



# i SKILL

## D3.2 – National policy brief DENMARK

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This document is part of a deliverable for the project Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue to Kick-in Inclusive Adult Learning (I SKILL), grant agreement no. VS/2021/0208.



This publication has received financial support from the European Union.

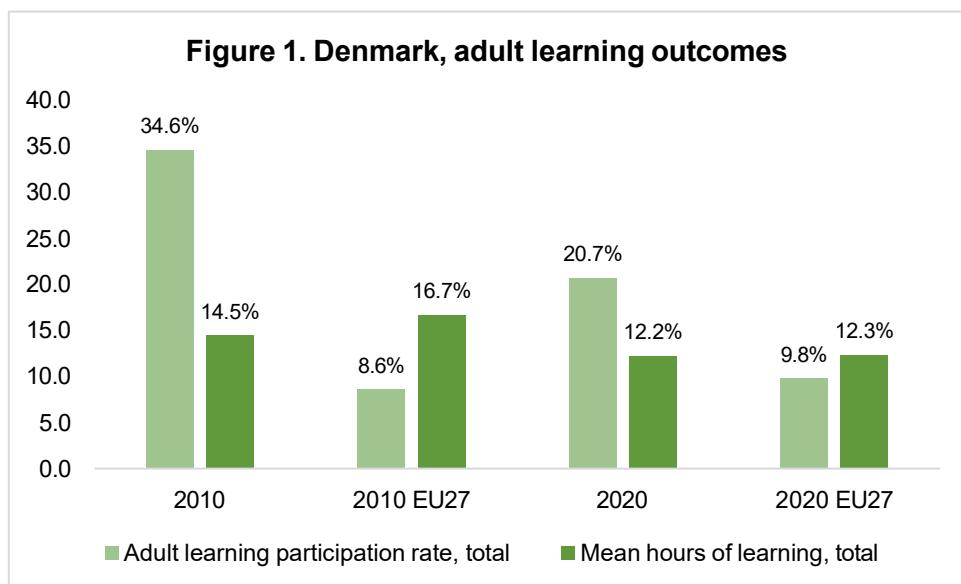
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## National context for adult learning

The adult learning system in Denmark has historically been grounded in the concept of general liberal adult education (*Folkeoplysning*), which emerged from religious and social movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Eurydice, 2022). In the 1950s, the adult learning system underwent reform in response to high unemployment rates and the necessity of upskilling both employed and unemployed individuals to meet the evolving demands of the labour market (Andersen, 2019). This resulted in the establishment of an adult education and continuing training system that combined elements of the democratic citizenship education, the regular school system and the company-oriented training. The adult education and continuing training system provided a range of educational offerings, including single-subject teaching and later vocational education and training, to enhance and update the skills of employees in response to labour market changes. Although the structure underwent various reforms from 1950 to 2000, the fundamental principles and objectives of the adult education and continuing training system have remained consistent.

Adult education and continuing training play a significant role in supplementing the formal education system in Denmark. In 2020, the participation rate of adults (aged 25 to 64) in education and training activities in Denmark was 20.7 % and is expected to be higher in 2022.

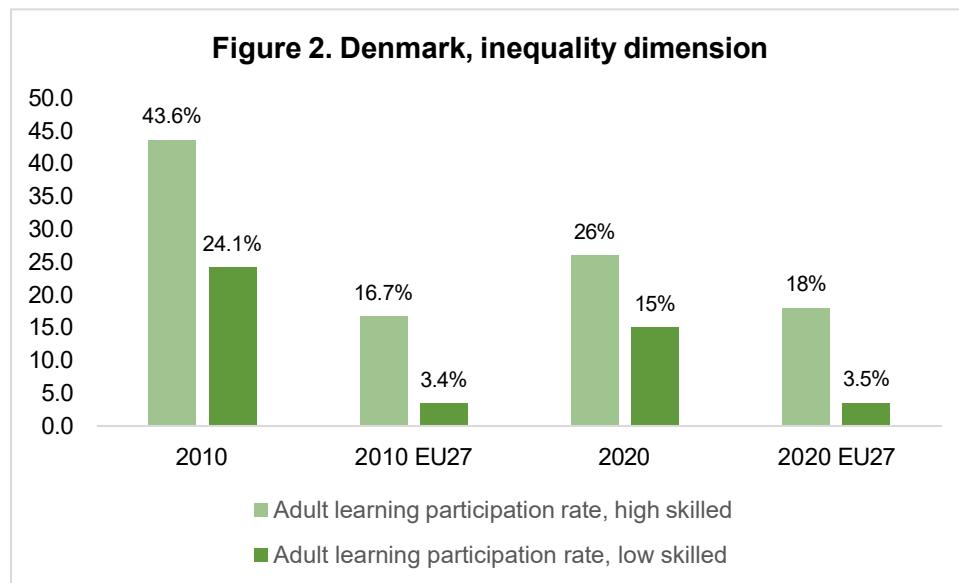
## Participation in adult learning



Source: Own calculations based on the Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2010 and 2020.

Note: Variables refer to the population of employed adults, aged 25-64.

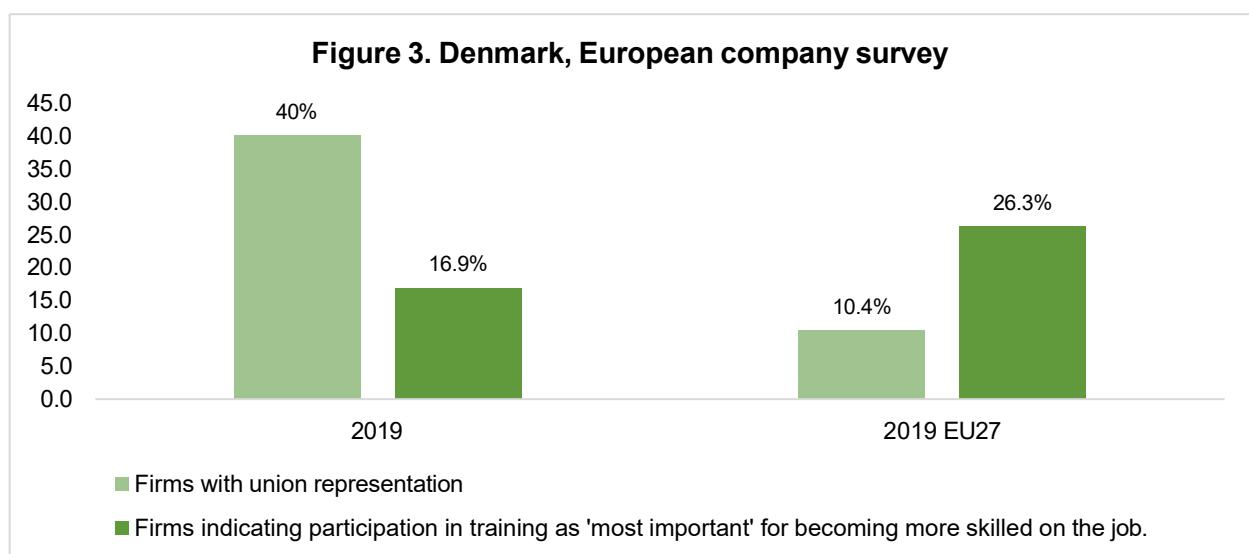
## Inequality dimensions



Source: Calculations based on the Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2010 and 2020.

Note: Variables for low-skilled refer to the population of employed adults, aged 25-64, ISCED levels 0-2; variables for high-skilled refer to the whole population, aged 25-64, ISCED levels 5-6.

## Firms, union representation and the importance of training



Source: Calculations based on the European Company Survey 2019 dataset.

## Inclusive adult learning, industrial relations and social dialogue: Main takeaways from the National Report<sup>1</sup>

- The primary objective of adult education and continuing training in Denmark is to *foster a flexible labour market capable of adapting to the complications posed by globalisation, digitalisation and sustainability*. A well-functioning adult education and training system benefits both employers and employees.
- Denmark has faced challenges within its adult education and training system, with a decline in participation due to economic growth, as *many companies struggle to allocate time for employee training*.
- Reports, evaluations and public documents from the ministries have consistently highlighted the same problems within the adult education system since the 2000s. *These problems include:*
  - a significant number of individuals with low levels of literacy and numeracy,
  - difficulties in accessing adult education and training programmes for both employers and employees,
  - insufficient reorganisation of individual learning assessment, and
  - a lack of flexibility within the adult vocational training system to meet the demands of companies.
- To address these problems, various tripartite agreements introduced by several governments have proposed different initiatives. The initiatives, dating from the 2000s to the latest tripartite agreement for 2017-2023, aim to *lower barriers to attendance and increase incentives for companies to upskill their employees*, such as through *higher subsidies, simplified administration and improved access to other education opportunities*.
- Regulating the adult education and training system requires the *active involvement of social partners at the national, local and sectoral levels* representing both employers and employees. At the national level, social partners collaborate with the government to develop policies and strategies. Social partners are also involved in the specific planning of adult education and training programmes to ensure that the needs of the labour market are adequately represented. Despite a decrease in the number of members of trade unions, social partners still play a relevant role in developing the labour market in Denmark.
- Larger companies are *frontrunners in adult education and training, and their structured approach to training and upskilling can have a positive impact on SMEs*. However, SMEs face issues in engaging with adult education and training due to limited resources and knowledge. Additionally, public education providers struggle to meet the specific needs of companies, lacking the required flexibility and offering courses that may not align closely enough with the companies' requirements. As a result, companies often turn to alternative education providers or opt for internal training programmes.

<sup>1</sup> Engdal Vorting, K., and Fajstrup Toftild, L. (2023). *I SKILL National Report – Denmark*. Working Paper I SKILL Project - Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue to Kick-in Inclusive Adult Learning – Deliverable 3.1. Retrieved at: <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-projects/i-skill/>

The adult education and training system receives political support through the negotiation of tripartite agreements involving social partners and the government. Yet, since 2000, numerous analyses and reports on the subject have highlighted the recurrence of similar obstacles and proposed comparable solutions. Nevertheless, it has proven difficult for politicians, social partners, stakeholders and others to successfully establish a well-functioning adult education and continuing training system that effectively meets the demands of the labour market (Andersen, 2019) looking at the decrease in participation from 2010 to 2020.

## Recommendations from the National Report

Based on the main takeaways from the National Report and on a huge national study by Tænkertanken Mandag Morgen and Concito (2023), the following recommendations have been made:

- *Assess the labour and skills required for new green legislation.* A newly released report by Tænkertanken Mandag Morgen and Concito (2023) provides a relevant recommendation to make sure the workforce is sufficiently skilled for the green transition. It calls for the implementation of a *systematic assessment of the labour and skill requirements* associated with new environmental, climate, energy and supply legislation. A significant obstacle to the spread of green solutions is the scarcity of skilled workers. Therefore, it is essential to foster closer collaboration between the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities and the Ministry of Employment. This collaboration should focus on developing the necessary initiatives for upskilling the workforce to meet the demands of the green transition.
- *Enhance flexibility and autonomy for education providers to improve quality.* Educational institutions in Denmark are bound by rigorous regulations, which can hinder their ability to experiment with innovative approaches and drive institutional change. Yet, one particular education provider has endeavoured to foster close collaboration with local companies to develop education and training programmes based on demand rather than supply. This approach seeks to ensure that the education provided is directly aligned with the needs of the industry.

Additionally, the education provider assumes the *responsibility of facilitating subsidies* on behalf of the companies to streamline administrative processes and prevent barriers to participation.

To promote a more flexible education system, it is essential to temporarily alleviate the burden of excessive regulations on educational institutions. This would enable them to explore and implement new strategies that better align with the evolving needs of companies and the educational landscape, similar to the approach taken by the aforementioned education provider.

Furthermore, in order to effectively teach the latest technologies, it is crucial to *upskill educators*. Education providers can collaborate with universities and large companies to access the most up-to-date knowledge and expertise in the field. This collaboration can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and ensure that educators are equipped with the necessary skills to teach emerging technologies.

- In order to encourage greater participation by SMEs in adult education and continuing training, a recommended approach would be *to establish a comprehensive support system*. This system would assist SMEs in identifying relevant courses, applying for subsidies and systematically planning their education and training activities. While this recommendation has been made on multiple occasions in the past, it can be made more

practical through a proposal to appoint a *national secretary specifically dedicated to this purpose* (Tænketanken Mandag Morgen and Concito, 2023).

The national secretary could also focus on developing digital solutions to assist SMEs in gaining an overview of the skills they require, and the skills mandated by legislation.

- Employees covered by the Industrial Collective Agreement are entitled to 10 days of education and training. Providing an *overview of these 10 days in a more transparent manner* can help employees keep track of their allocated days, understand how they can utilise them and be aware of any specific requirements. PensionDanmark, a pension fund that serves numerous clients under the Industrial Collective Agreement, is currently working on establishing *individual information accounts* to enhance transparency. The aim is to ensure that more employees are informed about their rights and are encouraged to make full use of the allotted 10 days.

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