



Initial comparative study of employment context and resources for people over the age of 45 in Germany, Lithuania, Spain, and Sweden

The goal and objectives of the study

The main goal of this comparative study is to identify the labour market and education policies, initiatives, resources and national and European institutions oriented to groups over the age of 45. The findings of the study will be used as the main reference information for the development of the other products of the project, including:

- Development of the training tutorials for job placement programs aimed at people over the age of 45+, where the findings of the study (especially related to the learning needs, provision of training and employment services in the countries, employment and VET policy measures targeted to the population 45+) will serve as useful source of information.
- Development of the Mature 2.0 45+ center, which will also contain the main findings of the comparative study information area from each country, like training offer, national job offers and EURES, reports and alerts on relevant work aspects of the group, useful links and contacts relevant to the group.
- The findings of study will also be used for the preparation of different articles and working papers.

Methodology

The methodology of study was developed by the Folkuniversitetet (Sweden). The questions of research cover the following topics:

1. Situation of 45+ with regards to education / employment /self-employment and civic inclusion.
2. Existing infrastructure regarding the 45+ into the educational system / labour market in partner countries.
3. Employment situation regarding the 45+and key local and regional actors involved, e.g. employment agencies, social services, private organizations etc.
4. Perspective of stakeholders / actors responsible for working with 45+ in the partner countries – which barriers / solutions do they recognise.

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5. Formal criteria for entering formal education (pre-vocational, VET, enterprise course, etc.).
6. Existing non- and informal education/training aimed at the 45+ group.
7. Inventory of national research on the target group 45+.
8. National policies regarding the 45+ into the educational system / labour market in the partner countries.

There were applied several main methods of research – desktop study of the existing literature, analysis of the official statistical information, contents analysis of the policy documents and qualitative social research by interviewing responsible actors and policy makers in the project partners countries.

Main findings

Lithuania

Effective social and economic integration of the age group 45+ is of crucial importance for coherent economic and social development of Lithuania because of the fast shrinking of human resources caused by emigration and unfavourable demographic development trends.

Although this age group is not specifically discerned in the national policies of education and employment, many policy measures target this age group together with some other age groups.

Looking to the current policy initiatives related to improvement of education and employment opportunities for the 45+, there can be noticed the lack of consistency and systemic approach in this field. Most of these measures currently are based on the EU funded projects, what raises the question of their long-term sustainability and impact.

Germany

As outlined, the age group 45+ cannot be described as a disadvantaged age group per se in Germany. The main group of interest for our project in Germany will probably be the group of older long-term unemployed people who are particularly hard hit by the labour market trends if they are also low- or semi-skilled. The qualification of this target group, whether old or young, is also of major concern in the context of the digitalisation of work which, as described above, is one of the

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major trends of labour market policy in Germany at the moment. All research indicates that qualification will increasingly be the main determining factor for successful labour market participation.

Spain

Spanish society experiences profound social and economic changes led by globalization, information and communication technologies and other technological advances, all of which are transforming the social and economic model. The forms and possibilities of relating, communicating, moving, producing goods and services are mutating, industries are disappearing as new sectors and new work models emerge, demanding new knowledge and skills.

The employment policies foresee for unemployed person a more active role, being a protagonist of change, for each person to be able to detect and address their needs and solutions based on what they are, feel, have and need, in relation to themselves and others. In the face of structured and generalist solutions, there is favored development of tailor-made and creative responses (the help provided by coaching is very effective in this regard). Stimulating people as well as community bonds, developing territorial intelligence. The value of local and citizen inclusion despite unemployment play an important role. People, regardless of their status as unemployed should feel integrated, useful, and active. And in this sense we must provide support and advice to senior entrepreneurs in general and especially to social entrepreneurs, because we can all change the world, at any age.

Another key work area is training. Based on occupational analysis with better perspectives, training needs are identified in two broad categories: a) Transversal needs: languages, computer science, teamwork, social skills, b) Sectorial needs, which must be contrasted with the needs of employers, especially local so these can meet real demands, generation quality training with an added value. Resource optimization and searching for high impact innovative actions is now more necessary than ever.

Sweden

It is quite evident that the age-group 45+ is not disadvantaged on the Swedish labour market, or for that matter excluded from the educational system. Measurements taken is more directed to the age-group 55+, and mainly been directed to the sub-group within 55+, which is the long-term unemployed and here we can distinguish three categories of barriers:

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- Structural (prior work and learning experience; the operation of guidance and training services; state policy, including the provision and funding of guidance services and public transport; the attitudes and practices of employers; discrimination; racism; ageism against both young and old; sexism);
- Situational (wrong work experience, poor mental and/or physical health, physical disability, learning disability, low qualifications, lack of information about education, guidance or the labour market);
- Dispositional (low confidence and self-esteem, acceptance of negative stereotypes about themselves, anger and hopelessness, fear of change)

In many of the initiatives running, focus is on basic education and training, such as ICT, how to apply for work, how to use search engines when looking and applying for work and on-the-job training and education.

Conclusions

Employment and integration in the lifelong learning of the 45+ in the project partner countries present a strategically important objectives of socio-economic development of the countries.

The socioeconomic and institutional conditions and challenges of labour market integration and sustainability of employment of the 45+ are quite different in the partner countries: dealing with the issues of shortage of workforce caused by emigration in Lithuania, satisfaction of the changing high skills needs and shortages in Germany, coping with post-crisis employment challenges in Spain or removing remaining few barriers for the disadvantaged groups to access to employment and training in Sweden.

However, despite of these differences there can be noticed certain similarity of approaches used in the policies and measures of education, training and employment of the 45+, like individualisation of the education and employment offers, usage of the ICT technologies, closer cooperation between the state, social partners and business in development of the adult education and employment services.

The full report can be accessed on the project website: <http://www.mature45.eu>.

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