



### **BusinessEurope statement: Access to training for people in diverse forms of work**

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#### **Introduction**

The recovery from COVID and the digital and green transitions highlight the ongoing importance of up and re-skilling opportunities for workers in different forms of contractual relationship. The purpose of this statement is to develop BusinessEurope's views on access to training for people in diverse forms of work.

#### **Statement on access to training for people in diverse forms of work**

1. Whereas full-time open-ended employment remains the dominant form of employment relationship in the EU, part-time, fixed-term, temporary agency work, platform work and casual work, amongst others, increasingly plays an important role in addressing employers' labour and skills needs. Such diverse forms of work also enable workers to balance other commitments whether they relate to ongoing education or other responsibilities at home.
2. The rapid pace of change that COVID has brought about in relation to the use of digital tools and online platforms for remote working and distance and online learning has introduced much greater flexibility and more opportunities for where, when and how people work and learn.
3. The digital and green transitions are putting added emphasis on the need for all workers, irrespective of contractual arrangement to up and re-skill. This is important for workers to have a skills set that is relevant for their continued employability and employment and which simultaneously addresses employers' needs. **Diverse forms of work can also be an important driver of labour market transitions and act as a stepping-stone from unemployment to work and between different forms of work. Therefore, it is important that workers in diverse forms of work are also able to benefit from training opportunities.**
4. Whereas employees in standard employment relationships typically have good access to training opportunities that are defined either through training provided directly by employers or through collective agreements, such as in the form of training funds, this is much more heterogeneous in the case of people in diverse forms of work, especially those moving between jobs and employers on a regular basis.
5. This was outlined in the 2021 European social partners project on skills, innovation and training, which noted that almost 50% of employees on permanent contracts in the EU receive training compared to 32% of employees with fixed contracts and 19% of self-employed.
6. This suggests that in many cases those who need access to learning opportunities the most are often those who have the least access to it. At the same time, it can be noted that there are initiatives to provide training to workers on fixed-term contracts. A good example of this is in the temporary agency work sector where training funds provide opportunities for skills development in a number of countries, including Belgium,

France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Switzerland. Most of these training funds are bipartite, thus based on collective labour agreements and managed jointly by the sectoral social partners.

7. To help further foster the provision of training to people in diverse forms of work, there needs to be sufficient flexibility for public authorities and social partners at the national and regional level to orient the structure and content of training funds and programmes to the needs of employers and workers within their labour market context. In addition to state-funded and state-operated training measures and programmes such as via the public employment services, appropriate support and incentives - financial and non-financial – need to be available to companies and workers to help them progress in offering training opportunities that are widely available for all workers, irrespective of the form of work in which they are.
8. The European business community fully supports the objective to improve access to training for workers in diverse forms of work, keeping in mind the objective to achieve open, dynamic and mobile labour markets where people can move between jobs and employment statuses across sectors. Member States and social partners are best placed to consider how best to achieve progress in this respect in view of diverse education and training practices across Europe. In countries where bipartite training funds have been put in place, an important objective is to improve their functioning, notably to provide better opportunities to make access to training transferable and portable, which is particularly important for people in diverse forms of work, who change their employer and the labour contract based on which they are working more frequently.
9. The particular situation of casual work where workers work only a limited number of hours needs to be taken into account, as well as the situation of the low qualified. For these groups of vulnerable workers, improving access to training requires financial support from public authorities, notably when this comes to training programmes aiming to ensure that these workers possess the necessary basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
10. As concerns platform workers, access to training for platform employees should be in line with the applicable rules and practice at the national level. As regards self-employed platform workers, member states and/or social partners should facilitate access to appropriate training/skills-updating/re-skilling programmes in cooperation with platform providers, or solely by them. There may also need to be an element of co-investment by individual platform workers as well.
11. It can also be noted that entrepreneurs play an important role in developing the products and services that are being utilised in the digital and green transitions. As such, this category of workers also need access to training. Whereas initial training in entrepreneurial skills can take place during secondary and tertiary education, additional up and re-skilling may also be needed. While the financing can be covered to a good extent by the individual, possibly supported by government incentives, they may need guidance and support in identifying relevant training courses according to their needs.
12. As part of the overall approach to supporting up and re-skilling, Member States should explore the use of available resources under the recovery and resilience facility and the European Social Fund+ to widen access to labour market relevant training for people in diverse forms of work. In both cases it is important that access to these funds is as facilitated and transparent as possible and that social partners are well involved in actions relating to their areas of competence.