



Upper Austrian Employment Service

Employability and the willingness for further training of labour force aged 45 and over in Upper Austria

On behalf of AMS Upper Austria

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1 Introduction

The demographic developments in the coming years will continue to bring along an aging of the population and of the work force. Thus the employability of older workers will continue to gain in relevance. Concepts of employability are differently wide-ranging, but skill-related components always play a central role. These mainly refer to formal education, the experience and willingness concerning further training and the existing skills.

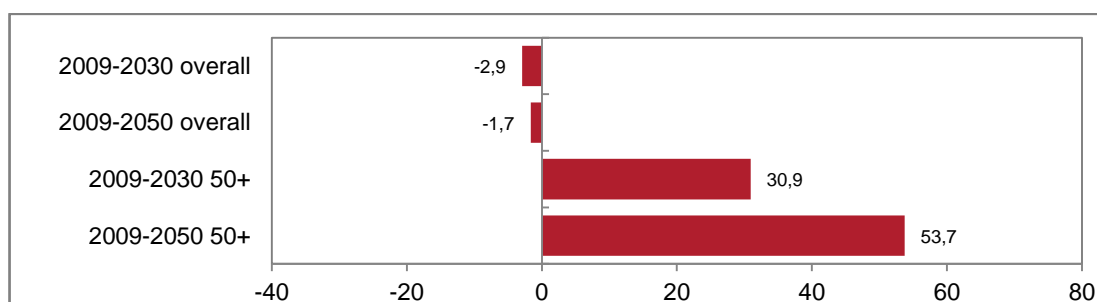
Against this background, the present study generates information about qualification-aspects for a specific sub-group, namely the 45 - to 49-year-old labour force (both employed workers and unemployed) in Upper Austria. Findings on their attitudes and specific requirements concerning further training shall serve as a connecting factor for the Upper Austrian Employment Service to develop age-appropriate offers.

Methodologically, the study is based on different approaches, comprising the analysis of secondary data and studies as well as field research. The latter included expert interviews with representatives of the Upper Austrian adult education (n = 20) and telephone interviews with people of the respective age group (n = 304).

2 Background: Demographic Situation

As of 2030, more than half of the Upper Austrian population will be over 45 years old. The group of "elderly" therefore will gain importance also at the labour market. Overall, the labour force in Upper Austria will slightly decrease until 2050 (-1.7%), but the number of those aged 50 years and over will increase by half – they win importance both absolutely and relatively for the potential labour force.

Figure 1: Change in the number of the work force 2009-2030/2050, overall and for 50+, Upper Austria, in % (baseline scenario)



Source: ÖROK Small-scale acquisition Forecast 2010

The educational level of the 45 - to 49-year-old labour force in Upper Austria in a nationwide comparison is currently characterized by more low to medium levels and fewer higher levels of education. Especially among women and migrants there is an above average number of people with no more than compulsory schooling.

But for the years to come, a general up skilling of the population is predicted. Among the over 45-year-old work force especially the proportion of graduates of upper secondary schools will increase significantly by 2030, people with only compulsory edu-

cation will become rarer, whereas the share of apprenticeship graduates remains relatively constant. The trend towards higher qualifications also holds true for migrants.

3 The Target Group at a Glance

Speaking about the group of 45-49 year employees, some employment-related characteristics are worth mentioning. Thus, the professional field of activity of the persons interviewed is strongly gender-segregated. Women focus on few career fields (e.g. particularly the office sector), while men are involved in a wider range of professions (e.g. technical jobs, skilled trades, operating machinery / assemblers). Part-time employment has a very high significance for women (roughly two thirds).

Overall, a third of respondents works as unskilled or semiskilled workers, skilled workers make up for another third, and about a quarter are highly trained employees. People with a migration background work more often than average in unskilled and semiskilled jobs, a relatively high proportion also feels overqualified. It is generally true to say: The higher the formal education, the higher the level of activity. And the lower the level of activity, the less the employees see chances for personal development in the company (as to career opportunities or possibilities for additional tasks and competences).

In the perception of respondents transferable skills are the most important qualification requirements in the current work. Notably, personal attitudes and values (such as friendliness, reliability, etc.) and social skills (such as communication skills, teamwork, etc.) are the essential job-related needs. The demand for computer application knowledge is conceived as a dynamic requirement: Almost every third person says that such skills have become more important in his / her profession in recent years.

4 Participation in Further Education

On the basis of official data, the participation rate of 45 - to 49 -year-old dependent workers and unemployed in Upper Austria at non-formal education and training¹ adds up to 11.6 % and those at formal education and training² to below 1%³. By tendency men and people with a migration background are less active in further education. The reason for participating in non-formal education is mostly job-related, whereat private reasons gain relevance with age.

The respondents show a comparatively high participation rate, which can be explained mainly by the method of data collection.⁴ Overall, 87 % attended one or more

¹ Non-formal: Participation in non-formal education and training, including all types of taught learning activities, which are not part of a formal education (e.g. courses, seminars, ...) within the last four weeks.

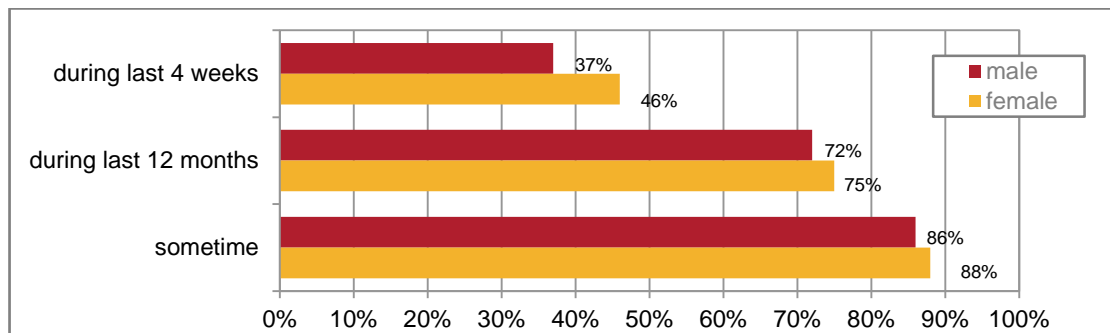
² Formal: Participation in education and training in the regular system of schools, universities and colleges (including apprenticeship) within the last four weeks

³ Statistik Austria, Labour Force Survey 2012, own calculations on the basis of Statcube, date of inquiry August 2013

⁴ Access to the target group; Definition of participation in further education and training (including informal education)

training/s sometime, during the last 12 months three quarters of all respondents did. This participation rate rises with increasing levels of education and is higher among people with a non-migrant background.

Figure 2: Participation in further education (formal, non-formal, courses of AMS, informal) in different time periods, by gender



Source: L&R Datafile 'WB OÖ', 2013, weighted sample; Interviews n= 304

The non-formal forms of training are of greatest importance, specifically multi-day courses. Formal and informal forms of training prove of greater importance for those with higher education and activity levels.

The contents are generally broad and vary significantly between the forms of training. The issues of non-formal education are most likely to be set in the social, economic and legal area. Informal education mostly deals with subject-specific contents in the fields of engineering, and AMS courses are dominated by IT topics.

13% of all respondents have never participated in training activities. This proportion is higher among low-skilled workers and people with migrant background. The main reasons for not attending training opportunities relate to a lack of relevance of the education for the job, at least from a subjective point of view.

5 Access to Learning and Further Education

Respondents are generally quite open towards learning and perceive further education mainly as a necessary part of professional success and to secure employment – around three quarters fully agree to suchlike statements. Many also apprehend further education as a personal gain: aspects such as self-confidence in the job through further education, the desire to learn new things for work and the immediate practicability are given plenty of approval. Only every tenth respondent believes, that with increasing age professional training pays less – people with no former participation in education as well as people with a migrant background more frequently.

A direct linking of the further education to the personal (professional) situation is the central motif for participation: The main reasons for further education and training (in the past) were the development of professional skills and personal enrichment. These motifs are of more importance for women and persons without migrant background than for men and for migrants. The latter – men and people with migrant backgrounds – as well as participants in AMS courses however connect also more strategic objec-

tives with their training participation, such as career and higher income, job security, certificates, etc.

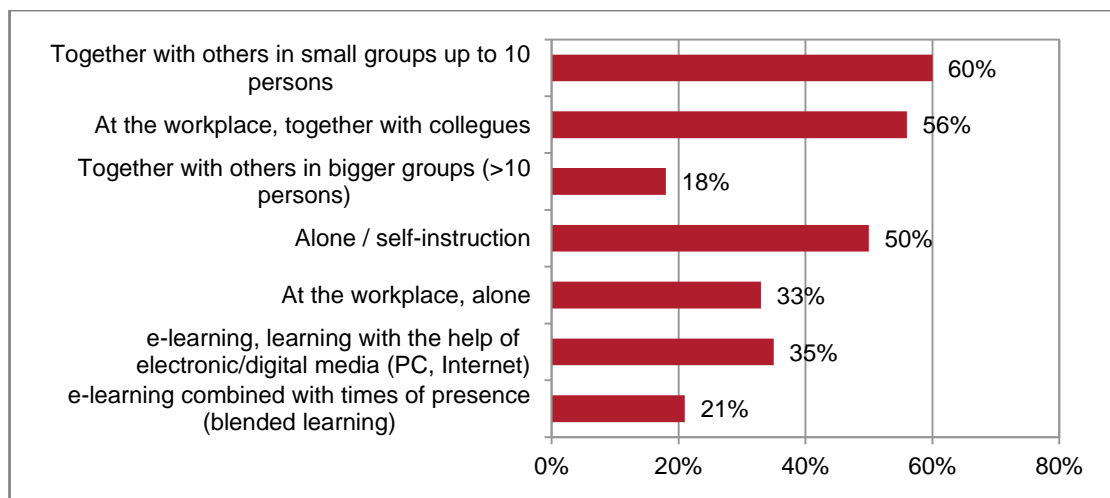
Also regarding the benefits from former trainings, personal and professional aspects dominate by far over strategic aspects. And if the participants had personal and professional reasons for their participation, those expectations were met to a relatively high degree. Strategic hopes however were fulfilled less satisfyingly.

6 Requirements for Learning Environments

Regarding the organization of age-appropriate education, results from the survey and interview data indicate the following elements of particular relevance.

- The voluntary nature of participation is, from the perspective of the participants, the central aspect. The opportunity to bring in their own questions and interests is important to them and refers to necessary forms of participation and interactivity.
- Training should be directly related to the working life. The benefits of a professional training should be cognizable, whereat support from the employer can be regarded as essential.
- The preferred setting for learning is socially constructed: learning groups in a manageable size (up to 10 people) or learning on the job with colleagues are the most attractive learning environments, in particular for low-skilled persons. At medium and higher qualifications also other learning settings are popular in addition.
- As contents should focus on practical tasks in the workplace, a combination of practical activity and theoretical learning is the preferred form of learning – about 70%, regardless of gender and level of education, find such an environment attractive, learning by doing is by far the most appealing method of learning.
- The documentation of the learning performance is important, because the professional certificates and strategic utility of further education play an important role. Classic test settings however often let exam nerves rise (again).

Figure 3: Preferred Settings for Learning, Multiple Entries Possible



Source: L&R Datafile 'WB OÖ', 2013, weighted sample; Interviews n= 304, n miss between 7 and 9

7 Future Interests

The respondents' willingness for further education is also high in the future, so this age group is by no means uninterested in education. Around two-thirds – regardless of gender – say they are interested in education and training over the next 12 months. The interest is even bigger among people who have already participated (especially if they did so during the last year), and also a highly skilled employment increases the likelihood of interest in further education. The interest is primarily aimed at non-formal forms of training and is predominantly motivated by occupational reasons, whereas the substantive interests are widely diversified. Ensuring a close linkage between the education and the professional activity and a support from the employer can be considered as key prerequisites to actually implement these educational interests into action.

8 Conclusion. A Typology of Job Related Plans and Related Training Requirements

The present study is titled employability and the willingness for further training of older workers. It pursued the matter of further education and skills-related issues, under the premise that the strengthening of skills contributes to maintain employability and thus to prolong working life. However, people have very different ideas of how their remaining time in employment should be like. Based on the respondents' answers about their personal career plans in the next few years, three types were distinguished.

- The vast majority of three quarters wants to CONTINUE to be active in the current career field. This group is characterized by relatively high formal and professional levels and is relatively strongly anchored in the professional activity.
- REORIENTATION in the coming years is contemplated by about every fifth. This can be a more or less voluntary reorientation ("once again a fresh start" vs. physical disabilities) and is relatively more likely among those feeling overqualified, among unemployed people, people with a migration background and in service occupations.
- A relatively small proportion of 7% – especially men, skilled workers or people in production occupations and those with physical problems – expresses no professional development plans but would like to GET OUT of working life as soon as possible.

It should be emphasized that further education is generally understood as a relevant factor in all three types, and the interest in future participation is not clearly above or below average for any of the types. But at the same time, the survey data suggest, that these types have different requirements concerning further education. The offers must therefore meet varying needs.

If for the first type the direct applicability of the learnt content to specific job issues is in the foreground, the focus of further education for this group should aim for maintaining and adapting existing skills. In a re-orientation, however, the monitoring of this orientation step is more in demand – training should provide strong reference to the personal situation, and facilitate and support the further educational steps. Training

opportunities for persons willing to drop out should provide motivation and work primarily to stimulate changes concerning competences and skills in the context of personal and labour market chances.

Table 1: Ideal-typical characterization of training dimensions along a typology of career plans

	Continuation in current career field (74%)	Reorientation (18%)	Orientation on leaving work life (7%)
Further education perceived as ...	part of professional activity	Way to (modified) professional activity	Way to secure job
Approach to further education rather...	active	proactive	reactive
Personal value of further education lies in...	applicability of content	strategic usability	strategic usability
Contents of further education should...	Deepen, broaden existing competences/skills	Broaden existing / acquire new competences/skills	Broaden existing / acquire new competences/skills
Geared to ...	specific job-related issues	individual situation, considering reasons for reorientation	personal and labour market chances
Ideal-typical orientation of further education	maintenance and adaptation	facilitation and support	motivation and change

Source: L&R Datafile 'WB ÖÖ', 2013