



Straighten Basic Skills - Strategy to raise awareness and improve, generalize and help tackling European needs for basic skills

European Roadmap

Designed by  based on project outputs



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Introduction

About the project

The European project STRAIGHTEN BASIC SKILLS offers a multi-perspective view for a comprehensive strategy to effectively promote work related basic training for adults. Seven organisations from France, Germany, Austria, Norway, the UK and Romania gathered, convinced that only the interaction of certain critical elements, success factors, such as the legal framework, information and financing arrangements, or the action as an intermediary body could lead to real improvements in the development of basic skills to professional aiming.

In frame of the project, a set of successful indicators are developed based on findings regarding learning opportunities for adults, especially for low qualified employees and long term unemployed, with a view to training needs of workplace basic skills existing in Austria, France, Germany, Norway, Romania and the UK. Only taking into account many different aspects to strengthen basic skills trainings for adults will be successful and sustainable. Among them are: Successful environments, legal conditions, so called “vocational training cultures”, supportive collective agreements or agreements between the social partners etc.

About this document

The European Roadmap provides practical information about the implementation of basic skills education in European countries. On a larger scale, it aims to increase participation in the public consultation on questions related to the strengthening of work related basic skills, and the training participation of low qualified employees and unemployed in adult education.

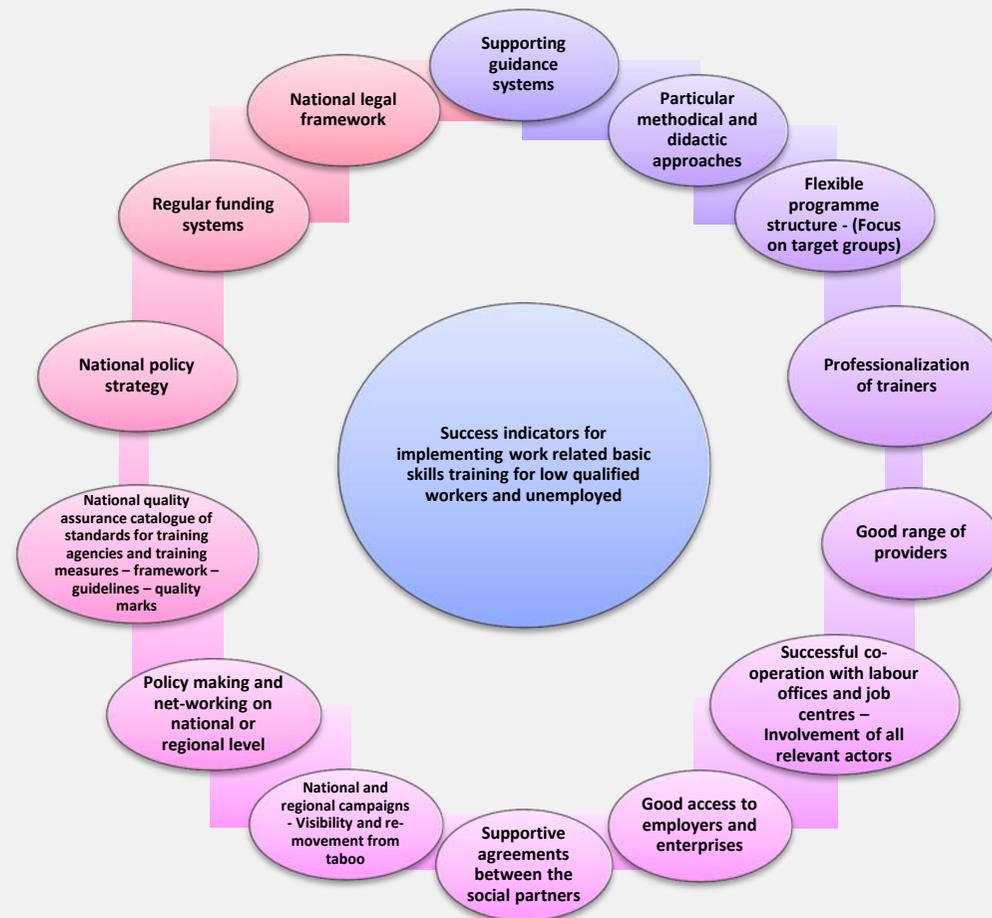
It is built upon European exchange, the excellent expertise of each Straighthen Basic Skills consortium partner in the field of work related basic education, the development of country case studies and finally the pooling of the piloting results shall convincingly demonstrate how workplace related basic education could be strengthened also in other European countries.

Set of successful indicators

This set describes key factors of social, economic and cultural elements which contribute to the success of work-related basic skills provision. They are generated from relevant resources, gathered from desk research, and several significant projects undertaken in and around the European Basic Skills Network.

In the research phase, the following factors were identified to have significant influence on the successful delivery of work-related basic skills training. Different indicators were tested in frame of pilot trainings conducted in the partner countries. The set of successful indicators serves as a reference for orientation to be taken into consideration by VET providers and professionals in the field for the provision of basic skills trainings.

Figure 1 : Success indicators for basic skills training



Review of national policies and country specific training practices

National policies and training practices are necessarily linked to each other. A well-elaborated policy framework has a positive impact on the recognition and improvement of basic skills training, whereas insufficient or incoherent political actions can undermine it. The term “national policies” refers to different factors resulting from the action taken by political institutions. This might include a specific rule or legal framework, a funding system, a new policy strategy or a national campaign. Training practices also require a well-elaborated frame, starting from continuous funding over professionalization of training staff to well-designed programmes in order to feed the need of both, participants and employers. In this connection, country comparison can function as a useful information and learning source for actors in the field of basic skills education.



National policy and framework

Topic/ indicators	Austria	France	Germany	Norway	Romania	UK
Funding	Federal states Additional resources: European Social Fund (ESF)	Regional; accredited collection organisms for training (OPCA) Regional Council European Social Fund	No regular funding	No regular funding	The law of education stipulates that funding of adult learning is made through private and public funding, based on the public-private partnership, through financing and co-financing from employers, NGO's, grants, lifelong learning accounts, contribution by beneficiaries.	Via the Department for Education: Adult Education Budget, Apprenticeship and the Union Learning Fund
National Framework	Austrian Initiative for Adult Education Strategic Guidelines in Frame of the LLL:2020	The French Vocational Training Reform (2015) establishing the personal training account (CPF) Law on Vocational Training, Employment and Social Democratisation	Lack of a nationwide legal framework for adult education No national law or other legal regulations regarding work related basic skills	Adults Right to Formal Education White Paper on Lifelong Learning and Exclusion	Law of Education for "Lifelong Learning"	There is a statutory entitlement to fully-funded (free) English and maths learning up to Level 2 in the national qualifications framework.



<p>National Strategy for Literacy and Basic Education of Adults</p>	<p>Initiative “Basic education” (BHW NÖ) - Educational Homeland Association Lower Austria - “Basic education in lower Austria”; Qualification Plan Vienna 2020</p>	<p>Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre l’Illettrisme (ANLCI – National Agency to Fight Illiteracy) Professionalization of trainers and pedagogical teams through specific trainings</p>	<p>National Strategy for Literacy and Basic Skills of Adults (2012-2016) Decade for Literacy (2016-2026)</p>	<p>Norwegian Basic Skills Work Life Programme (BCWL) Kompetanse Norge (VOX) Professionalization of trainers</p>	<p>Strategy for education and vocational training in Romania for the period 2014-2020” (under development)</p>	<p>The national Skills for Life Strategy ceased in 2010. A range of policies in adult (19+) learning and skills place an emphasis on basic English and maths, creating an enabling environment for providers and employers.</p>
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Austria

A settled national framework

In Austria, national policies specifically target to enable disadvantaged people to develop and update their basic skills. Therefore, basic skills trainings are freely available and do not require any formal requirements. Courses are mostly practical showing a flexible structure in order to fit the participants` needs. There are courses for both, unemployed and employed people. Basic skills education cover literacy, numeracy and ICT. Furthermore, there are specific courses for migrants/refugees, which combine language learning with basic skill education. Due to this variety of offers, courses still need to be developed with a specific focus, in order to actually meet the needs of different groups. Vocational training should be adjusted to the companies` and employees` demands. Moreover knowing the culture of the people (i.e. migrants and refugees) is of crucial importance for trainers, thus it is necessary to get in deep contact with them. Still, awareness needs to be raised for the issue, i.e. regarding unrecognised basic skills gaps of employees. Intercultural awareness and inclusion requires to fill gaps in language, cultural and social skills, leading to a much more holistic approach.



France

A Vocational Training Reform and regional responsibility for basic skills training

France has a well defined national framework for VET and a regular funding system. However, the training reform of 2015 is not specifically targeted to basic skills training. The implementation of basic skills training is the responsibility of the regions, because they are locally funded.

In the last few years, the co-operation between state, regional councils and social partners has been strengthened by legislation. In addition, the collaboration between the state and the local government/local communities has improved.

Basic skills training for employees is often linked to sector-specific training (i.e. cleaning, food industry). That means that the trainings are tailored in order to up-skill professional staff. For this purpose, educational professionals need to be trained in order to deliver contents related to basic skills education and to address the needs of the target groups.



Germany

No national law/legal regulations regarding work related basic skills

The responsibility for education and advanced vocational training lies with the German Federal States and is not regulated by national law. However, there was a national strategy followed by a Decade with a National Coordination point. Legislative actions are required in order to develop an adequate infrastructure and sustainable support opportunities for public funding. Currently, besides national campaigns, there is no uniform national funding scheme. In the following ten years, a large number of measures will be encouraged with up to 180 Million Euro of funding.¹

It is obvious, that there is a gap between initiatives and national policy. In this connection, the professionalization for basic skills trainers is lacking. The profession is undervalued and characterised by precarious employment conditions.

¹ <https://www.bibb.de/de/39396.php>



Norway

Long-term experience with basic skills education

With the Norwegian Basic Skills Work Life Programme (BCWL), Norway has an established governmental programme for basic skills education. Therefore, a lot of experience, various tools and material exist related to the topic. Here to mention are the “Competence Goals”, which are examples of local curricula in basic skills for adults. These goals, in cooperation with “The Basic Job Skills Profiles”, are tools meant to facilitate the design of basic skills courses tailored to the needs of each workplace and individual learner. Through the use of these profiles, employers can get an overview of the skills that need to be strengthened and workers can increase their awareness of their need for further training in literacy, numeracy, oral communication and digital competence. Although this comprehensive system is a promising approach, it has to be questioned, if employers recognise skills gaps of their employees, especially regarding basic skills, and if employees lacking basic skills are encouraged to announce their situation and participate in respective trainings.



Romania

Attempt of developing a “culture of learning”

Romania has a national law regulating basic skills training and public funding. However, a gap exists between the reality and the law. Even though employers might finance some workplace learning, basic skills learning is not acknowledged at national level as being a priority area for intervention for less skilled employees. The Second Chance Programme, part of the national school system, addressed to those who have not completed compulsory education. The support of basic education is also addressed by the Strategy to reduce early school leaving, but other than this, there are no other national policies to support the development of basic skills for adults. At the same time, there is a general lack of basic skills provision for adults. There is no main actor providing these kind of specific trainings. In this connection, there is a lack of trainings for professionalization of educational staff. These current developments are challenges the Romanian VET sector has to deal with. It is an obstacle for the process of establishing a “culture of learning”, which will be needed in order to draw attention to the importance of basic skills for work and to encourage employers to use the workplace as a setting to develop their employees’ basic skills.



UK

National policy and basic skills training in frame of apprenticeships

In the UK, policy is devolved to the four UK nations, meaning there are differences of approach in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In England, there are national policies and national funding schemes which support the development of workplace basic skills. Reductions in public spending on the Adult Education Budget have decreased the overall resources available for adult literacy provision, with much of the funding for work-related skills now routed through apprenticeships. Accordingly, there is a need to prioritise basic skills delivery and awareness in the professional development of apprenticeship trainers and providers. As literacy provision can also be delivered in discrete courses, as with the Norwegian approach, awareness of employers regarding potential gaps in basic skills need to be raised. For this purpose, it is considered as important that VET providers and employers collaborate in order to achieve a whole organisational approach.

Educational aspects

The provision of work related basic skills education is a central concern of VET providers and actors in the field. The following examples describe educational approaches collected in the partner countries. For the implementation of basic skills training, the following aspects are considered as relevant:

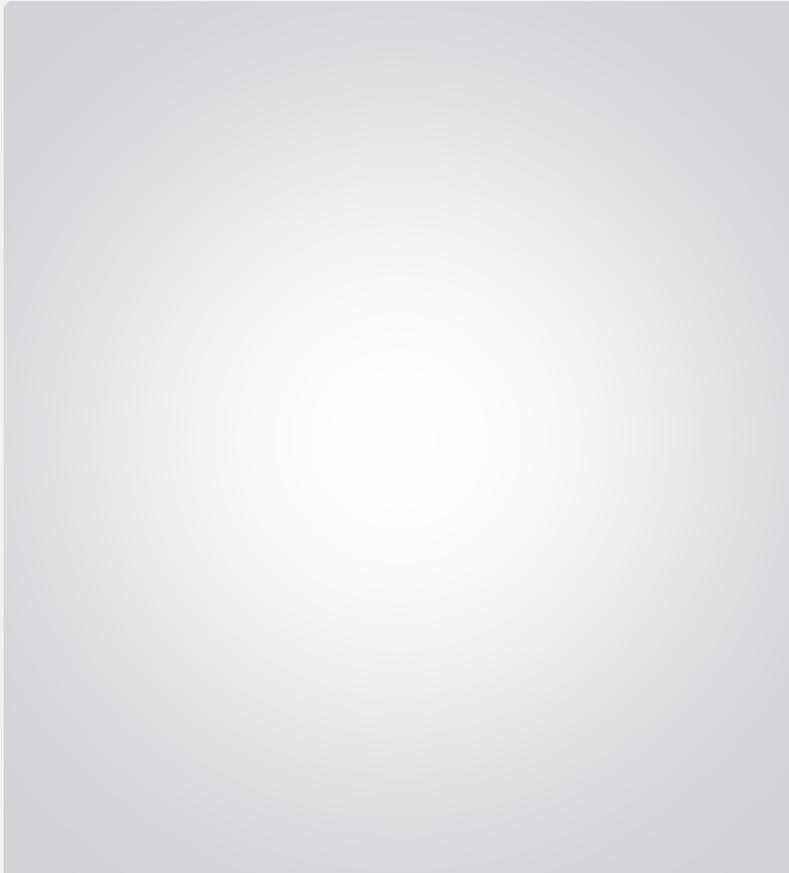
Target group: Unemployed, disadvantaged (young) people

-  Focus on acquisition of basic *and* social skills
-  Support of integration into labour market
-  Easy to access/low threshold approach/no enter requirements
-  Strengthening of learning skills such as autonomous learning, learning to learn, etc.
-  Small class size (10-12 participants)
-  A proper guidance before entering in the training
-  Flexible programme structure
-  Personalised training + Group dynamics
-  Contents for specific target group
 - Motivation for economic and technical (ICT) topics (i.e. for young, disadvantaged and low-skilled women)
 - Basic skills education combined with language course for migrants

Target group: Employees

-  Professional basic and up-skilling courses combined with literacy, numeracy and ICT
-  Access to the enterprise for the trainers in order to adapt their training to the company needs
-  Small class size (10-12 participants)
-  A combination of training in the job place + outside the company + distance education
-  Promotion of network building with companies and institutions such as employee representatives, employer networks and jobcentres
-  Development of programmes for companies and in collaboration with employers
-  Exchange of proven approaches and strategies of different stakeholders
-  Training for employees to function as training mentors and learning counsellors
-  Training in basic education to achieve formal certificates
-  Easy to access/low threshold approach/no enter requirement

Key findings and success factors



Conclusions and recommendations

Uniform national framework

A uniform national framework is considered as success factor, because it puts the topic of basic skills education into the focus of public attention. Further, it mostly assures public funding. Of course, budget cuts as described in the case of the UK as possible setbacks, but nevertheless, a national framework gives the opportunity for necessary initiatives. Alternatively, regional campaigns or projects can be started in order to raise awareness for the topic and provide an opportunity for training of the regional community. Of course, when a national framework or national/regional projects exists, it is extremely important to inform the public and communicate widely on these opportunities.

Funding/free access

As described in the previous paragraph, public funding is a benefit for basic skills education. Literacy, numeracy, and meanwhile also ICT skills are basic prerequisites for participation in society and therefore basic skills education should be accessible to any member of society regardless social and economic background, language or origin. An intelligent exploitation of existing support and support structures might be one approach to receive funding from public sources. If there are no or insufficient funding opportunities available on national level, European funds are an alternative option.

In France, the CLEA framework, a professional certificate created in 2016 by the *Comité Paritaire Interprofessionnel National pour l'Emploi et la Formation (COPANEF)* in order to evaluate and enhance job seekers' and employees' basic skills is a good example of large-scale financing device. <https://www.certificat-clea.fr/>

Professionalization of educational specialists

Where basic education is not established or under development, the staff responsible for implementing the courses are specialists from the sector (for employees), or educational experts such as psychologists, educational scientists or trainers. The lack of basic skills is a sensitive topic as the concerned people feel stigmatised and/or have to deal with difficult situations such as long-term unemployment or economic disadvantages. Therefore, the staff implementing basic education courses need to be trained in counselling and coaching, as well as methodological and didactic knowledge for teaching in basic skills education courses.

A focus on target groups

Another important aspect is the focus on target groups. Among jobseekers, specific programmes are tailored to targeted audiences, such as young people (16 to 25 years old) or women. If it is not possible to have a homogeneous group, it is recommended to cover a wide range of the different success indicators in order to reach the set goals as good as possible.

During one of their initiatives the UK took up the expedient discussion around the defined success indicators and the related challenges:

“It was felt that the indicators chosen were comprehensive, but some were difficult to implement practically at a provider level. It was suggested categorising the indicators thematically could help implementation, as providers could then focus on indicators relevant for them.”

Combination of basic skills education and professionalization

The main objective of the programmes is to enable (young) people to develop, not only basic skills, but also their professional skills. In some cases, social skills and learning skills are taught as transversal aspects of the courses in order to empower participants and prepare them to develop a positive attitude regarding (lifelong) learning.

Another positive aspect is the link between basic skills training and the support of transition into employment, i.e. through collaboration with potential employers and internships.

In the end, in order to be successful, every basic skills offer should have a real added value for the job market: this is what motivates the most both unskilled workers and unemployed people.

Definition of basic skills

The results of the pilot activities show that it is important to clarify the definition of basic skills in discussion with colleagues, partners and customers, and also with the final beneficiaries, with the aim of sharing the same vision regarding the goal of the training.

The clarification of the term is also important for the implementation in further European countries, as the definition and understanding might differ from country to country, but also between actors involved i.e. scientists and employers.

Further, it needs to be discussed whether basic skills training should also include other aspects of skills development i.e. soft skills, communication and specific digital skills.

Structure of the training

Basic skills trainings have to assure an easy access. That means that they should be easy to reach, flexible in their structure i.e. for people, who are working, or people with care responsibilities, but also give a low-threshold access without enter requirements and bureaucracy. The course itself should be designed in a way that addresses the target group's needs and practically oriented.

RECOMMENDED APPROACHES TO INCLUDE IN BASIC SKILLS TRAINING

-  IDENTIFICATION OF TAILOR-MADE WORK ORIENTED BASIC EDUCATION CONCEPTS
-  COLLECTION OF RESULTS OF DIFFERENT WORK-ORIENTED BASIC EDUCATION TRAININGS AND ADAPTION TO TARGET GROUP
-  BLENDED LEARNING
-  INTEGRATING LEARNING INTO WORKPLACE SCENARIOS
-  TAKING INTO ACCOUNT CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN WORKING LIFE
-  INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT AND FEEDBACK BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE TRAINING
-  INTEGRATING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE/EMPOWERMENT
-  TRAINING AND COACHING THAT CONSIDER BACKGROUND OF THE LEARNER AND MEET THE NEEDS
-  DOCUMENTATION OF SKILLS-TO BE USED FOR EVALUATION AND INTERNALLY FOR "LESSONS LEARNT" AND CONCLUSIONS FOR FUTURE INITIATIVES

Inclusion of stakeholders

Collaboration with stakeholders and establishing networks require continuous attention to relationships and time to develop them. A starting point can be the identification and contacting of institutions with experience in the field.



Also, the relationship with institutions such as employees' organisations or job centres are useful to support the development of work related basic education concepts and awareness. The results of the research and pilot activities in the partner countries also show, that raising awareness among employers is important, as well as collaboration approach between VET organisations and employers.

During the French local dissemination event, participants highlighted that the cultural aspect is also crucial:

"In a certain way, improving basic skills training means changing the culture, the mentality. All relevant actors should be convinced of the benefit of a collaborative work, especially between employers and training centers. A huge collaborative work is necessary in order to identify needs, properly orientate people, offer high-quality training and improve people skills."

Formal certification

The offer of a formal certification, i.e. in connection with further education in the professional field, is an incentive for concerned people to participate in a course involving basic skills training. It strengthens their motivation and confidence, supports improvement of their professional situation and might lead to further participation in trainings.

In Norway, the employees from two major companies in the bakery industry can receive a trade certificate at the end of the training sessions. ("The Road to Trade Certificate")



SbS consortium:



Institut National de Formation et de
Recherche sur l'Education
Permanente (France)

www.infrep.org



Büro für berufliche Bildungsplanung,
R. Klein & Partner GbR (Germany)

www.bbb-dortmund.de



BEST Institut für berufsbezogene
Weiterbildung und Personaltraining
(Austria)

www.best.at



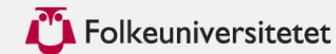
National Learning and Work Institute
(England and Wales)

www.learningandwork.org.uk



Instiut Roman de Educatie a Adultilor
(Romania)

www.irea.ro



Folkeuniversitetet (Norway)

www.folkeuniversitetet.no

Website:

<http://straightenbasicskills.weebly.com/>