

TRAILS

Enabling Data Analytics for Actions
Tackling Skills Shortages & Mismatch



Policy brief #1: REDUCING LIFELONG LEARNING INEQUALITIES IN EUROPE

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WHY IT MATTERS

Lifelong learning supports Europe's transition to a **knowledge-based, sustainable economy**. The EU aims for **60% adult participation by 2030**, fostering inclusion, productivity, and resilience amid technological, demographic, and green transitions.

WHAT DATA SHOWS

TRAILS analysed **Adult Education Survey (AES) data 2007–2022** (18–75 years, 27 countries, 930,000+ adults) to explore:

- Participation trends over time
- Groups are underrepresented in learning
- Motivation, prior experience, guidance, and barriers

KEY FINDINGS

- **Motivation drives participation:** Positive experiences increase willingness; first engagement is hardest.
- **Guidance is crucial:** Advice and information boost participation, especially for previously disengaged adults.
- **Barriers persist:** Time, cost, limited employer support, and life-stage challenges hinder learning.
- **Perception matters:** Some adults see learning as irrelevant, underscoring trust and communication gaps.
- **Education fatigue:** Motivation declines the longer adults stay away from learning.

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POLICY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen guidance systems** via employment services, local centres, and digital platforms.
- **Facilitate first engagement** with short, flexible courses and recognition of prior learning.
- **Reduce practical barriers** with training leave, flexible schedules, and employer-supported opportunities.
- **Promote a learning culture** through awareness campaigns and recognition of achievements.

LOOKING AHEAD

Investing in **motivation, guidance, and inclusive access** can help achieve the EU 2030 adult learning target, turning potential into active participation.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Full deliverables: D6.3 and TRAILS reports [\(link\)](#)
- For more information, please visit the TRAILS website(<https://www.trails-project.eu/>) and social media channels.



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