

SUMMARY

9 September 2021

Policy Dialogue

Strengthening the provision of adult learning through local partnerships



Summary – Workshop on adult learning in cities

Session 1 – Presentations from non-government stakeholders

Anna Byhovskaya, Senior Policy Advisor, Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) and **Peter Steyaert**, Staff Member, CSC-ACV (Algemeen Christelink Vakverbond)

- **Anna Byhovskaya** stressed the challenges to adult learning systems brought about by the crisis, including that firms have reduced training opportunities for workers. However, at the national level governments have been expanding the right to training, including through social dialogue. Taking a step back from the crisis, **major challenges to adult learning systems** are the access to training in terms of the amount and awareness of training offers, individuals' time to pursue training and financing. Trade unions across countries and internationally are working on many fronts to support workers getting into training, including through collective agreements, sectoral councils, funds administered by social partners, youth programmes, and sector based and local responses.
- **Peter Steyaert** presented **the Sherpa project** that aims to train selected workers to become a consultant or coach that can guide and motivate colleagues towards lifelong learning opportunities. The project is developed in cooperation with a range of stakeholders, including training and education departments of three sectoral trade union organisations, sector funds, government bodies, and European partners, including trade unions in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany, which all have previous experiences with **learning representatives in the workplace**.

Adam Gajek, Policy Advisor on Skills and Entrepreneurship, Eurochambres and **Katja Schager**, Policy Advisor in the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber

- **Adam Gajek** presented different examples on **local training projects provided by chambers of commerce**. Among other things, chambers of commerce are involved in career guidance, skills forecasting and assessments, training courses, and support for SMEs and entrepreneurs. An example of involvement in training provision is the training centres driven by local departments of the German chambers of commerce, which provides training opportunities and counselling across the country. An example of involvement in skills forecasting is Excelsior in Italy, which is the largest information system on the demand for professional skills at national, regional and local level, provided among others by the Italian Chambers of Commerce. Lastly, an example of the involvement in skills assessment is the DigitalSkill VOYAGER in Italy, which is a digital skills assessment tool provided through a coalition of chambers of commerce, employers and unions.
- **Katja Schager** gave a brief overview of **the involvement of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber in the provision of adult learning** in Austria, stressing that the chamber had a stake in many different operations on adult education and that they had developed a strategy to improve the provision of learning in the future. She highlighted three specific projects based on a strong partnership with companies, learning providers, regional chambers etc. The first was a virtual learning platform (a “Netflix for education”) where everyone can find existing courses that match their profile and use a tracker to create a learning path. The second was a project to make VET more visible and attractive by creating educational pathways for individuals after they have finished apprenticeships. The third was a project to redefine apprenticeships for adults by offering them a dual academy professional certificate through an apprenticeship and other certifications (e.g. digital or personal).

Asked about the **top two things to make partnerships more effective**, presenters highlighted among others that there was a need to break the silos between stakeholders and ensure more information on who is doing what to support broader partnerships. In addition, stakeholders need to develop a common language when engaging in partnerships.

Maria Pascual, Department of Education of Catalonia, partner of the S4Stride project coordinated by EARLALL (European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning)

- **Maria Pascual** presented the work of the Department of Education of Catalonia (a regional authority with competences to design up to 45% of VET curricula and to organise and establish training offers) focusing on how they create links with companies and local stakeholders in the region on the provision of skills. The region has more than 70,000 agreements with local partners to provide VET training (through VET training centres or companies) and due to the freedom to adapt VET curricula they are able to **continuously adapt the provision of training also through direct communication with companies**, chambers of commerce, trade unions etc. During the crisis, the region has worked with companies to provide online training while on-the-job training was not possible. Maria also introduced the **Stride4Stride Project** coordinated by EARLALL, which seeks to promote interregional peer learning for more effective implementation of skills policies at regional level. The project includes a number of workshops allowing participants to identify best practices and ideas that can be implemented in other regions.

Dearbháil Lawless, Executive Board member of EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults) and Advocacy Lead of AONTAS (Ireland's National Learning Organisation)

- **Dearbháil Lawless** elaborated on **the role of non-government stakeholders in adult learning** with a focus on community education and learning. This is learning that takes place outside the formal education sector, reflects the lived experiences of individuals and their community and aims at enhancing learning, fostering empowerment and contributing to civic society. Community learning reaches those groups who are most difficult to engage in adult learning and includes a range of programmes such as on parenting, knitting, democratic education, community development and digital literacy. Often, programmes are delivered as a holistic service, which means that individuals can access integrated support as a part of their education programme, including financial advice, childcare, counselling, career guidance, and transport. Key challenges to the provision of adult learning are a lack of sustainable funding, a lack of recognition of these forms of education and a decrease in learner engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She further highlighted the role of non-formal learning in community education as an effective vehicle for ensuring greater inclusion in boosting adult skills.

Session 2 – Breakout Groups

Group 1

Jack Gibson, Senior Policy Officer, Greater London Authority, presented two examples of how the City of London deliver adult learning through partnerships. The first example – the **No Wrong Door Project** – is a part of the recovery work in the city and aims to support those disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The project has a number of objectives, including increasing the understanding and awareness of training for key groups and increasing the quality of partnership working to improve the user-experience. A main element in the project is integration hubs covering sub-regional areas with the aim to drive integration and boost partnership working on adult learning. The second example – **The London Progression Collaboration** – is a partnership between the Greater London Authority and IPPR (a think tank) that aims to support the progression of low paid Londoners and address skills shortages facing key sectors by supporting employers to create good quality apprenticeships. The goal of the project is create over 100 new apprenticeship opportunities in priority sectors (digital, construction, hospitality, retail and health and social care), including by encouraging London levy-paying employers to transfer their unspent allocation to smaller businesses impacted by the crisis.

Amy Meyers, Policy and Planning Manager at Michigan Works! Southwest Area, and **Jakki Bungart-Bibb**, Deputy Director of Operations at Michigan Works! Southwest Area, presented work on adult learning

in partnerships in the city of Michigan. They noted that the basic structure of the Workforce Investment Board model in the United States, which is driven by the private sector, makes partnerships a core part of its design. They also highlighted two examples. The first example – **Employer Resource Network** – is a demand-driven private/public partnership where businesses invest in “success coaches” that provide services on site at each member company. The role of the coaches is to connect employers to resources that help them address issues causing instability, and assist employees with issues that the company often do not have the time or resources to do itself. While the programme is funded by employers, Michigan Works! seeks additional grants to keep member costs low and provide additional training and support services. The second example – **Neighbourhood Employment Hubs** – is provided through a partnership with workforce and economic development organisations in the local area. The aim of the programme is to increase employment rates and economic stability in high-poverty neighbourhoods by offering customised services to the unemployed where they live, and in ways that are compatible with their work and family obligations.

Group 2

Maria Carmen Gutierrez Olondriz, Head of Communication on European Projects, the Madrid Employment Agency, presented the work of the Madrid Employment Agency. It is an autonomous body under the Madrid city Council that offers training and employment pathways, recruitment help and customised training courses for companies and counselling. The agency operates a number of projects in partnership with companies, including with Fundacion Telefonica (a project that aims to train and prepare digital professionals in the technologies with the highest labour demand); L’Oréal (a project with aims at delivering professional beauty consultant training courses for jobseekers with an interest in the field); and Inditex (a project that focuses on increasing employment among the most vulnerable groups in the labour market). She stressed that the main benefits of these types of cooperation was that they facilitate knowledge sharing on the needs of the labour market in a more direct way, and that they favour the joint work of all the parties involved in the generation of employment opportunities.

Jeanette Sutherland, Director, EDGE UP, Workforce and Productivity at Calgary Economic Development, described how the economy and labour market of Calgary is undergoing significant changes due to a shift and downturn in the oil and gas sector, which has resulted in the displacement of a significant number of workers. Combined with the acceleration of the digital economy and the COVID-19 crisis, the city is today experiencing relatively high unemployment rates but also a high demand for talent across many sectors. In order to make the workforce pivot, the city has invested in three key areas: 1) skills mapping; 2) skills training and 3) work integrative learning. First, they have worked together with stakeholders to get a better understanding of existing supply and demand gaps and how to support individuals in their transition from declining to growing sectors. Second, they have worked together with strategic partners to support the displaced workers through short-term up- and reskilling programmes that can transition them to the digital economy. Lastly, they have partnered with an organisation that can provide work-integration projects where individuals can apply skills to real-world situations.