

# **Comparing Participation in adult Education**



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## **Participation and non-participation in adult education and learning: A comparative study between Portugal, Italy, Hungary, and India**

### **Introduction**

It is important to compare and discuss the topic of adult education between different countries because cultural environments, history, and systemic approaches in the area of education in general, and in the area of adult education specifically, contribute to the holistic development of mankind. Such comparisons will give an insight into some important conclusions about the learning fields related to adult participation and non-participation in educational activities. It is also relevant to compare countries with significant geographical, historical, economic, social, and educational differences.

Empirical studies and theories show that adult participation in educational and learning processes has increased since the 1970s (cf. Bélanger, 2011). Individual participation is not an independent factor; there are some influencing factors. Those factors can be supported by macro-level characteristics (e.g. educational system, labour market, etc.), meso-level characteristics (e.g. firm and employer characteristics, place and region of residence), and micro-level characteristics (e.g. socio-demographic characteristics, subjective dispositions, etc.) (cf. Dammrich, Vono de Vilhena, & Reichart, 2014). Empirical data also show that participation in adult learning activities varies according to demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural factors. Parents' educational status and their family's cultural influence and social position can also determine the level and kind of learning participation (cf. Bélanger, 2011).

This paper presents research on the issue of participation from Italy, Portugal, Hungary, and India, concluding with a comparative look at the four countries. Italy and Portugal are Romanic and Mediterranean countries; Hungary being

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historically part of Austro-hungarian empire; India is a fast-developing country in Asia with different traditions.

As this topic encompasses a wide field of research, the authors put their focus on learning fields and reasons for non-participation based on the available surveys. It was felt that a comparative and research-based study on the reasons for participation and non-participation in adult education will contribute towards formulating possibilities for the further development of adult education.

## **Participation and Non-participation in Adult Education and Learning in Europe**

For Europe, data on adult participation in education and learning are available from the *Adult Education Survey* (AES). The AES is part of the EU statistics on lifelong learning. Conducted in 2007 and 2011–12 by EU countries and other European states, the statistics show the average participation rates in adult education and learning activities in each of the participating countries. The 2007 survey focused on the adult education and learning participation of people between the age of 19 and 64 years; the 2011–12 survey covered 18-to-64-year-olds.

The AES survey distinguishes between institutionalised learning activities (=informal learning), institutionalised learning activities not included in the National Qualification Frames (=non-formal education), and learning activities of adult which are included in the National Qualification Frames (=formal education) (European Commission/Eurostat, 2012, p. 3). Non-formal education activities include the following activities: ‘private lessons or courses (classroom instruction, lecture or a theoretical and practical course),’ ‘courses conducted through open and distance education,’ ‘seminars or workshops,’ and ‘guided on-the-job training.’ (European Commission/Eurostat, 2012, p. 6). According to AES, the average participation rate in the EU 28 countries was 34.8 per cent in 2007 and 40.3 per cent in 2011–12.

The European country reports below are based on national reports and the Eurostat database, which provides metadata of the 2007 and 2011–12 AES to the public. In the following, these data are referred to as AES 2007 and AES 2011–12, enhanced by macrodata from the Eurostat database.<sup>2</sup>

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2 This paper intends to identify rough trends regarding the differences and similarities between countries. It doesn't examine differences in the data that can be identified between the country reports and also compared to the Eurostat database. When there was a difference, data from the Eurostat-database where used.

First, the European country reports give us an insight into the development of participation in adult education and learning in Europe from 2007 to 2011–2012. This allows us to observe participation trends. Then the country report can be divided in two important parts: the first part is about *participation in adult education (formal and non-formal)* (influences and motivation to participate, differences in participation by age and gender, who is participating more and why). The second part of the country reports focuses on *non-participation in adult education and learning activities*. In this second part, we can find out who is not participating and why (the principal obstacles to people's participation). Afterwards, the Indian report presents a structure based on the Indian discourse on literacy development in India.

## **Participation and Non-participation in Adult Education and Learning in Portugal**

Portugal is a small country, situated in the extreme southwest of Europe. It borders on Spain (east and north) and the Atlantic Ocean (west and south). Portugal has an estimated population of 10.4 million (Eurostat, 2015); it is divided into 18 districts<sup>3</sup> and has two autonomous regions (Azores and Madeira). The education system in Portugal is mostly regulated by the government, and the principal responsible authority is the Ministry of Education and Science. Universities and non-governmental institutions are the main institutions responsible for adult education in Portugal. In the past decade, the government introduced some policies and programmes related to adult education, with a focus on education and learning for young (active) adults to improve their background and qualification.

To analyse the participation of adults in lifelong learning, Europeans were asked about their participation in formal and non-formal education and informal learning activities. In Portugal, the national micro-data research was conducted by the National Statistics Institute (INE) (a first inquiry in 2007 and a second between October 2011 and January 2012).

In 2007, Portugal was among the EU-27 countries with the lowest level of participation in lifelong learning activities although participation has been increasing in recent years. In 2007, 26.4 per cent of the Portuguese population aged 19–64 participated in adult education. In 2011–12, it was 44.4 per cent of the Portuguese population aged 18–64. This result clearly shows the effort that the country has developed in recent years to improve the educational qualifications of the adult

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3 Districts remain the most important division of Portugal.

population. From 2007 to 2011–12, the growing participation of adults in lifelong learning activities has contributed to a considerable improvement of Portugal's ranking in the European context. Portugal's proportion of participants in lifelong learning went from 8.7 per cent below the estimated EU-28 average in 2007 (35.1 per cent) to 4.1 per cent above the EU-28 average in 2011 (40.3 per cent). 'This improvement in the country's positioning was mainly achieved through an increase in participation in non-formal education activities.' (AES, 2007, 2011–12)

In 2011–2012, 44.4 per cent of the population aged 18–64 participated in lifelong learning activities (formal or non-formal education). According to the Adult Education Survey, overall participation in adult education and learning activities is increasing (cf. INE, 2013). This increase is related to gender: women's participation (49.5 per cent) was higher than men's, (47.9 per cent). Concerning age groups, the increase in participation in lifelong learning activities is found in all age groups.

The increase in each of the components of formal and non-formal learning is more pronounced in the age groups of 18–24 and 35–44. With increasing age, participation seems to go down: 79.3 per cent for those aged 18–24, compared to only 22.0 per cent for those aged 55–64 (cf. INE, 2013). This trend could be related to the need to improve one's knowledge and skills in order not to lose one's job or, in the case of unemployed people, to enter the labour market (initial entry or re-entry). It also could depend on the educational background of the different generations in these age groups. These results show the influence of the market in our society.

### **Participation in adult education activities (formal and non-formal)**

Participation is not an independent concept. It has a connection with many factors. Factors that have an influence on participation in lifelong learning activities include the education level of the population and parental education level (inter-generational transmission of education between parents and children), employer support, and the like.

Regarding formal education activities, it appears that more than two-thirds of the population participated in only one activity (69.6 per cent). This largely corresponds to entry and/or frequency rates in tertiary education. The main motivation for participation was getting a certificate or diploma (cf. INE, 2013).

Regarding non-formal education activities, 52.0 per cent of the population participated in two or more activities, equivalent to an increase of 18.4 per cent compared to 2007 (cf. INE, 2013). The main motivation for participation was professional, and almost all of those activities occurred during or mostly during working hours.

Participation in lifelong learning activities in formal and non-formal education was complemented by analysing how it relates to each of the individual characteristics (level of education completed, employment status, age group, and place of residence) through a multivariate analysis. Compared to people in inactivity (not students), active people are more able to participate, especially the employed population (cf. INE, 2013). Employment status has a significantly correlated to participation in lifelong learning, and participation seems to be directly related to labour market concerns and competitiveness.

### **Non-participation in adult education and learning activities**

Non-participation in education, training, and learning was particularly high among (cf. INE, 2013):

1. the older age groups (40.1 per cent for the age group 55–64, compared to 7.2 per cent for the age group 18–24)
2. the less qualified (63.5 per cent for those who had no education level, compared to 5.2 per cent for those who had tertiary education)
3. with equally low-skilled parents (following a trend similar to that observed for one's own education level), who spoke only their native language (38.1 per cent, compared to 11.8 per cent of those who spoke at least one foreign language)
4. with non-existent or irregular reading habits (30.0 per cent and 60.3 per cent, respectively, for those who never read books and newspapers, compared to 10.7 per cent of people who read books and 15.0 per cent of those who read newspapers daily).

According to the data from AES (2011–12) the main reasons for non-participation in Portugal are personal reasons, distance, and costs. As we can see, the most frequently mentioned obstacles to people's participation in lifelong learning activities were: 'other personal reasons' (24.4 per cent), lack of time or interest, 'training takes place at a too distant place' (6.2 per cent). Distance and the lack of nearby training opportunities seem to be an important reason for non-participation; and 'cost too high' (5.5 per cent)—it doesn't seem to be accessible for all.

### **Participation and Non-participation in Lifelong Learning in Italy**

Italy is a European country with almost 61 million people (Eurostat, 2015), the fifth-most populated on the European continent. The country has 20 regions: 15 with ordinary statute (totally depending by the central government) and 5 with

special statute (partially depending, more autonomous). The Ministry of Education, Universities, and Research, is the main institution managing adult education. It is supported by many national agencies and associations (highly structured system) helping to divide and better distribute the work, including the National Agency for School Autonomy Development, the Institute for Workers' Professional Training and Development, the Italian Adult Education Union, the National Institute for Assessing the Educational System of Instruction and Training, and the National Anti-Illiteracy Union. The National Institute of Statistics supports all of these institutions and associations.

In term of adult education participation, Italy was (in 2007) and still is 2011–2012 below the European average. If we compare the two surveys, the percentage of participants in adult education and training courses increased from 22.2 per cent in 2006 to 35.6 per cent in 2012 (ISTAT, 2013). A focused analysis of AES data shows a big difference between formal and non-formal education and training. Participation in formal education decreased between the two surveys (from 4.4 per cent to 2.9 per cent), whereas participation in non-formal education and training saw a big increase (from 20.2 per cent to 34.3 per cent).

According to the *Istituto nazionale di statistica (ISTAT)* (Italian national statistics institute) (ISTAT 2013), 51.5 per cent of the population aged 18–74 in 2012 declared to have participated in at least one adult education activity or training course in the last 12 months (45.7 per cent in 2007, i.e. 5.8 per cent less) (ISTAT, 2013). For 2012, it is possible to divide the data by type of education and training:

- Participation was highest in the category of informal education, with 33.8 per cent of all participants (35.8 per cent men and 32.0 per cent women). It has dropped by 6.2 percentage points since 2006.
- The second-most popular category was non-formal education, with 31.4 per cent (33.3 per cent men and 29.6 per cent women). It has risen by 13.3 percentage points since 2006.
- The least popular category is formal education, chosen by 5.8 per cent of participants (5.5 per cent men and 6.2 per cent women). It has fallen by 2.2 percentage points since 2006 (cf. ISTAS, 2013).

The 2011–12 AES data do not consider the participation rate in informal learning. The percentages consists of three categories regarding education and training:

- formal or non-formal (35.6 per cent), with more men (37.3 per cent) than women (34.0 per cent)
- non-formal (34.3 per cent), with more men (36.2 per cent) than women (32.5 per cent)

- formal (2.6 per cent), with more women (3.2 per cent) than men (2.6 per cent).

It is possible to see that women's participation rates are higher than men's only in formal education and training, as the ISTAT (2013) data pre-announced above (AES, 2011–12).

According to ISTAT, the age range of those who participate more in formal, non-formal, and informal education is between 18–24 (37.3 per cent). By contrast, the range of those who participate less in formal and non-formal education is 65–74 (0.0 per cent). For informal education, the figures are: the group of 25–34-years old is first with 39.6 per cent, compared to 37.0 per cent among those aged 18–24 (second) (ISTAT 2013). In order to be able to make a comparison between countries, according to AES (2011–12) data, the age range of those who participate more in formal or non-formal education is 25–34 (43.0 per cent). Those who participate less are aged 55–64 (22.3 per cent). Focusing on formal education, the age range of those who participate more is 25–34 (9.7 per cent); that of those who participate less is 45–54 (0.8 per cent). Regarding non-formal education and training, the age rate of those who participate more is 35–44 (38.8 per cent), that of those who participate less is 55–64 (22.3 per cent) (cf. AES, 2011/12).

Beyond that, it is interesting to note the strong geographical difference between the four Italian macro-regions: North East, North West, Centre, and South (islands included). In descending order, starting with the region with the highest 2012 participation rates in education and training activities, we find: North East (59.3 per cent), Centre (56.0 per cent), North West (52.5 per cent), and South (43.7 per cent). Dividing the data by education categories, we find the same ranking order in informal education (North East 39.4 per cent, Centre 37.5 per cent, North West 34.0 per cent, South 28.5 per cent) and in non-formal education (North East 37.5 per cent, Centre 34.9 per cent, North West 34.0 per cent, South 23.5 per cent). In terms of formal education, however, the situation is completely different (decreasing participation order): South (6.7 per cent), Centre (6.1 per cent), North West (5.5 per cent), and North East (4.7 per cent). All the macro-region saw increasing participation rates in adult education and training between 2006 and 2012: 47.6 to 52.5 per cent in the North West, 53.5 to 59.3 in the North East, 48.1 to 56.0 in the Centre, and 38.5 to 43.7 in the South. These differences between the regions could be explained by the relation between territory and industrialisation. It is possible to understand that more industrialised regions offer more training opportunities. These industrialised regions have a higher percentage of medium- to large-size industries and companies (ISTAT, 2013).

### **Participation in adult education activities (formal and non-formal)**

Adult participation in education and training varies between workers and unemployed persons. We see that employed people participate more frequently than unemployed people in all learning activities (63.1 per cent vs. 43.7 per cent). Employed people participate much more heavily in non-formal learning (45.5 per cent) than unemployed people (21.3 per cent), whereas unemployed participate more in informal learning (30.9 per cent, highest percentage for the unemployed group) than workers (39.4 per cent, second-highest percentage for workers). Focusing on worker categories, major differences emerge:

- 79.7 per cent of all managers, entrepreneurs, and freelancers participate in education and training, compared to
- 58.8 per cent of mid-level managers and office workers
- 52.9 per cent of specialised workers
- 37.4 per cent of unskilled workers (cf. AES, 2011–12).

Moreover, it has to be considered that people with the highest educational level usually participate more in education and training activities. AES (2011–12) data show that adults with a university degree participate more frequently (80.5 per cent) than adults who only have a high school diploma (66.3 per cent) or adults who only have an intermediate education level (41.9 per cent).

### **Non-participation in adult education and learning activities**

There are no major differences between men and women in Italy concerning the reasons for participating in education and training activities. The most important are:

- to get a certificate (87.9 per cent)
- to have more knowledge and competences on topic of interest (87.0 per cent)
- to have more options to find/change jobs (85.1 per cent).

Considering again the AES data, there is a clear distinction between women and men regarding the non-participation reasons. For both women and men, the three main reasons are: ‘conflict with family responsibilities’ (44.3 per cent), ‘activities too expensive’ (43.4 per cent), and ‘conflict with work responsibilities’ (26.7 per cent). This classification is the same if we look only at women; for men, it changes: first, we find ‘activities too expensive’ (42.8 per cent), then ‘conflict with work responsibilities’ (38.3 per cent), and ‘conflict with family responsibilities’ (31.0 per cent) (cf. AES, 2011/12).

## Participation and Non-participation in Adult Education and Learning in Hungary

Hungary is a country in Central Europe. On 1 January 2015, the population was 9.8 million (cf. HCSO, 2015). The country has 19 counties. The counties and the capital city (Budapest) are grouped into 7 regions. Since 1 May 2014, Hungary has been a member of the European Union. The system of education is controlled by Act CXC (2011) on National Public Education, Act CCIV (2011) on National Higher Education, Act CLXXXVII (2011) on Vocational Education and Training, and Act LXXVII (2013) on Adult Education. Adult education has two main areas: formal and non-formal education. Formal education is conducted by the Ministry for Human Capacities. Non-formal education is directed by the Ministry for the National Economy.

In Hungary, the 2007 and 2011–12 AES surveys were conducted by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO). According to the AES data (2007), Hungary was one of the EU-28 countries with the lowest participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training (9.0 per cent). The EU-28 average was 34.8 per cent. However, the participation of adults has been increasing since 2007 due to the efforts of the government. In 2011, the participation rate was 41.1 per cent in formal and non-formal learning, compared to the EU-28 average of 40.3 per cent. This result shows that Hungary was above the EU average (cf. AES 2007, 2011–12).

In Hungary, non-formal education has had a bigger influence on adults than formal education (inside the school system). The data proves this statement, showing participation rates of 2.5 per cent (2007) and 6.5 per cent (2011) in formal education. In non-formal education, the participation rate was 6.8 per cent (2007) and 37.6 per cent (2011) (cf. AES 2007, 2011–12). Non-formal education is outside the school system and ‘includes those complex activities which aim to purposefully develop certain competencies of adults’ (Farkas, 2013, p. 15).

In 2011, 41.1 per cent of adults aged 25–64 took part in adult education activities (formal and non-formal). The male participation rate in formal and non-formal learning was 43.0 per cent in 2011 and higher than the female rate (39.4 per cent). The EU-28 average participation rate of men was 40.7 per cent and 39.9 per cent for women (cf. AES 2011/2012).

With regard to participant age, most adults were aged 25–34 (51.8 per cent). Participation was lowest among those aged 55–64 (21.7 per cent) in 2011 (cf. AES, 2014). The older adults get, the less they participate in adult education (cf. HCSO, 2014). The background of these data could be that, first, adults can take part in lifelong learning to improve their skills and to get a qualification. Second, they intend to enter the labour market or to keep their jobs.

According to AES (2011–12) data on the highest level of education in formal and non-formal learning, differences in adults' educational background influence their participation. Most participants have just graduated in the first and second stage of tertiary education (58.1 per cent). This finding could be related to the need to get a certificate or diploma. 39.8 per cent have conducted upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education. Furthermore, adult education was least popular among those who have only finished pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education (24.7 per cent). In 2011, employed people (56.9 per cent) took part in adult education more often than unemployed (20.5 per cent) and retired people (12.8 per cent) (cf. AES, 2011–12).

### **Participation in adult education activities (formal and non-formal)**

In Hungary, the main reason why adults took part in adult education activities was the need of the job. Three in four respondents chose trainings because of their work. This point could be related to the need to integrate into the labour market in order to get a job; not to lose the job or the trainings connected to their job. One in four adults took part in adult education for personal reasons, such as hobbies or enrichment. These participants want to improve their knowledge and skills in areas in which they are interested. According to the data, the reason why women take part in trainings is often not work-related (30.0 per cent of the trainings are chosen for personal enrichment). This is not typical of men (only one-fifth of all trainings are chosen for personal enrichment) (cf. HCSO 2014).

The most popular forms of trainings (non-formal) were training courses (without qualification), conferences, visiting seminars, workplace coaching, and vocational training (state-approved training). The most popular disciplines were social sciences, economics, law, and services (cf. HCSO, 2014).

9.6 per cent of adults who did not participate wanted to take part in the training (the EU average was 9.5 per cent). 5.7 per cent of respondents who already participated in lifelong learning wanted to participate in more trainings in 2011. The EU average was 11.9 per cent (cf. AES, 2011–12).

### **Participation and Non-participation in Adult Education in India**

India is a vast country with a population of 1.2 billion (Government of India, 2011), making it the second-most populous country in the world. It has 29 states and 7 centrally administered Union Territories. As it has federal set-up, some subjects of administration are dealt directly by the central government, whereas the

state governments have exclusive powers in certain other areas. This arrangement is called 'central list' and 'state list'. However, education falls under a concurrent list in which both the central and state governments can enact laws. In case both central and state governments enact law on the same aspect related to education, then the law enacted by the central government will be applicable uniformly throughout the country. The federal authority in charge of policies and programmes relating to education is the Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India; at the state level, it is the Department of Education.

### Literacy status

When India became independent, the literacy rate<sup>4</sup> as per the 1951 census (Census of India, 1951, cited in National Commission on Population, 2014) was 18.33 per cent, with female literacy at an abysmal low of 8.86 per cent. However, education was given equal importance in the five-year plans (Five-Year Plans, n.d.) like that of industrialization, with large financial allocations, resulting in schools opening even in small villages much closer to children's door steps. As a consequence, the percentage of literacy started increasing year by year. Simultaneously, adult education programmes were also planned and implemented to cover dropouts and out-of-school youth. As per the 2011 census, India's overall literacy rate was 73 per cent, with male literacy at 80.9 per cent and female literacy at 64.6 per cent (Census of India, 2011, cited in National Commission on Population, 2014). Still India has a long way to go, as literacy rates vary from state to state, district to district, between rural and urban, and above all male and female.

The following table depicts India's progressive increase in literacy rates from 1951 to 2011 (from the age group of seven and above).

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4 'Literacy, as defined in Census operations, is the ability to read and write with understanding in any language. A person who can merely read but cannot write is not classified as literate. Any formal education or minimum educational standard is not necessary to be considered literate' (National Commission to Reviews the Working of the Constitution 2001).

## All persons literacy rate (1951–2011)

Table 1: Indian Literacy Rate (Source: Based on Census India 1951–2011, cited in National Commission on Population, 2014)

Census Year	Literacy Rate (All Persons)	Literacy Rate	
		Male	Female
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86
1961	28.30	40.39	15.35
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97
1981 (excludes Assam state)	43.57	56.38	29.76
1991 (excludes Jammu & Kashmir state)	52.21	64.13	39.29
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16
2011	73.00	80.9	64.6

## Adult education and literacy

Adult education aims to extend educational options to those adults who missed the opportunity and are past the formal education age but now feel a need for learning of any type, including literacy, basic education, skill development (vocational education), and the like. With the objective of promoting adult education, a series of programmes have been introduced since the first five-year plan (1951–1956). The most prominent of these was the National Literacy Mission (NLM), launched in 1988 to impart functional literacy to non-literates in the age group of 15–35 in a time-bound manner. By the end of the tenth plan period (2002–2007), the National Literacy Mission had helped 127.45 million persons to literacy (Saakshar Bharat, 2015).

In 2009, another massive literacy mission, the ‘Saakshar Bharat mission’ (meaning literate India), was launched as a new variant of the National Literacy Mission with specified targets and goals (Government of India, 2011a). The mission goes beyond the 3Rs—that is, reading, writing, and arithmetic (a person’s basic ability to read, write, and perform basic calculations)—for it also seeks to create awareness of social disparities and a person’s deprivation of the means for their amelioration and general well-being. The central and state governments, Panchayati Raj institutions, NGOs, and civil society need to work in unison to realise the dream to create a ‘literate India.’ ‘Saakshar Bharat’ has been formulated with the objective of achieving an 80-per cent literacy level by 2014 at the national level, by focusing on

adult women literacy, seeking to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 percentage points. The mission has four broader objectives: imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates; acquiring equivalency to the formal educational system; imparting relevant skill development programmes; and promoting a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education. The principal target of the mission was to impart functional literacy to 70 million non-literate adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond.

According to the draft report of the 'consultative meeting to review past performances and discuss strategies for the effective and result-orientated implementation of Saakshar Bharat' (Government of India, 2011a, p. 1), dated 29 May 2015, 'around 54.75 million learners have been enrolled under basic literacy up to March 2015' (Government of India, 2011a, p. 13) and 'about 42.98 million learners have appeared in the biannual assessment tests conducted by the National Institute of Open Learning (NIOS). So far about 31.42 million learners have successfully passed the assessment tests conducted under the programme up to August 2014 and been certified as literate' (Government of India, 2011a, p. 14).

### Adult literacy rates (15 + age group in percentage)

Table 2: *Adult Literacy Rates (15 + age group in percentage)* (Source: Based on O/O RGI, Census 2001 and 2011 cited in Government of India, 2014, p. 2)

Year	Total	Male	Female
2001	61.0	73.4	47.8
2011	69.3	78.8	59.3

The above table clearly indicates that there has been an increase in participation in adult literacy if we compare the data of census statistics of the last two decades (1991–2001 and 2001–2011). There was 8.3 per cent increase in the total adult literacy rate, and the female literacy rate increased visibly by 11.5 per cent. However, the adult female literacy rate is 17.5 per cent lower than the adult male literacy rate.

Based on the collegial discussion in adult education in India, the following reasons for participation and non-participation in adult education can be formulated.

### Reasons for participation in adult education

1. The massive campaigns from all spheres, such as government, non-government organisations, academics, and professionals of adult education, have helped people understand the importance of literacy in life.

2. Adult education programmes are framed and revised from time to time so as to make them suitable for the present society, thereby increasing people's participation in such programmes. Such programmes are organised in a way to make adult participation convenient in terms of time.
3. The inclusion of skill development programmes such as cutting and tailoring, handicraft, beauty culture, packaging, and so forth as part of adult education has successfully attracted more participation. Both literacy and skill development programmes are almost free or charge very nominal fees.
4. Adult education centres provide linkages with educational, financial, and social institutions offering information on enrolment in formal education, bank loans, getting employment, and starting one's own income-generating activities. People find such information useful for the improvement of their existing status and join adult education programmes.
5. The revolution of information and communication technology in India has also contributed towards participation in adult education programmes. Information and communication technology has widened access to education in various sections of our society, with farmers using mobile phones to get necessary guidance on crop production being a special example. It has made learning interesting.

#### Reasons for non-participation in adult education

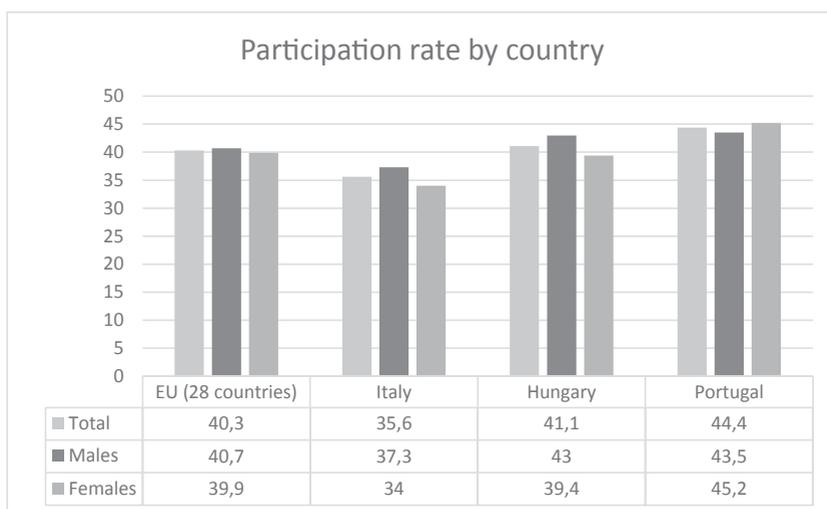
1. Adults who have expectations other than literacy and linkages to higher education or institutions do not participate in activities of adult education centres.
2. Many adults look for immediate sources of income-generating activities and subsidies. So an adult education programme, which generally lasts three to six months, does not appeal to them.
3. A huge number of migrants, who migrate to cities from various rural areas as labourers, are not keen to join adult education programmes, as their stay in a particular community is for a short period.
4. Language is another barrier in case of migrants, as adult education programmes are often taught in local languages, which at times may be different from the language spoken by the migrants.
5. Female adult learners belonging to communities where there is lack of family and social support to improve the status of women stay away from such programmes.

## Comparisons Between Europe and India

### Growing importance of adult education and learning

Comparing the European countries amongst each other on the one hand, and with India on the other hand, one can observe several similarities and differences.

Table 3: *Participation in Adult Education and Learning by Country*  
(Author's own, based on AES, 2011/12)



The data seem to indicate that European countries have a similar background in the field of education, and all three countries focus on lifelong learning. Despite all inner-European differences, especially when comparing the 2007 with the 2011–12 data, rising participation rates can be observed in all European countries; at the same time, the differences between them become smaller.

Nevertheless, one can observe differences between female and male participation in adult education and learning. Whereas Italy and Hungary have lower participation rates of women, the rates of women are higher in Portugal. The Indian literacy rate also shows that women are educationally disadvantaged. To understand these differences, we need to return to the role of woman and men in society. As most participation in adult education and learning in Europe takes place within employment, the female employment rate may be one part of the explanation. Furthermore, the average education rate of women may be an influencing factor in all countries.

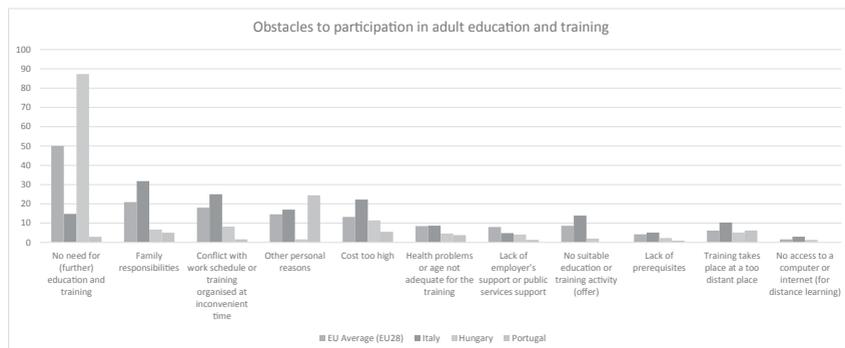
Furthermore, the Italian and the Indian country reports give us an insight into the strong differences in participation rates within a country. There are big gaps between different regions in Italy and India. One can conclude that participation in adult education and learning cannot be explained by national patterns. This means we have to be careful with regional explanations as well. Moreover, societal indicators such as employment rate, industrial and service development, and education background seem to be more far-reaching explanations.

The available figures from Europe on the one hand and India on the other also give an impressive insight into which kind of data are collected: whereas the European figures focus on participation in education and learning activities, India's focus on the 'the outcome', that is, the literacy abilities of the population. This may be a legacy of the Anglo-Saxon influence, which has traditionally had a stronger focus on learning outcomes. We can also see this stronger outcome orientation in international organisations. Although the European Union emphasises the policy shift from an 'input-orientation' towards a focus on outcomes—called competences in the European context—the statistics refer to the question of who is participating in adult and continuing education and who receives what kind of societal support. This traditional European 'input' or curriculum orientation can be understood as reflecting the role of the welfare state in several European countries.

Despite all differences in what is being measured (literacy or participation in adult education and learning), one can find that participation in adult education and learning seems to increase steadily in all countries. Using the European data, it can be shown that people with the highest education level usually participate more in education and training activities. Those with university degrees participate more in non-formal education, whereas those with a high school diploma and an intermediate education level participate more in informal education activities. Participation in lifelong learning seems to be directly related to labour market trends and competitiveness. We might formulate the hypothesis that this may apply to India, too.

## Obstacles to participation in adult education

Table 4: *Obstacles to Participation in Adult Education and Learning by Country*  
(Author's own, based on AES, 2011/12)



The obstacles to participation in adult education vary widely between the EU countries studied. The EU average and respondents from Hungary point to a lack of need as the biggest obstacle. From an academic point of view, one can hardly argue that there is no need for adult and continuing education and training. This answer can possibly be seen as an indicator that people do not see educational offers that fit their personal situation and needs. Family responsibilities are named as a main obstacle in Italy, but also on the EU average. This situation is especially interesting in the context of low birth rates in Europe. This obstacle, too, can possibly be interpreted as indication a lack of public structures for realising family responsibilities and others. Interestingly, in Portugal, 'other personal reasons' was named as the most frequent obstacle. This can be seen as a sign that the 'obstacle-list' in the Adult Education Survey doesn't capture the real obstacles in Portugal. The other obstacles got little response in all observed countries: 'health problems or age not adequate for the training', 'lack of employer's support or public services support', 'no suitable education or training activity (offer)', 'lack of prerequisites', 'no access to a computer or internet (for distance learning)'. In India, literacy and skill development programmes are almost free or charge nominal affordable fees. Moreover, the schedules of such programmes are flexible to male participation as convenient as possible. Therefore, the cost and timing of programmes is not a reason for non-participation in India. It is interesting to note that in spite of varied demographic and geographical backgrounds, there are similarities between the European countries and India in the way that reasons for participation and non-participation are analysed.

Comparing the way in which non-participation is discussed in Europe and India, one main difference emerges: Whereas the obstacles named in the Adult Education Survey are focused strongly on individual obstacles, the Indian discussion focuses more on contextual reasons for non-participation. Thus we may speak of an individual approach (Europe) versus a collective approach (India) (cf. Egetenmeyer in this volume). This has quite different consequences: Does adult education have to motivate individuals, or does adult education has to work on the context conditions? In the European context, participant orientation can be understood as a leading principle of adult education and learning. The way India is connecting adult education to community development, social development, and skill development can enrich the discussion Europe by taking into account the contexts of adults. Thereby, the missing social dimension of adult learning will be strengthened.

Participation in adult education programmes in India has been increasing, which could be very well assessed from the data available from the 2001 and 2011 census reports. There has been a 8.3 per-cent increase in the adult literacy rate (61.0 per cent in 2001 and 69.3 per cent in 2011), thanks to initiatives of the central government and educational institutes along with non-governmental organisations working on the development of adult education programmes that suit the needs of present-day society. Reasons for non-participation could be reduced by adopting a professional approach and by providing need-based support to the adult illiterate community. Statistics on lifelong learning in Europe and the reasons found for participation and non-participation in adult education training activities would be helpful for both India and Europe when further planning and developing their adult education activities.

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