

**OECD CENTRE FOR SKILLS**

**Proceedings of the 12th OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshop**

**Unlocking Informal Learning: Pathways to Lifelong Learning**

Workshop held in a hybrid format on 14th November 2025, 09:00-16:00 (Paris time)

The OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshops annually convene representatives from countries having undertaken OECD Skills Strategies, as well as other interested countries, to engage in open discussions and learn from the experiences of other countries taking a strategic approach to skills policy.

On 14th November 2025, the OECD Centre for Skills held the 12th OECD Skills Strategy Peer Learning Workshop, in a hybrid format. The topic of the workshop was “Unlocking Informal Learning: Pathways to Lifelong Learning” and it gathered representatives from 19 OECD member countries and 2 OECD accession countries, as well as from the European Commission, Google, and the University of Glasgow.

This proceedings document provides an overview of the workshop and summarises the key discussion points.

Note: The opinions expressed, and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of the countries having participated in the workshop.

For any questions about this document, please contact: Bart Staats, Policy Analyst, OECD Skills Strategy Team, [Bart.Staats@oecd.org](mailto:Bart.Staats@oecd.org).

For any questions about the work of the OECD Skills Strategy team, please contact: Andrew Bell, Deputy Head of the OECD Centre for Skills and Head of OECD Skills Strategies, [Andrew.Bell@oecd.org](mailto:Andrew.Bell@oecd.org).

**JT03582108**

# 1 Introduction

## OECD Skills Strategies

The OECD Centre for Skills works collaboratively with countries to assess their skills challenges and opportunities, identify priority areas for action, and develop concrete and tailored policy recommendations for building more effective skills systems that promote employment, productivity, and social cohesion. Using the OECD Skills Strategy framework, the [OECD Skills Strategies](#) analyse skills performance along the following dimensions: i) **developing relevant skills** over the life course ii) **using skills effectively** in work and in society and iii) strengthening the **governance of the skills system**.

Since the launch of the OECD Skills Strategy in 2013, the OECD has collaborated with over 25 economies to develop tailored skills strategies. This work has been carried out with individual countries and subnational entities – including Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand and the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland) – as well as at the regional level in Latin America and Southeast Asia.

## OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshops

Since 2014, the annual [OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshops](#) have convened public officials from countries that have completed OECD Skills Strategies, as well as other interested countries, to engage in open discussions on skills policy, and to learn from each other. Participants have the opportunity to exchange policy experiences and challenges, helping to translate emerging insights into concrete action. Workshop participants are also offered the opportunity to present their country's policies and practices on a selected topic, share their experiences, and strengthen their international network of colleagues.

## The 12th workshop on “Unlocking Informal Learning: Pathways to Lifelong Learning”

On 14 November 2025, the 12th OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshop took place with more than **39 representatives from 21 countries**, including participants from the European Commission and the private sector.

The topic of the 12th OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshop was “**Unlocking Informal Learning: Pathways to Lifelong Learning**”. Lifelong learning is essential for individuals to adapt their skills to changing aspirations, labour market needs, and societal transformations. A strong system combines solid foundations in initial education with opportunities for continuous learning in formal, non-formal, and informal settings.

**Informal learning**, while accounting for most of the time people spend learning, is still under-recognised in policy frameworks. It supports higher wages, better job performance, and complements more structured forms of education. It also offers accessible opportunities for groups facing barriers to formal learning, such as disengaged learners or employees in SMEs. Yet, limited recognition, inconsistent definitions, and gaps in data collection constrain policy development.

At the same time, technological change and new work practices further increase the **importance of informal learning**. These developments expand access to learning and create more flexible, individualised learning pathways, but they also raise questions around quality, equity, and privacy. The growing shift towards skills-based hiring further underlines the importance of recognising skills gained outside formal education.

The OECD Centre for Skills is currently exploring this topic further through the ongoing project “[Enhancing the Understanding and Measurement of Informal Learning](#)” which also served as a key input for this workshop. Insights from the workshop will, in turn, shape the final phase of the project, which will develop policy recommendations on how to further improve the definition and measurement of informal learning.

The workshop was delivered in a **hybrid format**, and included a **panel discussion with keynote speakers, OECD presentations**, and **two sessions** with six country presentations, along with **table discussions** (see agenda in Annex A). The discussions were guided by targeted questions and informed by an issues paper shared with participants in advance of the workshop.



# 2 Overview of the 12<sup>th</sup> OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshop

## Workshop opening

The 12th OECD Skills Strategy Peer-Learning Workshop opened with remarks by **Ms El Iza Mohamedou**, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills, who welcomed participants and underscored the value of this forum in enabling open exchange among countries advancing their skills strategies. She highlighted this year's focus on informal learning, noting both its vital yet often overlooked role in lifelong learning and the need for clearer definitions and stronger measurement frameworks to guide effective policy.

**Mr Andrew Bell**, Head of OECD Skills Strategies and Deputy Head of the OECD Centre for Skills, then provided an overview of the Centre's ongoing and upcoming work. He outlined recent OECD Skills Strategy projects in Malta, Thailand, and across Latin America, and described other ongoing Technical Support Instrument (TSI) projects led by the centre in Latvia, Poland, Ukraine, France, and Norway. He also expanded on thematic analysis published by the Centre in 2025, including the [Skills Outlook 2025](#), [Building the Skills of the 21st Century for all](#), and the study [Empowering the Workforce in the context of a Skills-First Approach](#). In addition, he presented recent work on quality assurance of adult learning, profiling adult learners, digital skills for seniors, and skills financing, among other topics. He concluded by sharing an update on the OECD Skills Summit 2026 in Türkiye, which will take place on 27-28 April in Istanbul.

To conclude, **Ms Ciresica Feyer**, Deputy Head of the Reform and Investment Task Force (SG REFORM) of the European Commission (EC), shared updates on the EU's efforts to implement effective skills policies through the TSI. She provided examples of country projects supported by the TSI, to design lifelong learning strategies, quality assurance and validation mechanisms for non-formal and informal learning, ILAs and micro-credentials. She summarised key lessons learned including the need for effective governance arrangements, support to learners and employers and cultural change to embed lifelong learning in everyday activities.

## Panel discussion with keynote speakers

The panel discussion brought together four complementary perspectives to explore how informal learning can be better supported. Moderated by **Ms El Iza Mohamedou**, experts from business, academia, and government discussed the importance of informal learning and the challenges and opportunities associated with defining, measuring, valuing, and promoting it. The discussion featured contributions from **Prof Ellen Boeren**, Professor of Adult Education at the University of Glasgow, **Ms Jennie Magiera**, Global Head of Education Impact at Google, **Ms Lieselot Declercq**, Co-founder and Director of d-teach, and **Mr Michel Peters**, Programme Manager at the Dutch Public Employment Service (UWV).

**Prof. Boeren** set the scene by examining how informal learning is defined and what it encompasses, noting that the traditional distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning – the so-called

triadic classification – is increasingly blurred. She emphasised the need for clearer conceptual foundations and stronger evidence to better assess the contribution of informal learning to skills development and employability.

The discussion then turned to the role of digital platforms in shaping informal learning. **Ms Declercq** reflected on emerging digital trends, highlighting the growing importance of online environments for skills acquisition. She noted how platforms such as d-teach can support the recognition of informally acquired skills, pointing to innovations including digital badges and learning analytics, while underscoring the importance of accessibility and inclusivity.

From an employer perspective, **Ms Magiera** discussed how informal learning is embedded in skills-based recruitment and workforce development. She described the use of peer learning, mentoring and digital tools at Google to identify and reward informal learning, alongside the challenges associated with supporting the necessary digital infrastructure.

Finally, **Mr Peters** addressed the policy dimension, outlining key challenges in integrating informal learning into lifelong learning strategies. He highlighted national tools designed to support employers, such as the [Learning Culture Quick Scan](#) and [CompetentNL](#), and reflected on effective policy measures to strengthen the recognition and uptake of informal learning.

The session concluded with a shared reflection that while informal learning is deeply embedded in everyday life, its potential remains underleveraged and that strengthening recognition, culture, and accessibility will be central to advancing lifelong learning in the years ahead.



## OECD presentation – Setting the scene

Following the opening remarks, **Mr Bart Staats**, Policy Analyst at the OECD Centre for Skills, introduced the OECD's analytical work on informal learning, building on findings from the ongoing project [Enhancing the Understanding and Measurement of Informal Learning](#). His presentation outlined the defining characteristics of informal learning, distinguishing it from formal and non-formal education and training, and highlighted the wide range of everyday activities through which young people and adults acquire skills (from hobbies and volunteering to online platforms, workplace interactions, and AI-enabled tools). He emphasised its substantial contribution to lifelong learning, and its significant role in job performance and career progression, while also pointing to the considerable cross-country differences in participation. He further underscored the growing relevance of informal learning in a digitalised world, describing both the opportunities it offers, such as personalised learning and enhanced knowledge sharing, and the challenges it raises in relation to equity, digital skills, and the quality of learning environments.

## Session 1 – Measuring and recognising informal learning

This session examined how governments can strengthen the measurement and recognition of informal learning within comprehensive lifelong learning systems. Discussions addressed current practices, key data gaps, and policy approaches to enhance the visibility and value of informally acquired skills.

### **OECD introduction**

**Mr Ben Game**, Policy Analyst at the OECD Centre for Skills, opened the session by outlining how international surveys (for example, the EU [Adult Education Survey](#) and the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) measure informal learning in different ways and how some countries complement these with national surveys. He stressed that measuring informal learning is essential for effective policy, but remains challenging due to its unstructured nature, diverse forms and the absence of a single agreed definition. Differences in survey design, target populations, data collection methods and the reliance on self-reported information limit cross-country comparability and weaken the evidence base.

To address these challenges, countries could develop national surveys aligned with international definitions and promote greater international consistency through shared frameworks and methodological co-operation. Beyond measurement, Mr Game emphasised the importance of recognising informal learning outcomes. Although often overlooked in policy targets, informal learning plays a critical role in lifelong learning. Clear definitions, integration across education and labour market policies, and systems for recognising prior learning can help make informal learning more visible and better valued.

### **Country presentations**

The first session also featured country presentations highlighting diverse national approaches to recognising and measuring non-formal and informal learning. The session included contributions from **Dr Young Saing Kim**, Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET), **Mr Maciej Lasota**, Ministry of National Education Poland, and **Mr Virgil Ion**, National Authority for Qualifications of Romania.



The presentation by **Dr Young Saing Kim** explored the use of the National Competency Standards (NCS) as a basis for recognising informal learning, emphasising its role in improving skills measurement and supporting adult learners. It comprises structured measurement tools and a competency-based methodology designed to capture skills acquired outside formal programmes. The approach relies on a multi-method assessment, including simulation, observation, and portfolio evaluation, aligned with a five-level performance scale ranging from basic task execution under guidance to expert-level proficiency,

including the ability to train others. Korea's experience demonstrated the benefits of a standardised national framework for assessing learning outcomes, while also highlighting the need to further expand NCS applications to support broader upskilling and recognition efforts.

The presentation by **Mr Maciej Lasota** examined adult learning patterns and the prevalence of informal learning across the EU and within Poland. Drawing on data from labour force surveys, adult education surveys, and national studies, the presentation showcased differences in participation in lifelong learning across age groups, with informal learning shown to play a significant role in adults' skill development, particularly through workplace practices and internet-based learning. Polish national surveys, including the Human Capital Balance study and the Adult Learning in Poland report, were presented as key sources for understanding how adults acquire skills outside formal systems, including coaching, mentoring, and self-directed learning.

The presentation by **Mr Virgil Ion** focused on major ongoing reforms to the system for validating non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) in Romania. A new legislative framework introduces updated mechanisms for quality assurance and institutional accreditation within the VNFIL system. The new framework aims to strengthen quality standards, assessment procedures, and monitoring at both systemic and modular levels. The accreditation of VNFIL centres now follows a two-stage process involving provisional authorization followed by full accreditation, enabling centres to issue certificates of competence and qualification. Lessons learned emphasised that quality assurance is essential in ensuring trust and consistency across all education sectors.

### ***Table discussion session 1***

The table discussion allowed for an exchange on how informal learning can be measured, recognised, and embedded within broader lifelong learning systems. Conversations highlighted growing policy attention to informal learning, while also acknowledging that implementation remains uneven across countries.

Participants emphasised that informal learning is gaining visibility as a response to ongoing skills shortages, particularly in the workplace, yet remains under-represented in national policy frameworks. Several countries have initiated pilot initiatives and early regulatory steps. For instance, Malta is beginning to develop national occupational standards and plans to expand a skills card system to validate informal learning; Luxembourg has begun surveying informally acquired skills; and the Netherlands is working toward a shared national skills language and pilot recognition initiatives. Representatives from industry also expanded on examples of skills-based that support the recognition of skills acquired through informal learning.

Discussions stressed the importance of shared definitions and common terminology to ensure that stakeholders understand what counts as informal learning and how it can be recognised. Participants agreed that validation and recognition are central to building trust, but that mechanisms remain difficult to operationalise. A recurrent challenge is the gap between large firms, which often lead in skills-based hiring and validation initiatives, and SMEs, which frequently lack the tools and capacity to assess skills gained informally.

Approaches discussed to advance measurement included peer-review models, task-based indicators, diary-style tracking tools, and national surveys. The absence of timely and comparable international data remains a constraint, and participants suggested that OECD surveys could integrate informal learning more explicitly.



## Session 2 – Policy action: Promoting a culture of informal learning

This session explored how governments and organisations can foster a culture that encourages informal learning as part of lifelong skills development. Discussions focused on strategies, incentives, and policy tools that support participation, equity, and engagement in informal learning across different populations.

### **OECD introduction**

**Mr. Andrew Bell**, Head of OECD Skills Strategies and Deputy Head of the OECD Centre for Skills opened the second session by highlighting the multiple drivers shaping informal learning. He identified five key influences: i) individual motivation (including curiosity, self-efficacy and perseverance); ii) workplace practices such as autonomy, task complexity and collaboration; iii) organisational culture and leadership that encourage reflection and experimentation; iv) social and relational dynamics based on trust and feedback; and v) system-level factors including policies, labour markets and cultural norms.

Mr Bell emphasised that AI is not only expanding access to informal learning, but also reshaping these drivers through personalisation of learning, transformation of job tasks, and the reinforcement of learning-oriented leadership and collaboration. Governments play a central role by supporting learning-supportive leadership, raising awareness and providing practical tools for firms, and incentivising workplace practices that foster everyday learning. Beyond workplaces, investment in digital infrastructure, digital literacy, libraries and community centres can broaden access to self-directed and community-based informal learning.

### **Country presentations**

Presentations were delivered by the **Ms Yvonne Vogelenzang**, Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and **Mr Michel Peters**, Programme Manager UWV, **Ms Margrethe Marstrøm Svensrud**, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills), and **Dr Ho Young Oh**, KRIVET.

The presentation from **Ms Yvonne Vogelenzang** and **Mr Michel Peters** addressed the motivations for establishing a public skills standard ([CompetentNL](#)) in the context of significant labour shortages in the Netherlands. The initiative seeks to create a common skills language by linking various existing systems, such as [ESCO](#), [ISCO](#), and [ISCED](#) skills classifications, into a single coherent reference framework. CompetentNL is intended to improve alignment between education and labour market needs, support lifelong learning, and enhance recognition of informal learning. Key strengths include its potential to improve mobility, skills visibility, and opportunities for jobseekers, while challenges relate primarily to

achieving a cultural shift towards skills-based thinking among employers and institutions. Lessons learned emphasised the importance of stakeholder management in supporting the adoption of skill standards.

The presentation by **Ms Margrethe Marstrøm Svensrud** focused on learning in the ‘flow of work’ and the role of workplace-based learning circles in nurturing informal learning cultures in Norway. [Learning Circles](#) are peer-led groups that bring employees and leaders together to reflect, exchange experience, and test small improvements without a formal curriculum, helping to embed learning directly into everyday work. The model strengthens collaboration, the development of tacit knowledge and motivation while remaining cost-efficient and scalable. Key strengths include its cost-efficiency and scalability, as well as its contribution to improved retention and professional pride. Norway’s upcoming work will continue to explore leadership, facilitation, and research to inform guidelines for sustainable workplace learning cultures.

The presentation by **Dr. Ho Young Oh** centred on the development of a [National System for Recognition of Prior Learning](#) (RPL) and the nationwide [Lifelong Learning Account System](#) (LLAS). The RPL framework aims to grant academic credit, up to full degrees, based on vocational experience and learning outside formal education, supported by a dedicated national agency. The LLAS complements this system through an integrated online platform that records, evaluates, and manages diverse learning experiences and links them to credit recognition, employment, and qualification pathways. Strengths highlighted included robust legal foundations, credit portability, scalable data systems, and improved flexibility for adult learners. However, ongoing challenges remain, including fragmented governance, equity gaps, employer awareness, and complex user journeys. Lessons from both the RPL and LLAS stressed the need for standardised assessment, simplified credit mapping, targeted outreach to SMEs, and enhanced learner guidance.



## **Table discussion session 2**

Table discussions in Session 2 focused on how participation in informal learning can be encouraged across society. Participants recognised that informal learning often occurs through social interactions, such as learning through collaboration and peer support. It was noted that these facets risk being overlooked when learning becomes entirely digitised. Governments were seen as key agenda-setters that can raise awareness and incentivise engagement even when direct influence over workplace practices is limited. Examples shared included targeted programmes such as [‘learning shops’](#) in Flanders, Belgium, and [financial incentive programmes](#) for employers to upskill workers in Latvia.

A major theme was the challenge of uptake among workers with low levels of skills, who often engage least with informal learning despite having the most to gain. Outreach strategies such as personalised career guidance, learning shops, and voucher systems were highlighted as effective ways to make

opportunities visible and accessible. Participants also noted that fostering culture change requires collaboration with business associations, sector bodies, and civil society actors. Digital tools and AI offer potential to support validation processes, but participants stressed the need for careful implementation to ensure quality and trust.

Governance and collaboration emerged as cross-cutting priorities. Participants underscored that embedding informal learning within lifelong learning systems requires engagement from governments, employers, individuals, and social partners. Sustainable implementation depends on clearer standards, capacity building, and recognition processes that are credible yet flexible enough to adapt to national contexts. Countries also emphasised the value of cross-country knowledge exchange, including policy experimentation programmes, pilot recognition schemes and adult guidance initiatives, demonstrating how peer learning can accelerate progress.

Overall, the discussions revealed strong momentum toward recognising and promoting informal learning, even as measurement challenges and institutional barriers persist. Participants agreed that improving visibility, validation, and cultural acceptance of informal learning is essential for resilient skills systems. While progress varies across countries, the shared commitment to collaboration and experimentation provides a foundation for further development and learning across contexts.

## Workshop closing

**Dr El Iza Mohamedou**, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills, delivered the closing remarks, expressing her sincere appreciation to all participants for their active engagement throughout the day. She reflected on the key insights shared, emphasising that while informal learning is increasingly recognised across countries, significant challenges remain, particularly in its effective measurement and in ensuring equitable access. She underscored the importance of recognition of prior learning as a central policy lever and reaffirmed the value of these annual workshops in fostering collective learning and exchange.

## Annex A. Agenda

Time	Item
09:00-09:30	<b>Registration, coffee/tea</b>
09:30-09:40	<b>Opening remarks</b> <i>El Iza Mohamedou, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills</i>
09:40-9:55	<b>OECD presentation – Overview of current and upcoming work</b> An update on ongoing and planned OECD projects and studies related to skills strategies. <i>Andrew Bell, Deputy Head of the OECD Centre for Skills</i>
9:55-10:00	<b>Update on the Technical Support Instrument of the EC</b> <i>Ciresica Feyer, Deputy Head of Unit, European commission</i>
10:00-10:15	<b>OECD presentation – setting the scene</b>

	<p>To set the scene for discussions, this presentation will draw on recent OECD work on informal learning, highlighting its importance for skills development and lifelong learning, the main factors that drive it, and how it is defined and measured.</p> <p><i>Bart Staats, Policy Analyst, OECD Centre for Skills</i></p>
10:15-11:00	<p><b>Panel discussion with keynote speakers</b></p> <p>In this panel, experts from business, academia, and government will discuss the importance of informal learning and examine the challenges and opportunities in defining, measuring, valuing, and promoting it. The discussion will be followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p> <p><b>Panel members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Ms Lieselot Declercq, Co-founder of d-teach online school</i></li> <li>- <i>Ms Jennie Magiera, Global Head of Education Impact at Google</i></li> <li>- <i>Ms Ellen Boeren, Professor of Education, University of Glasgow</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Moderator:</b> <i>El Iza Mohamedou, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills</i></p>
11:00-11:15	<b>Coffee/tea break, group photo</b>
11:15-12:30	<p><b>Session 1 – Policy action: Measuring and recognising informal learning</b></p> <p>This session will examine how governments can strengthen the measurement and recognition of informal learning within comprehensive lifelong learning systems. Discussions will address current practices, existing data gaps, and policy approaches to enhance the visibility and value of informally acquired skills.</p> <p>The session will be structured as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduction</b> by the OECD</li> <li>• <b>Country presentations</b> from 3–4 countries, followed by Q&amp;A</li> <li>• <b>Interactive table discussions</b> guided by a moderator, focusing on the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>To what extent is informal learning recognised in your country, for example through its inclusion in national policy frameworks?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Have you observed any recent shifts in its recognition, particularly in response to technological change or evolving work practices?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What strategies or initiatives have proven most effective in making informal learning more visible and valued?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How is informal learning currently measured in your country?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What are the main challenges to effectively measuring and recognising informal learning, and what approaches could help overcome them?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How could the OECD best support countries in advancing the measurement and recognition of informal learning?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
12:30-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
14:00-15:30	<p><b>Session 2 – Policy action: Promoting a culture of informal learning</b></p> <p>This session will explore how governments and organisations can foster a culture that encourages informal learning as part of lifelong skills development. Discussions will focus on strategies, incentives, and policy tools that support participation, equity, and engagement in informal learning across different populations.</p> <p>The session will be structured as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduction</b> by the OECD</li> <li>• <b>Country presentations</b> from 3–4 countries, followed by Q&amp;A</li> <li>• <b>Interactive table discussions</b> guided by a moderator, focusing on the following questions:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>What policies or initiatives have been introduced in your country to promote a culture of informal learning?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Which of these have proven most effective, and what factors contributed to their success?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How are employers, educators, and community organisations encouraged to support informal learning opportunities?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>What are the main barriers to informal learning – such as limited access, low awareness, or lack of motivation – and how could they be further addressed?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How is participation in informal learning promoted among underrepresented groups, such as low-skilled adults or SMEs?</i></li> <li>➤ <i>How could the OECD better support countries in fostering a culture of informal learning?</i></li> </ul>
<p>15:30-16:00</p>	<p><b>Closing remarks + Closing coffee</b>  <i>El Iza Mohamedou, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills</i></p>