

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Life-long learning includes all learning activities aimed at improving knowledge, skills and competencies in a personal, social and career-related context. The importance of life-long learning for the improvement of workplace quality and productivity, and as a factor to promote labour force participation and social integration, has been widely recognized. The possibilities of life-long learning vary considerably, however, from country to country, depending on the age of employees and their education.

According to the European Labour Force Survey conducted in the Spring of 2001, 8 percent of employees working in the EU-15 reported that in the four weeks before the survey they had taken part in general and professional education measures. The highest participation level (16 to 22 percent) was achieved in the northern countries, the Netherlands and Great Britain. In Greece, Portugal and France (with reference to a different time factor, however) practically no further education programs were offered. In Germany fewer people were involved in further educational programs than on average for the European Union (see Figure 1).

In all EU countries the degree of participation in training measures decreases with increasing age: from 14 percent for people between the ages of 25 and 34 to 3 percent for those between 55 and 64. In some countries the percentage of

Figure 1

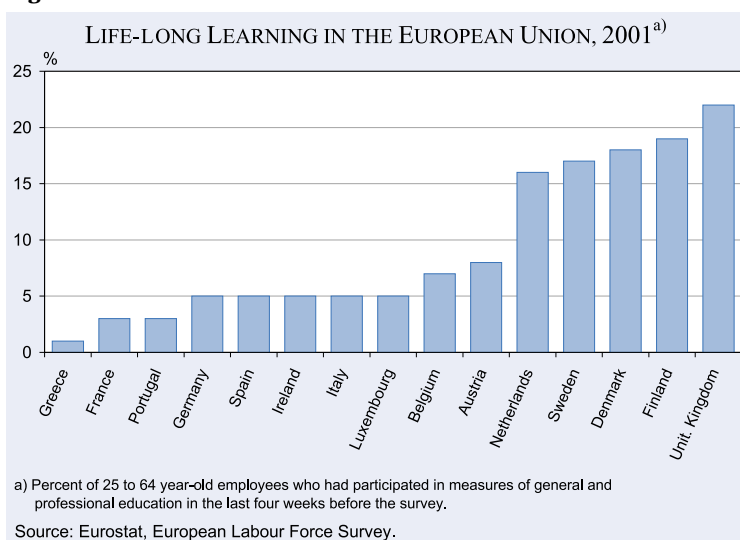
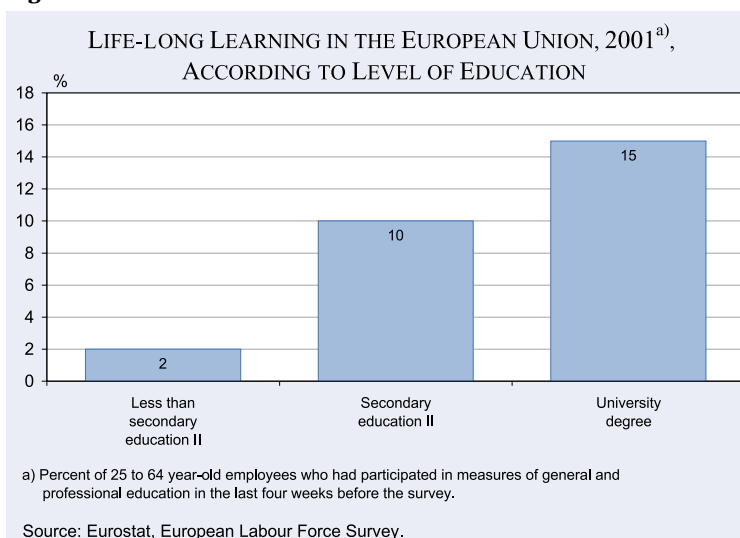


Figure 2



Life-long learning in the European Union, 2001^{a)}, according to age group

Age	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	25-64
Austria	14	8	7	2	8
Belgium	12	8	5	2	7
Denmark	27	19	14	8	18
Finland	28	21	18	8	19
France	6	2	1	0	3
Germany	13	5	3	1	5
Greece	4	1	0	0	1
Ireland	9	5	3	1	5
Italy	12	3	2	1	5
Luxembourg	9	6	3	1	5
Netherlands	25	18	13	7	16
Portugal	8	2	1	0	3
Sweden	25	18	15	10	17
Spain	11	3	2	1	5
United Kingdom	26	24	20	13	22
EU 15	14	8	6	3	8

a) Percent of 25 to 64 year-old employees who had participated in measures of general and professional education in the last four weeks before the survey.

Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey.

people in older age groups who benefited from further training was relatively high: between 7 percent and 13 percent of the 55 to 64 year-old employees in the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Great Britain. In contrast, in several countries, including Germany, senior staff seldom take part in further educational measures. In these countries the performance of older staff is considered low, and in view of the ageing society, the necessity to use these people to a greater degree is not seen (see Table).

In addition to age, the level of education has an impact on the chances for participating in “life-long learning”: in 2001 15 percent of university graduates in the EU-15 took part in further education courses in comparison to only 2 percent of those with the lowest education (see Figure 2).

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