the major building employers' confederations in Haute Marne. Employers have said that they are interested in such programmes since they have trouble finding suitable candidates for low-skilled jobs, with the right basic skills, conduct, attitudes and ability to integrate and learn new tasks.</p> <p>The economic crisis has compounded problems for the <i>chantier école</i> target group, since they must now compete on the labour market with more qualified unemployed people, while – in parallel – employment opportunities have become more limited.</p>
<p><b>Success factors</b></p>	<p>Key aspects of the programme which can be classified as good practice include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) using work tasks as a support for learning. Work provides status and self-confidence for participants and allows them to see the value of learning new skills and competences;</li> <li>(b) recognising the importance of learning both job-specific (technical) skills and key competences, understanding their complementarity and assessing them distinctly;</li> <li>(c) the focus on a core group of key competences which are essential for any work activity, which includes both basic skills (reading, writing, etc.) and conduct/behaviour;</li> <li>(d) the 'progress assessment booklets' which allow the identification of the skills and key competences (technical skills and key competences) and monitoring of progress;</li> <li>(e) intensive support for participants provided by the tutors/social assistants;</li> <li>(f) the tools and training programme for ACI staff developed by the <i>chantier école</i> network.</li> </ul> <p>The success of the programme is measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the progress of participants (in both technical skills and key competences) as measured in their 'progress assessment booklets';</li> <li>(b) the rate of completion of the programme;</li> <li>(c) the success of participants in gaining vocational qualifications;</li> <li>(d) the increased self-confidence, greater autonomy and improved self-</li> </ul>

Case Study: France	
	<p>image of participants;</p> <p>(e) participant outcomes after the programme (access to further learning, employment, etc.).</p>
Lessons learnt	
<b>General lessons learnt</b>	<p>The <i>chantier école</i> case study provides a number of important lessons in terms of the delivery of programmes for low-qualified, unemployed adults:</p> <p>(a) the importance of using work tasks, in as real a situation as possible, as a means for teaching both technical skills and key competences. Participants with a troubled history in formal education are thus able to understand the importance of basic skills, appropriate conduct and key competences and hence have increased motivation for learning;</p> <p>(b) the powerful motivational effect and boost to self-esteem which comes from having an employment contract, producing services that are useful to the community, gaining skills and competences and (re)gaining a structure in their lives, which often radiates beyond their own personal well-being to that of their immediate families, and even sometimes their communities;</p> <p>(c) the need to take into account the full situation of each participant to ‘secure’ their participation in the programme, through dealing with off-the-job issues which may otherwise cause them to drop out of the programme;</p> <p>(d) the positive effect of fully involving participants in assessing their own needs and progress;</p> <p>(e) the importance of providing tools to structure and monitor progress in learning in both technical skills and key competences and providing training for staff on how to use these tools most effectively;</p> <p>(f) the focus on ensuring that participants are able to present their experience, skills and competences in a positive light to potential employers, even if they are unable attain formal qualifications;</p> <p>(g) the potential cost benefits of implementing the programme compared to the cost of supporting someone on benefits (a recent study calculated that the IAE programme as a whole saved public funds some EUR 104 million; Conseil national de l’insertion par l’activité économique, 2009, p. 25).</p>
Annexes	
<b>Sources of information</b>	<p>(a) Interviews:</p> <p>(i) delivery organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provider – national delegate of the <i>chantier école</i> network in charge of development and professionalisation;</li> <li>• training engineer;</li> <li>• director, Association Atout Linge;</li> <li>• training advisor, Association Atout Linge;</li> <li>• director, DEFIS 52 and vice-president of the <i>chantier école</i> network in charge of training;</li> <li>• trainer, Association ARIES;</li> <li>• director, Association ARIES.</li> </ul>



## Case Study: France

(ii) programme participants:

- participant 1 – programme participant (for 12 months), Association Atout Linge;
- participant 2 – programme participant (for seven months), Association Atout Linge;
- participant 3 – programme participant (for 24 months), Association Atout Linge;
- participant 4 – former programme participant (24 months), Association ARIES;
- group of 10 programme participants, Association ARIES.

(b) Literature:

- (i) Conseil national de l'insertion par l'activité économique, 2009;
- (ii) Pluricité and Comité interministériel des villes, 2010;
- (iii) Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Santé, 2011;
- (iv) Dorival, 2010;
- (v) MEDEF et al., 2008;
- (vi) Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Cohésion Sociale et du Logement, 2005;
- (vii) Ministère du Travail, des Relations Sociales et de la Solidarité;
- (viii) Brun et al., 2006;
- (ix) ouestfrance-emploi.com, 2012;
- (x) <http://www.chantierecole.org> [accessed 16.9.2013].





**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

## Return to work

### Work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market

Luxembourg:  
Publications Office of the European Union

2013 – VI, 138 p. – 21 x 29.7 cm

ISBN 978-92-896-1364-4

ISSN 1831-2403

doi: 10.2801/32083

Cat. No: TI-BA-13-004-EN-N

Free download at:

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6121\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6121_en.pdf)

Free of charge – 6121 EN –

## Return to work

### Work-based learning and the reintegration of unemployed adults into the labour market

Low-qualified adults have experienced a greater rise in unemployment than any other group in Europe. What particular barriers are they facing in (re-)entering the labour market? How can VET be used in active labour market policies to help overcome these barriers? How can training programmes be designed to address the particular needs of this target group?

This report shows how work-based learning (WBL) programmes which include key competence development can make an important contribution. WBL offers a way of learning which is different and has the potential to be more attractive and suitable than 'traditional' school-based forms, especially for those with previous negative experience. Its potential comes not only from the mode of delivery, but also from the knowledge, skills and competences it can foster and a range of other benefits, such as the opportunity to connect with potential employers.

---

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylea), GREECE  
Postal address: PO Box 22427, 551 02 Thessaloniki, GREECE  
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020  
E-mail: [info@cedefop.europa.eu](mailto:info@cedefop.europa.eu)

---

visit our portal [www.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu)

---

6121 EN

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6121\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/6121_en.pdf)

