Increasingly tight funding in Germany worsens accessibility and responsiveness of ALE

In Germany, access to continuing training depends heavily on employment status: unemployed adults, low-skilled workers, and those in small companies face fewer opportunities. Despite a high participation rate, learners still face important barriers.

The overall situation of adult learning and education in Germany remains challenging. According to EAEA's member Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV), the German Adult Education Association, the funding environment is increasingly tight, and the situation has worsened compared to 2023. Both at the national and European levels, financial support for ALE is insufficient, leading to a significant accessibility gap in which many adults cannot afford to participate in learning opportunities.

While civil society organisations have relatively good channels to express their views and contribute to policy-making, learners themselves have fewer opportunities to participate directly, and their concerns are only partially taken into account. This imbalance highlights the need for stronger structural support and more inclusive mechanisms to ensure that adult education remains both accessible and responsive to societal needs.

Skills dimension

DVV emphasises the need to maintain a holistic perspective on skills development in adult learning. While the growing focus on employability is understandable, it should not become the sole objective of education. The importance of so-called future skills - such

as critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, is increasing, yet these competences often fall outside the scope of traditional vocational education. It is therefore essential to preserve a comprehensive, human-centered approach to adult learning that values both professional and personal development.

AI in adult learning

DVV is currently exploring the role of artificial intelligence in adult education. The organisation is testing various AI tools to assess their potential benefits for adult education centers. While there is growing demand for AI as a learning topic, several challenges still hinder its broader implementation - including unresolved data protection concerns, issues of GDPR compliance, and high operational costs. To address these, DVV is developing guidelines to help adult education centers navigate the opportunities and risks associated with the use of AI in teaching and administration.

Participation in decision-making

DVV has been actively involved in several consultation processes during 2024. Among other topics, the organisation contributed to discussions on the VAT exemption for educational programs and on the employment conditions of freelance educators working in continuing education institutions. These consultations provided an important opportunity to highlight the specific challenges faced by the adult learning sector and to advocate for fairer and more supportive policy frameworks.

German member's view on the PIAAC results

DVV agrees with the results shown by the OECD survey on adult skills.

Funding of adult education

According to DVV, the funding situation of adult education in Germany has slightly deteriorated in 2024-2025. The main funding continues to be provided through active labor market policy. Other areas of adult learning and education are heavily dependent on projects, programmes, and regional and local funding levels, and are therefore regionally diverse.

The member organisation mentions multiple sources of funding, including:

- project funding
- program funding
- contribution paid by employers
- paid training leave

DISCLAIMER ON THE PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING DATA: the data focuses on formal and non-formal education and training, excluding guided on-the-job training. Participation is higher when on-the-job training is included. Data coming from sources such as OECD and the monitoring framework of the European Pillar of Social Rights may differ from the presented data.