



# Adult learning in the workplace: benefits and implementation strategies

Simon Broek and Ramona David Craescu

Date: 5 February 2020

Location: Belgium, Greece, the Netherlands

Employment,  
Social Affairs  
and Inclusion

# This presentation will cover:

1. The need to continue learning and the role of adult learning in the workplace
2. State of play: participation in learning in the workplace
3. Building blocks for stimulating adult learning in the workplace
4. The role of apprenticeships for adults in bridging learning and work (employers and VET providers)
5. Recap and conclusions





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# Question 1:

## What is your background?



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## Question 2:

**What is your primary interest in taking part in this webinar?**



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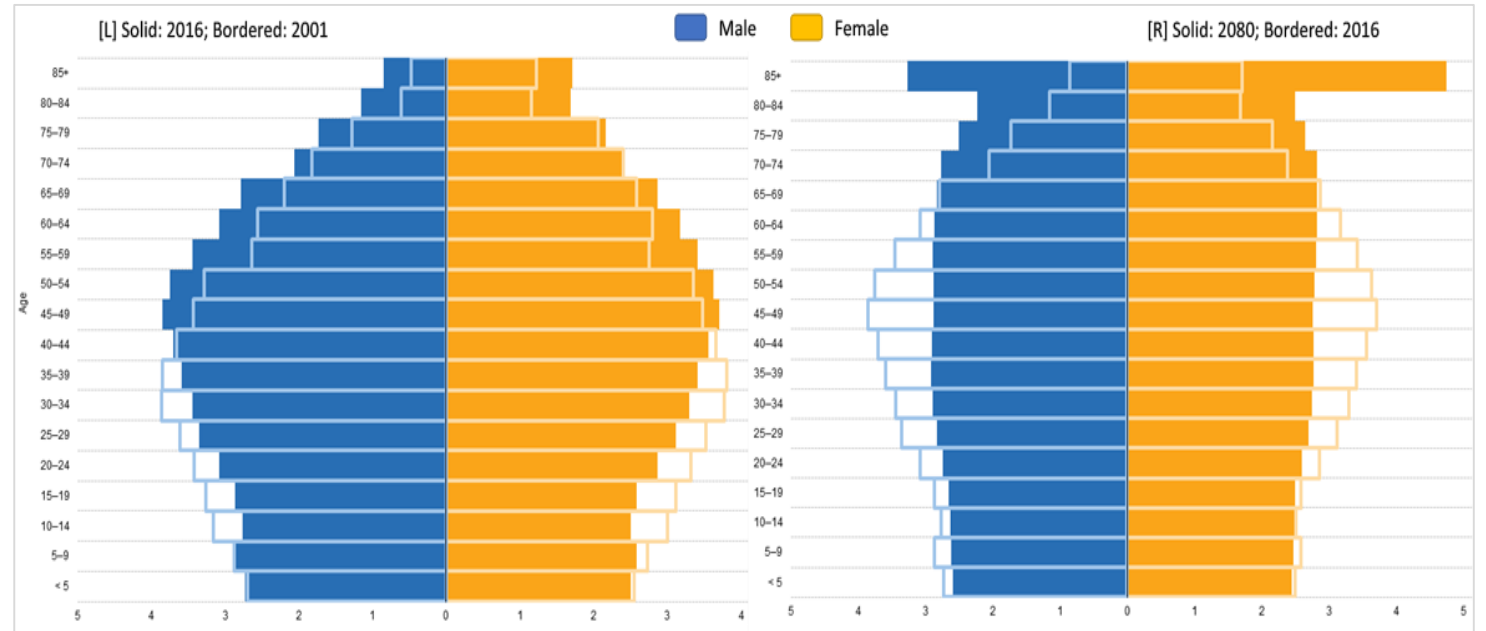
# The need to continue learning and the role of adult learning in the workplace

# The need to continue learning

**Demographic developments**  
dependency ratio shifts from 29% in 2015 to 50% in 2050

**Fourth industrial revolution**  
jobs transformed, displaced, eradicated/created

**Higher flexibility in the labour market**  
from jobs to a collection of tasks



Eurostat: [Population Structure and Ageing](#) (demo\_pjangroup) and (proj\_18np)

The consequences of these mega trends together demonstrate  
**the need for a higher adaptability of the labour force**

# The value of the workplace in stimulating adult learning



## Employees

economic  
benefits, health  
and wellbeing,  
social/civic  
participation



## Employers

innovation,  
motivated  
workforce,  
economic benefits



## Society

economic and  
social/civic  
participation,  
equality, social  
integration



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# State of play: Participation in learning in the workplace



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# What is adult learning in the workplace?

‘Work-based learning refers to all forms of learning that takes place in a real work environment. It provides individuals with the skills needed to successfully obtain and keep jobs and progress in their professional development.’

IAG-TVET (2017), [Investing in work based learning](#)

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## Adult learning in the workplace can be:

### Formal

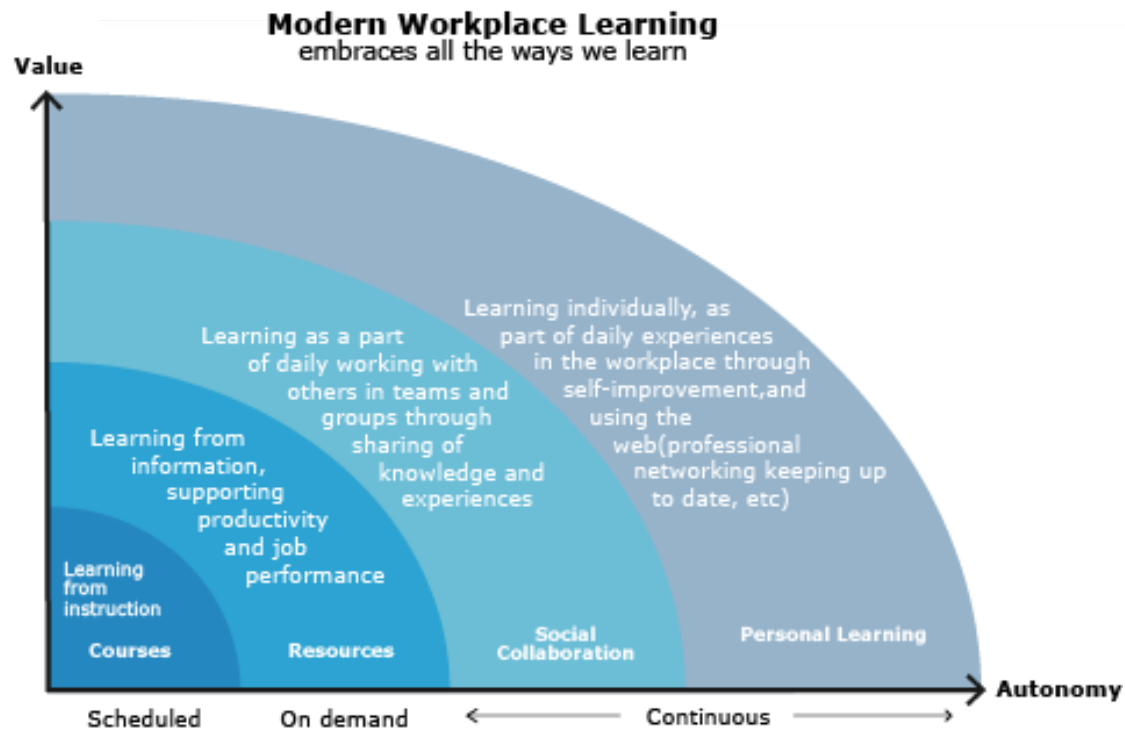
organised and structured, explicitly designated as learning:  
VET/apprenticeship-type programs (also at higher levels)

### Non-formal

organised and structured, explicitly designated as learning, but does not lead to a formal qualification:  
employer-based training or courses, self-study or job-shadowing

### Informal

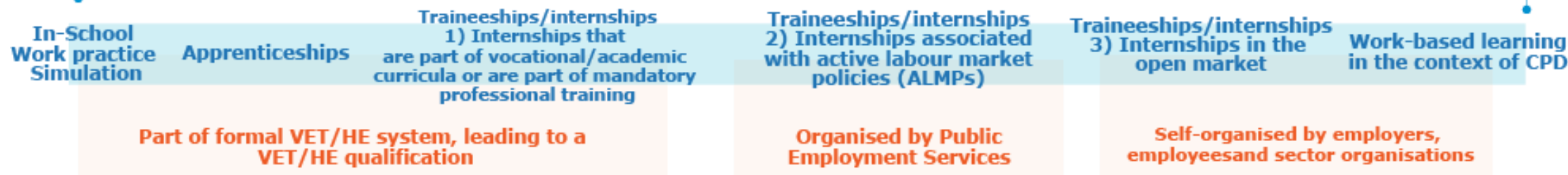
daily activities at the workplace, not specially organised or structured:  
learning by doing



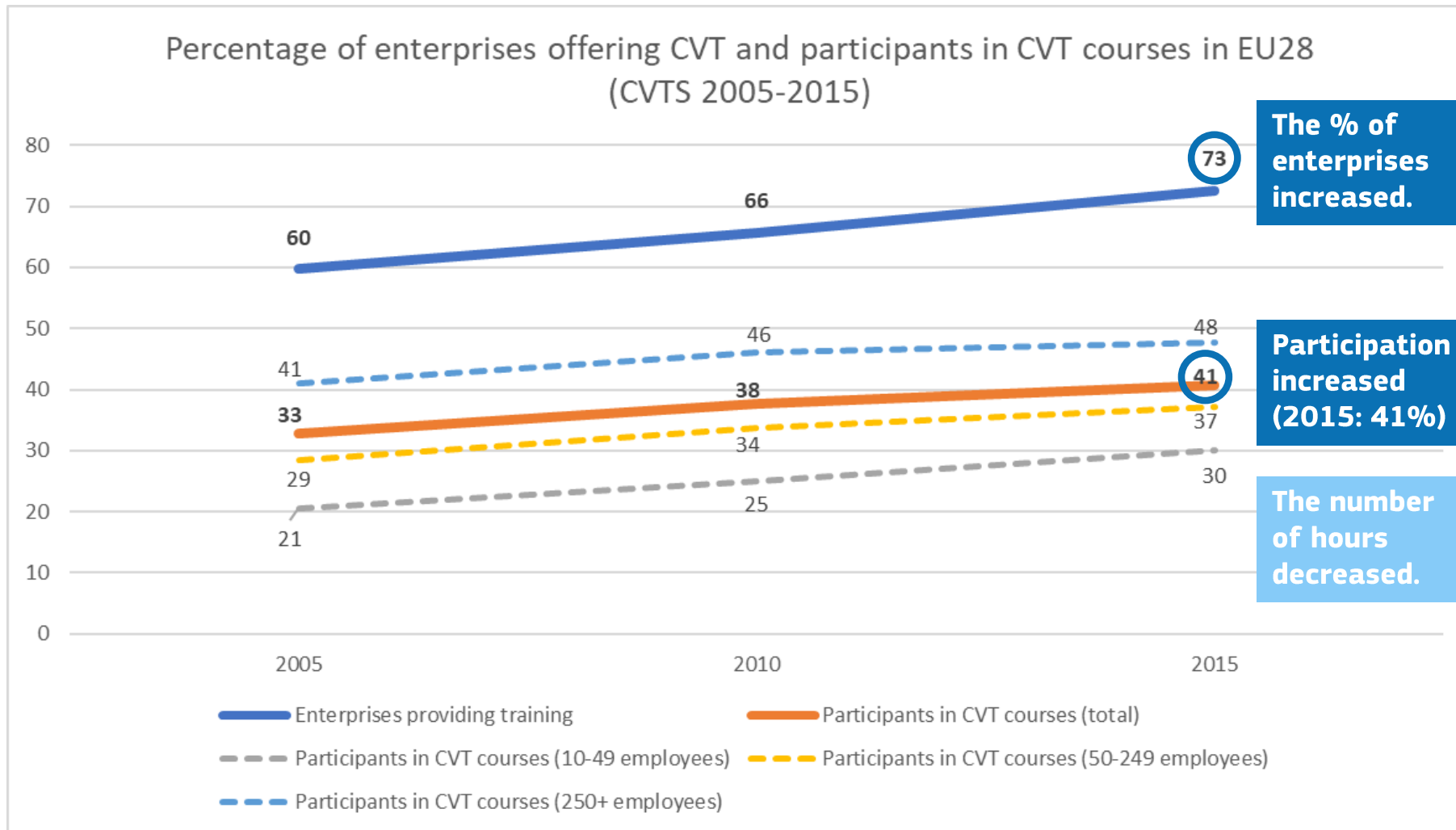
### 5 Stages of Workplace Learning (2010)

Stage 1 Classroom Training	Stage 2 E-Learning	Stage 3 Blending Learning	Stage 4 Social Learning	Stage 5 Collabrative Working/Learning
Trainers	Online (Contact-rich) Courses LMS	Classroom Training/ e-learning LMS	Social media in training and e-learning social LMS	Facilitators, peer- learning, UGC, collaboration platforms
Traditional approach to training managed and organized by L&D				working=Learning, supporting self- organized learners
Top down Control				Autonomy
formal Learning (Learning managed by L&D)				Informal Learning (managed by learner)

### Work based Learning

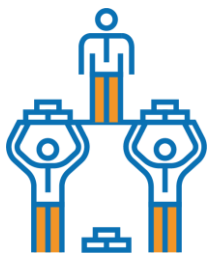


# Adult participation in workplace learning

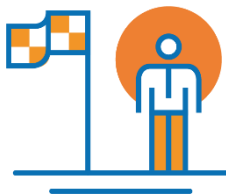


European Commission (2018), *Promoting adult learning in the workplace: Final report of the ET 2020 Working Group 2016 – 2018 on Adult Learning*

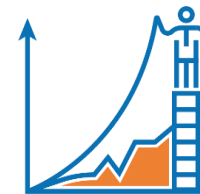
# Challenges in adult participation in workplace learning:



Participation increases with company size



Participation differs according to employment status



Participation differs according to skills levels



Training is needed for employees to keep up to date, but is not supported by all employers

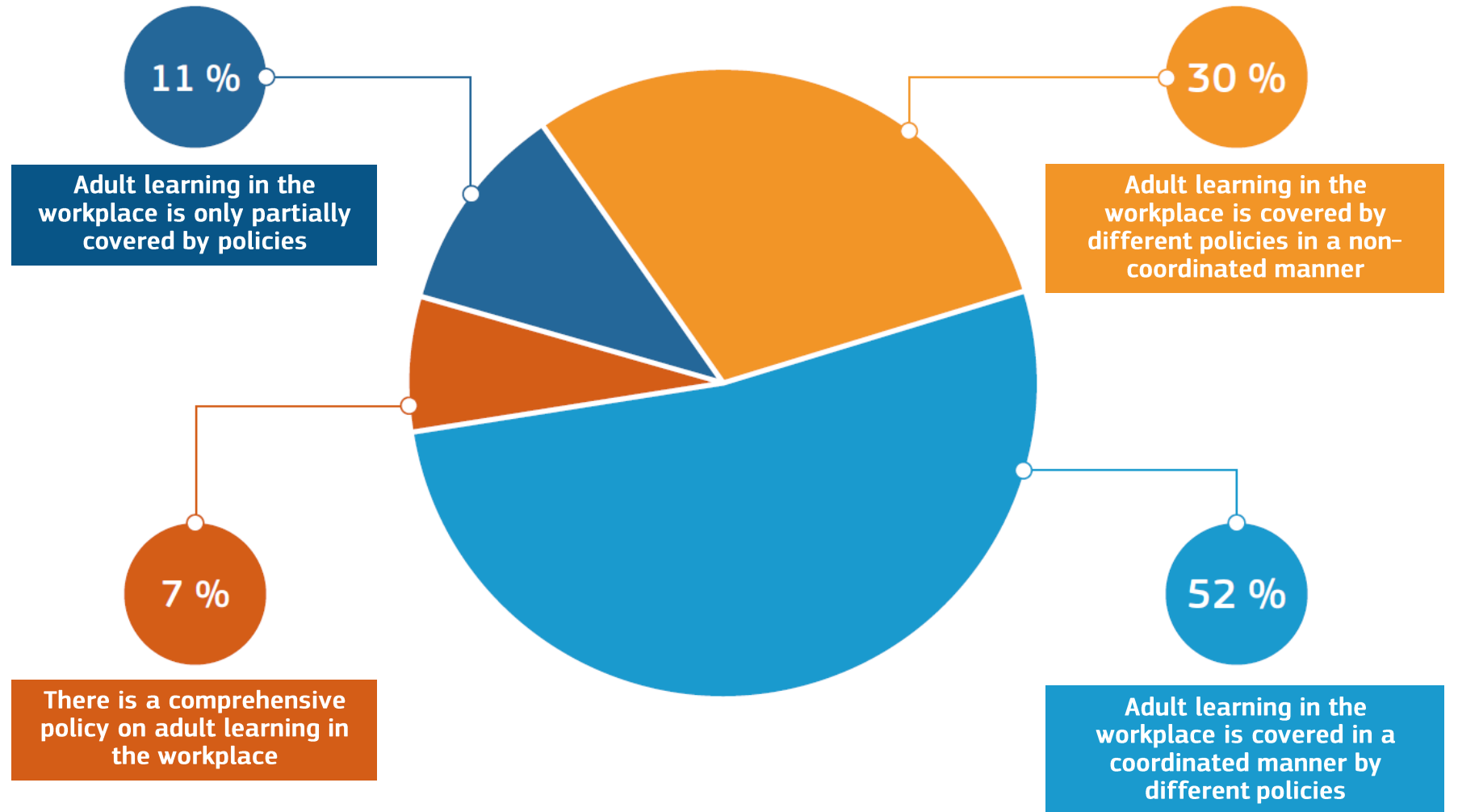


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## **Question 3:**

**Which policies in your country support adult learning in the workplace?**

## Which policies in your country support adult learning in the workplace?



European Commission (2018), *Promoting adult learning in the workplace: Final report of the ET 2020 Working Group 2016 – 2018 on Adult Learning*



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# Building blocks for stimulating adult learning in the workplace



## The vision on adult learning in the workplace



**BB1:**  
Encourage employers to adopt a learning culture that supports career-long learning

**BB2:**  
Ensure that adult learning in the workplace puts learners on a lifelong pathway (and is supported by guidance systems and validation of prior learning)

## Commitment, governance and coordination



**BB3:**  
Secure the long-term commitment of all stakeholders

**BB4:**  
Ensure effective coordination between all stakeholders and agree on roles and responsibilities

**BB5:**  
Communicate about adult learning in the workplace using the language of those who need to be encouraged

**BB6:**  
Ensure sustainable co-funding systems in which all see the benefit of investing in the workforce

## Planning and ensuring relevance of adult learning in the workplace



**BB7:**  
Ensure that workplace learning is tailored to adult learners' needs

**BB8:**  
Ensure that adult learning in the workplace responds to employers needs

**BB9:**  
Assure the quality of adult learning in the workplace

## Monitoring and evaluation



**BB10:**  
Set up effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that adult learning in the workplace remains relevant and effective



## Encourage employers to adopt a learning culture that supports career-long learning

(Building Block 1)



- Establish a sustainable workplace culture in which learning happens continually
- What is needed for organisations to stimulate learning?
  - Learning offer
  - Incentives for individuals to learn
  - Organisation of work (differentiated work tasks)

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**Ensure that adult learning in the workplace puts learners on a lifelong learning pathway (and is supported by guidance systems and validation of prior learning)**  
(Building Block 2)



- Learning should lead naturally to further participation in learning, contributing to continuous upskilling and reskilling
- The learning approach should both be directly linked to the working context and set learners on a lifelong learning pathway

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**Communicate about adult learning in the workplace using the language of those who need to be encouraged**

(Building Block 5)



- Communication about basic skills learning should be undertaken in the ‘language’ of the audience (employer or learner)
- Programs, and the related communication strategies, should focus on one specific basic skill

Ensure that workplace learning is tailored to adult learners' needs

(Building Block 7)

Ensure that adult learning in the workplace responds to employers' needs

(Building Block 8)



- Apply general adult learning principles to the outreach, content, approach, mode and organisation of learning
- The learning of employees should be relevant for employers
- The benefits to employers are clearly pointed out (reduction of accidents at work, higher productivity, improved welfare of workers etc.)
- Employers' needs should encompass both immediate skills needs and more long-term needs

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# Learning organisations through partnerships

- Strategic re-orientation towards becoming a learning organisation
- Long-term commitment
- Partnership with learning providers
- Distribution of responsibilities for skills development
- Strength of the apprenticeship system





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# The role of apprenticeships in adult learning – based on a Cedefop explorative study

Ramona David Craescu, Expert, CEDEFOP

# Main Objectives of the Study

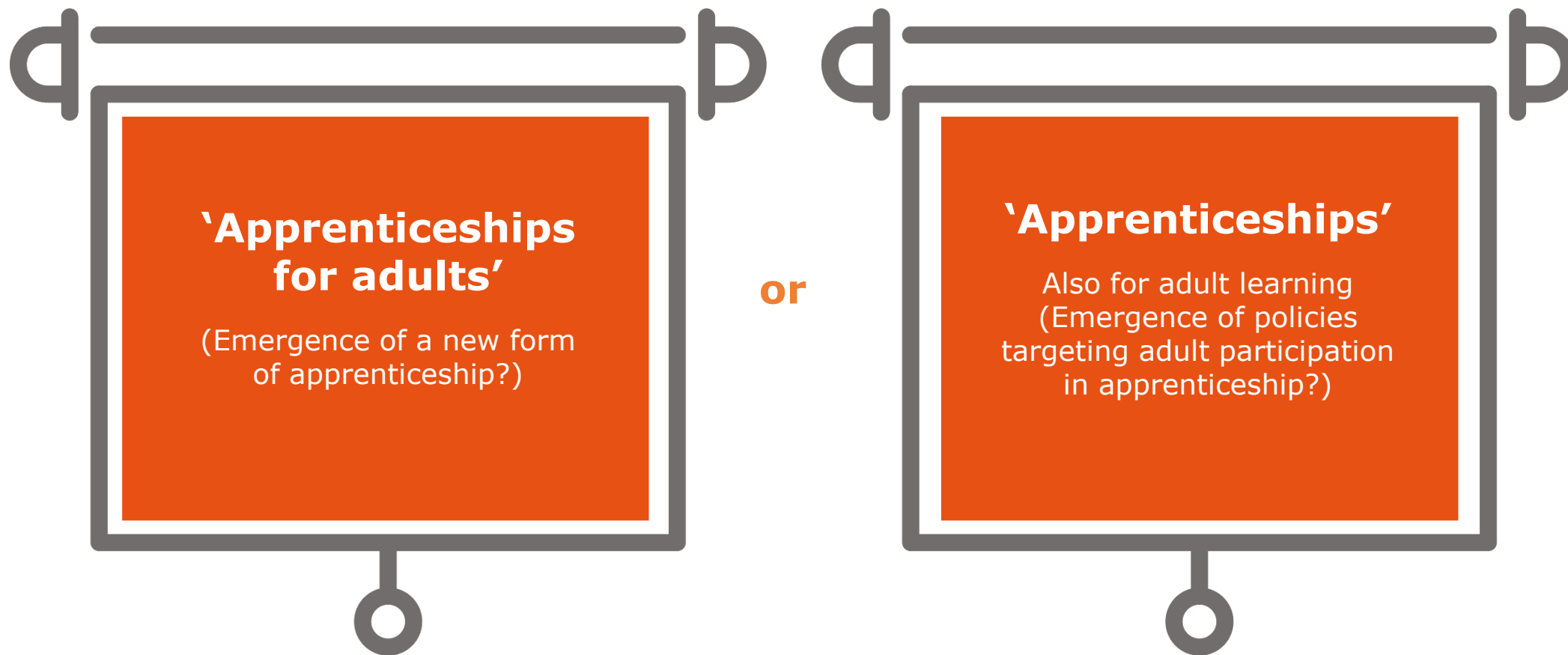
To explore:

- Whether apprenticeships for adults is a distinct analytical category or concept (conceptually, there are two different types of apprenticeship) or just two sides of the same coin
- Whether any specific features are required to shape or gear apprenticeships towards adults, including the deployment of enabling factors





## A main general (conceptual) consideration



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## Question 4:

In your opinion, the policy focus on increasing participation of adults in apprenticeships leads/would lead to the emergence of:

*(please chose one of the two options)*

- A new type of apprenticeship (necessity of building something new)
- Policies targeting adult participation in apprenticeships (necessity to make apprenticeships more agile in order to also meet the needs of adults)

# The main characteristics of apprenticeships



Learning in school  
and training in the  
workplace



Certified and  
recognised



Work contract



Wage/  
allowance



Long-term



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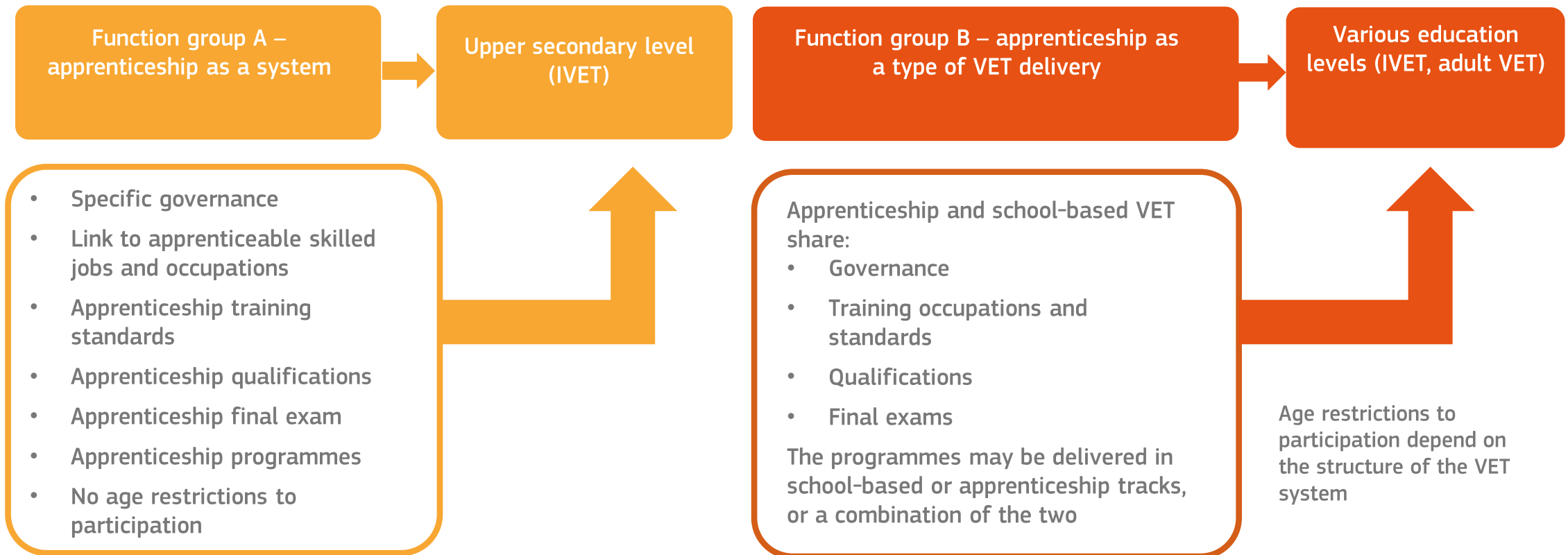
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# Main approaches to using apprenticeships for adult learning

(overview of apprenticeship function groups)



# Main approaches to using apprenticeships for adult learning (function Group A)

Function group A

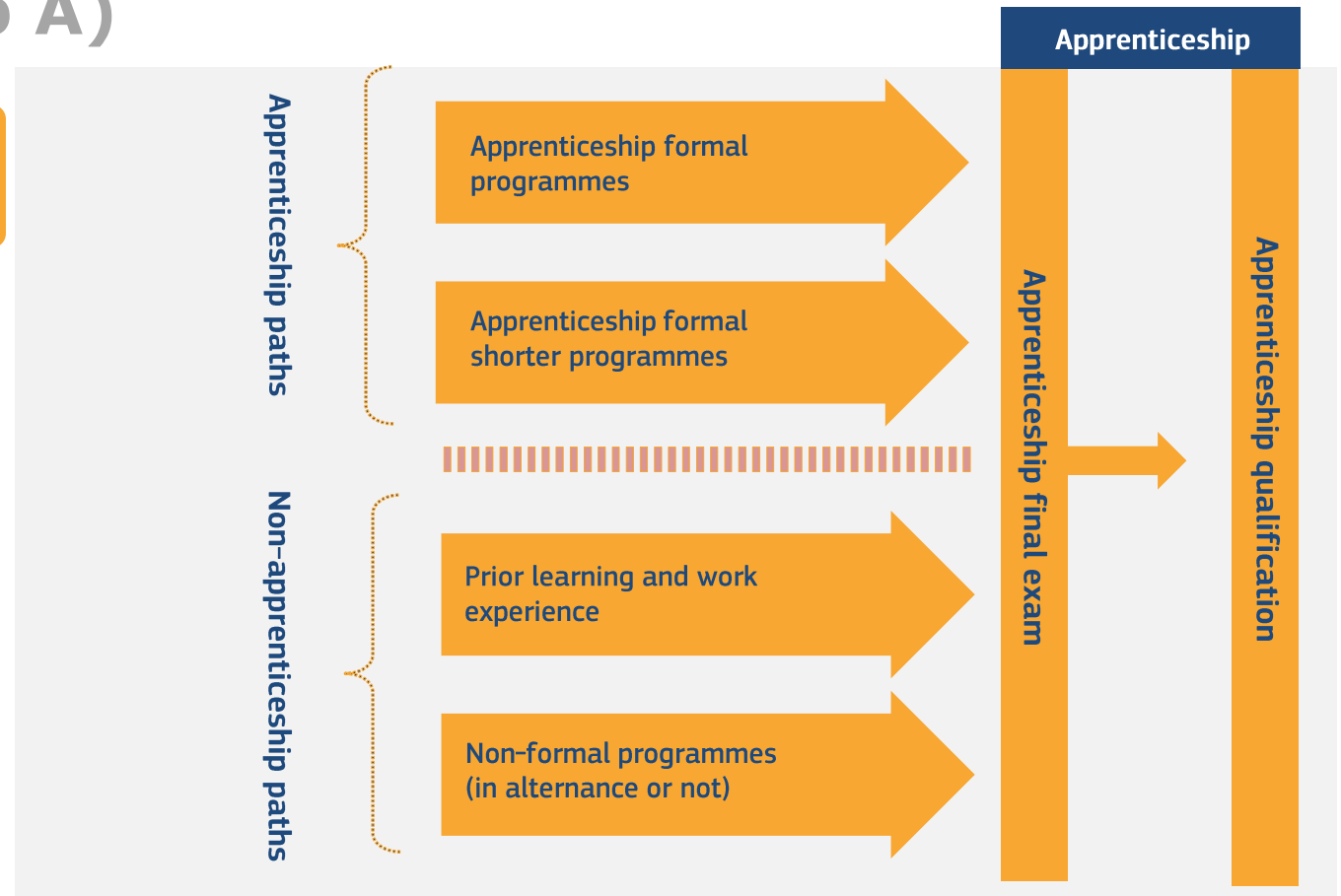
New/increased paths to achieving an **apprenticeship qualification**



Introduction of non-apprenticeship paths



Main identifying element: **apprenticeship qualification**



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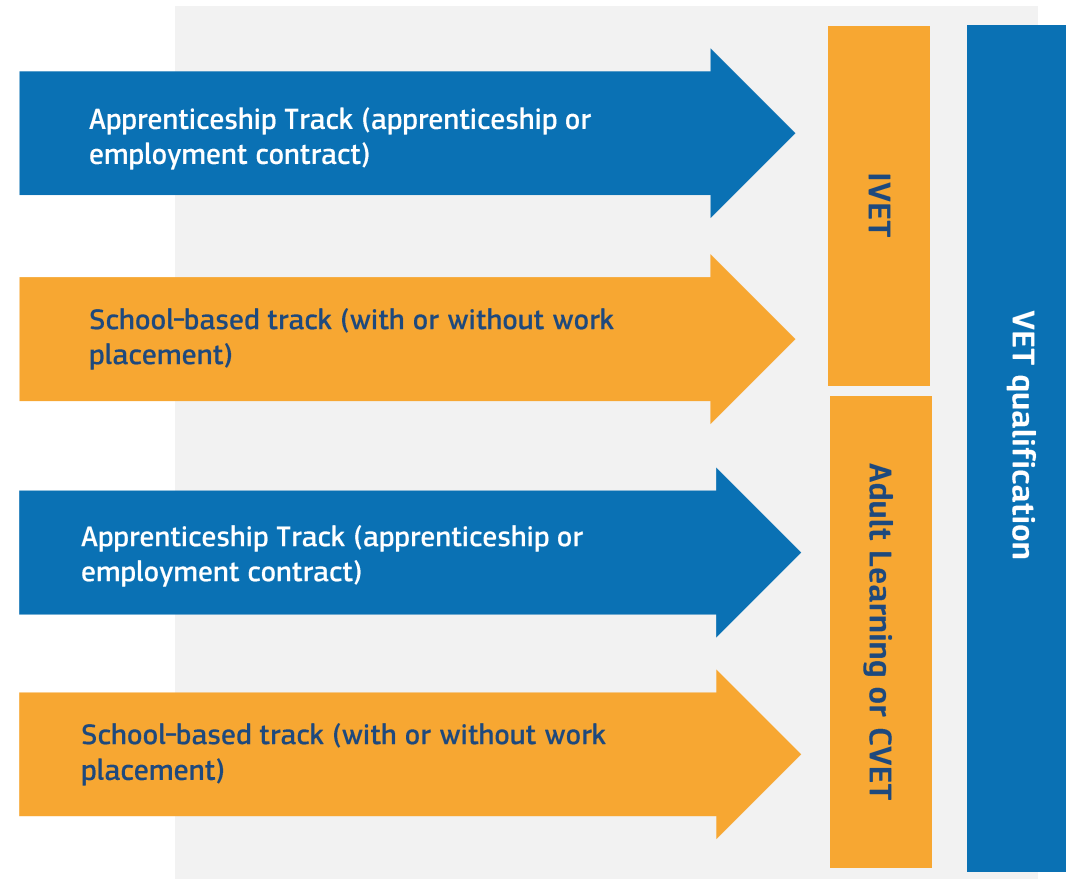
# Main approaches to using apprenticeship for adult learning (function Group B)

## Function group B

Those using an apprenticeship as an additional path to supporting people pursue a **VET qualification** in IVET, adult learning or CVET

A more practical way towards a VET qualification

Main identifying elements:  
employment, remuneration, higher amount of practical training



# Increasing the flexibility and defining the identity of apprenticeships



## Apprenticeship qualification at the centre

The apprenticeship path becomes less relevant  
(Group A)



## VET qualification at the centre

The apprenticeship path is defintory  
(Group B)



## Both groups face an identity crisis

(Less group A, where identity is given by other system-level elements)



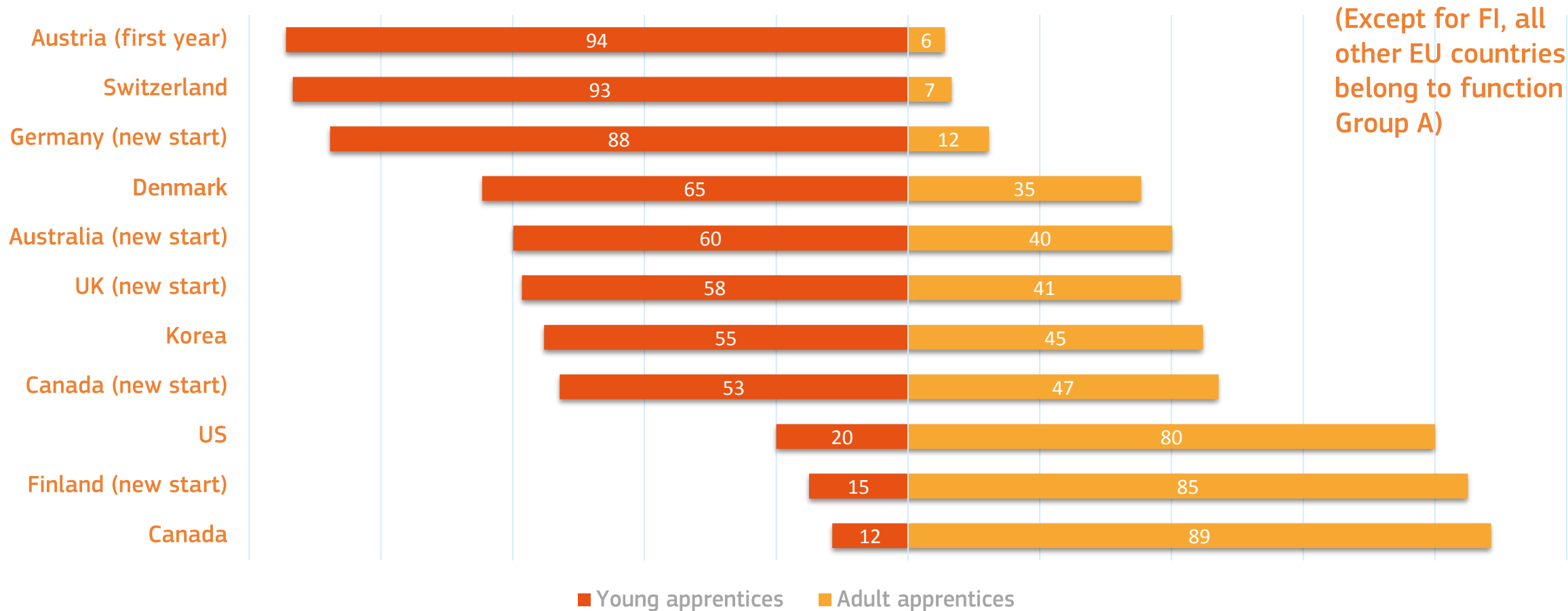
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## Share (%) of adult apprentices (2012-18) – OECD data



National Statistics and Muehleemann, S. (forthcoming), *The Economics of Apprenticeships for Adults*, OECD Publishing

Note: 'Adult' refers to those aged 25+, except in Austria (21+) and Germany (24+)



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## National policies to facilitate the participation of adults

- New funding arrangements (apprenticeship levy) favour 'conversion' (adults who join an apprenticeship while they are with their existing employer)

Critique: relabelling existing posts as apprenticeships

- Higher salaries for people over 18
- Account for a large proportion of adults who join apprenticeships



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Kingdom



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## National policies to facilitate the participation of adults

- Shortening the training duration through validation, partial qualifications and use of part-time vocational training contracts
- Extraordinary access to the apprenticeship leave exam for experienced workers
- Courses that prepare participants for external examinations
- Subsidies to employers (AT)



**Austria**  
**Switzerland**  
**Germany**

# National policies to facilitate the participation of adults

Only country in Function Group A to have introduced apprenticeship programmes with special conditions targeted at adults (25 or older)

While the modes of participation differ for adults compared to young people, the governance, scope and qualifications are the same, everything falling under the same system



**Denmark**

- **Policy rationale:** to offer more attractive, predictable and goal-oriented apprenticeship offers/programmes to progress from low-skilled to skilled workers
- **Starting point:** the education and the experience which the adult already possesses



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# National policies to facilitate the participation of adults

## Australian apprenticeships are not modified for adults

- Financial incentives for employers: in most cases it is the employer who initiates the process, with a view to accessing incentives (conversion in UK)
- Adult apprentices are encouraged to access recognition of prior learning processes



**Australia**



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# National policies to facilitate the participation of adults

Reminder: FI belongs to Function Group B countries

There is a law for adult VET, which states that an adult degree can be studied as an apprenticeship, and there is a law for apprenticeships, which states that they also cover degrees in adult VET.

Apprenticeship training is based on the curricula in adult education:

- Competence-based qualifications
- Shorter than the degree for young students
- Adult degrees include less general studies and are more practice-oriented
- There is some individual variation, depending on previous studies and qualifications
- Adult level is more based on qualification demonstration, which gives more responsibility to the student



**Finland**



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## Potential of apprenticeships to engage adults

- Link to a qualification and occupation (LM value)
- Remunerated while learning
- Learning predominantly in a company: adults are integrated into a working environment and are able to identify more with being workers than learners
- Possibility to undergo apprenticeship learning while staying with the employer (reconversion)



**However, some mature workers have reservations about doing an apprenticeship.**

- Going back to school with the study component of the apprenticeship
- Feeling they will be paid less as an apprentice than in their current position, which can impact on being able to make mortgage payments
- Potentially taking instructions from someone younger

# Why would employers hire adult apprentices?

- The need for a skilled workforce, combined with a decreasing youth cohort and a lack of interest amongst young people
- Using apprenticeships as an opportunity to upskill low-qualified employees – the practice of ‘conversion’ (most often comes from the employers themselves)
- Adults might be considered more attractive/productive to employers (experience, life skills, commitment, employability and job-ready skills)
- Adults are potentially stable, long-term employees (due to their responsibilities and obligations)



# Lessons to be learnt

- NOT to introduce something new, but to improve/preserve the quality of existing apprenticeship schemes and/or systems – developed by industry for industry
- Use policies to remove barriers and enable participation
- Remove age limits
- Build in flexibility (*consequence on identity*)
- Provide incentives targeting adults
- Encourage employers to ‘convert’ their employees into apprentices
- Prepare adults to enter and complete an apprenticeship
- Use/promote other forms of work-based learning
- Member States need a holistic perspective on how to stimulate adult learning in the workplace with *apprenticeships having a clear identity and place*



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# Questions?



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**Thank you for your time and attention!**

Look out for our upcoming webinar in  
March on...

**'Apprenticeships and  
Representation'**

