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### **PIAAC SURVEY: ADULT EDUCATION, THE SMART INVESTMENT**

**Last Tuesday were released the results of the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Aimed to collect and analyse data that assist governments in assessing, monitoring and analysing the level, distribution and utilisation of skills among their adult populations, it surveyed 166 000 adults aged 16-65 in 24 countries and regions from August 2011 to March 2012. EUCIS-LLL calls on EU decision-makers to use this opportunity to give a strong impetus on the need to strengthen cooperation in the field of lifelong learning.**

The PIAAC survey highlights the consequences of a **critical lack of basic skills** in the OECD area. Lower-skilled adults in literacy are for instance twice less likely to be employed but also to access basic welfare services, participate in democratic and associative life or even develop a sense of social cohesion. Tremendous gaps can be observed within the European Union: while 1 adult out of 5 has high literacy skills in Finland, figures come down to 1 out of 20 in Italy. The same example shows a strong correlation between skills proficiency and participation in adult education, which reaches 60% in Finland but is below 30% in Italy. **Access** to quality education and training especially for the unemployed and low skilled workers should thus be a top priority.

PIAAC also shows that the gap is widening between the high skilled and those with low proficiency. EUCIS-LLL calls for a **stronger political commitment** from our governments in the fight against **inequalities**. Providing **high quality learning opportunities to all** (and especially to the most disadvantaged) is crucial not only for our ageing workforce to cope with ever more competitive and changing labour markets, but also to be more socially included and have better living conditions. Finland is also among the countries that have been able to raise skills levels across generations with younger people who perform particularly well. Among the lessons that can be taken from those top-performers, we need to keep on investing in skills and *"move from a reliance on initial education towards fostering lifelong, skills-oriented learning"*.

As much of adult learning takes place beyond formal education, the PIAAC conclusions emphasise the importance of a **strong partnership between stakeholders from all sectors**. EUCIS-LLL recalls how the contribution of **civil society** is indispensable in that respect. Adult learning is *"currently the weakest link in developing national lifelong learning systems"* (2011 Council Resolution) – and the Commission has committed to give a political answer to the challenges revealed by the survey, notably thanks to Erasmus+ and the European Social Fund. EUCIS-LLL calls for a collective effort to face these challenges and for a **sustainable investment in learning in Europe through those programmes and even more by Member States**.

*Notes to the editors: The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) gathers 33 European organisations working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for secondary and higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education; networks for students, school heads, parents, HRD professionals, teachers and trainers. [www.eucis-lll.eu](http://www.eucis-lll.eu)*

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