

# AMU

The Danish Adult Vocational Training Programmes





# Introduction

Denmark has one of the highest technological levels in the world, and today it is crossing the threshold from an industrial to a knowledge society. The labour market is subject to constant development and change has become a way of life for the businesses and their staff. In the coming years, the knowledge society will increasingly require new skills and competences in almost all job functions.

In Denmark the adult vocational training programmes (AMU programmes) play a key role in the general policy of lifelong learning. AMU programmes contribute to creating a flexible labour market by giving individuals opportunities to acquire the skills and competences required by the labour market.

## 40 years of AMU programmes

AMU programmes have existed since the late 1950s. During the first phase in 1960s, the training programmes supported the transition from an agricultural to an industrial society. For example, unskilled workers from the agricultural sector and women, who were joining the labour market in greater numbers, were able to take part in vocational training so improve their employment prospects in the many new manufacturing businesses. The second phase of AMU pro-

grammes was the 1970s and 1980s, where the labour market was characterised by high unemployment. AMU programmes were further developed to solve the structural problems which followed from the high unemployment and the programmes provided the many unemployed with new skills in order to promote employment.

The 1990s represented a third phase in the development of AMU programmes. In this period knowledge, service and information increasingly played a greater role in enterprises' production. Technological developments and new ways of organising work entailed that training courses increasingly had to be adapted to local conditions in close cooperation between enterprises and training institutions. The aim was to support economic growth of enterprises and the working life of staff.

## Reform in 2000

In 2000, a reform was adopted, which created stronger coherence within adult education and continuing training. The reform provided a new framework of lifelong learning opportunities for adults, and gave the social partners greater responsibility in terms of prioritising and

organising the AMU programmes. The reform was followed by enhanced focus on closer dialogue between management, staff, and training institutions, and on the concept that training should be integrated with learning at the work place. The reform also focused on individuals with a low level of educational attainment and the provision of training to provide these people with competencies similar to skilled workers, or good basic education.

## The overall aim and framework of AMU programmes

The AMU programmes have a triple aim. Firstly, to give, maintain and improve the vocational skills of the participants in accordance with the needs and background of enterprises, the labour market and the individual persons and in line with the technological and social development. Secondly, to solve restructuring and adaptation problems on the labour market in the short perspective. Thirdly, to contribute to a general lift in the qualifications on the labour market, in the longer perspective. The programmes are developed and organised for low skilled and skilled workers, technicians, and similar. This includes employees as well as the unemployed, and there are special



training offers targeted to groups at risk of being marginalized in the labour market. For instance, this may include the long-term unemployed, refugees, and immigrants.

AMU programmes provide good opportunities for development of skills and competences of the individual in a lifelong learning perspective. Among other things, the legislation ensures:

- Good financial framework and conditions
- Nationally recognised competences
- A flexible structure
- Developing competences to higher levels
- Continuous development of new training programmes
- Adult educational techniques which cater for learning practical skills

- A close interplay with the enterprises
- Quality assurance at all levels of the AMU system.

#### **The social partners play a key role**

Within the AMU system, a National Training Council and training committees have been set up, and at local level boards and local training committees are operating at the schools and centres. The social partners play a key role in all these boards and committees, contributing to organising, developing, setting priorities and quality assurance of the training programmes. This ensures that training and education meets the qualification needs of the labour market, enterprises, and the individual.

#### **AMU and the education system in general**

Adult vocational training programmes constitute a significant part of education and training within the overall education system in Denmark and form an integral part of the adult further education system, which was established in 2000.

The AMU system is flexible, providing a lifelong opportunity to acquire new skills and higher levels of competence. This applies irrespective of whether one is unskilled and needs new basic competencies, or whether one is skilled and needs to extend and upgrade skills and competences or start in a new occupational field.

The figure shows how the AMU system fits into the overall Danish education and training system.

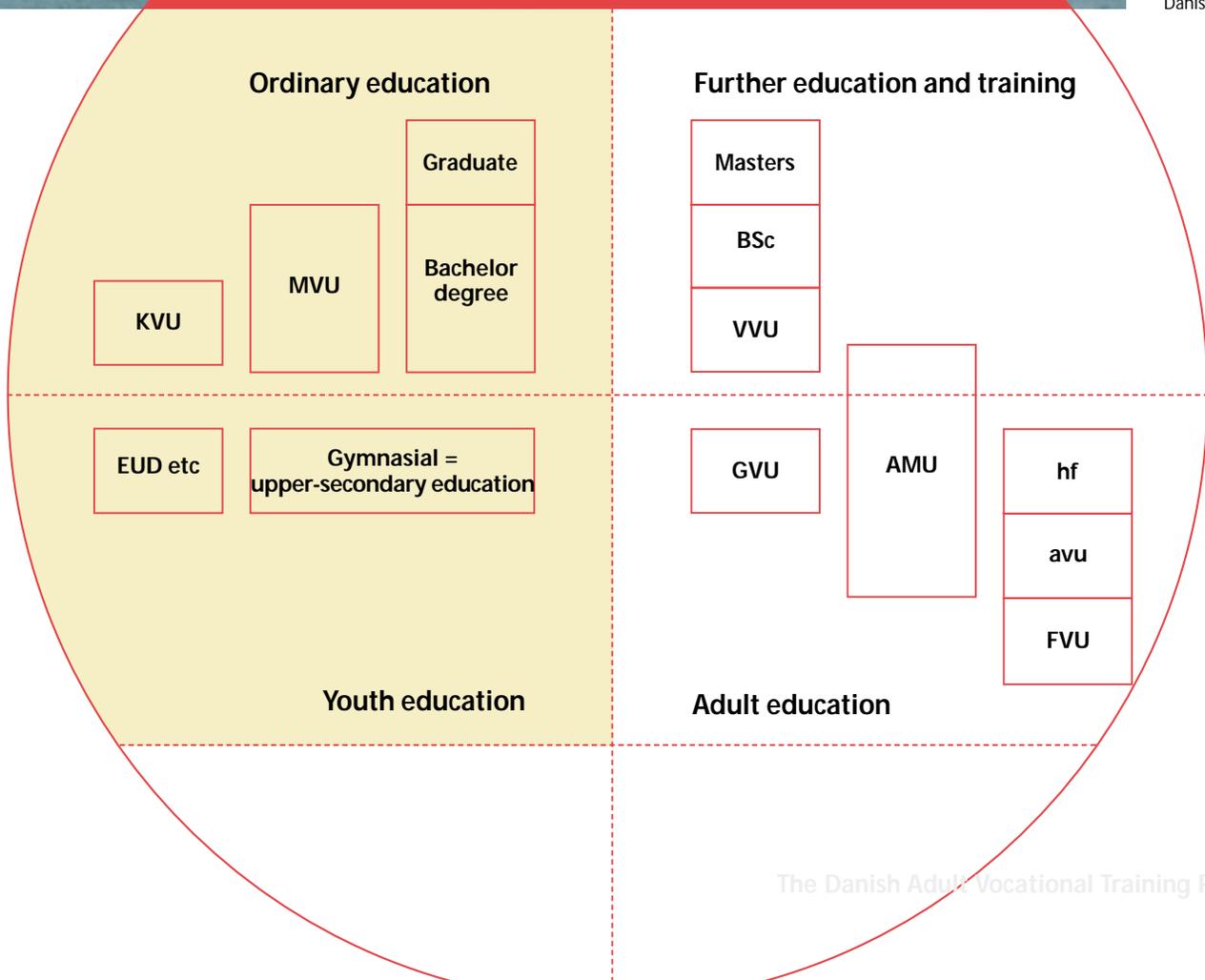


**Abbreviations:**

- KVU: short-cycle higher education courses
- MVU: medium-cycle higher education courses
- EUD: vocational education and training
- VVU: further adult education
- GVU: basic adult education
- AMU: adult vocational training
- hf: higher preparatory examination
- avu: general adult education
- FVU: preparatory adult education

Source: "Taxametersystemet for de videregående uddannelser – 2001"  
Danish Ministry of Education

**Education system**





## Content and planning

There are more than 2,000 AMU programmes. Together, they meet the needs for vocational continuing training of adult unskilled and skilled workers and technicians within a wide range of sectors and trades. The programmes mainly target employees in work, but the unemployed also have access to the AMU programmes.

The programmes offer the participants three levels of qualifications based on an assessment of the different job functions. This assessment forms the basis for the types of qualifications to be included in the individual training course.

The three levels are:

- Specific qualifications, e.g. crafts, technical insight and knowledge of materials
- General qualifications, e.g. working environment, IT, languages
- Personal qualifications, e.g. responsibility, independence and ability to cooperate

AMU training primarily provides skills and competences related to specific job functions, but a large majority of the training programmes also provides competences to continue at

higher levels within a sector. Many training programmes are also recognised by other basic vocational education and training programmes. This means that adults wishing to graduate as skilled workers can have their period of training shortened.

### **Vocational training programmes**

Vocational training programmes in AMU provide independent, national competences within one or several occupational sectors and trades. The aims and objectives of the programmes are described in training plans setting out clearly what the



participants should achieve though the completion of the course.

The training plans are developed at national level, and they provide a flexible framework for training, e.g. with open workshop training and distance courses. Thus, the individual training institutions have the best conditions to organise and implement training plans to meet the demand, for high quality training and education.

The duration of the AMU courses varies and may be between one day and up to 6 weeks. Most of the training provided has a vocational con-

tent which is directly targeted at one or several sectors and trades. But there are also qualifying training courses of a more general nature which can be applied across sectors and trades. Sector-oriented vocational training comprises the following sectors, for example: transport, social and health, iron and metal, trade and service etc.

Within the different sectors, it is common that training plans form part of an overall training structure that enables adults in the labour market to participate in basic courses and then move on to more spe-

cialised training courses. In some sectors, the training structure is developed in such a way that it is possible to acquire the same level as a skilled worker through AMU programmes. This applies, for instance, to building caretakers, abattoir workers, gardeners, assistants in laundries, and drivers and warehouse workers.

#### **Long-term training programmes**

AMU training may be composed of courses lasting up to one year. It may either be courses providing a national competence, or courses that individual training centres organise on the basis

of specific local needs. The integrated courses may include elements from other programmes than AMU, for example from general adult education and vocational education and training programmes.

When courses are organised for the unemployed, they may be extended by up to 25%, and there may be practical training at enterprises as part of the overall training course.

A special variant is integrated and long-term courses for refugees and immigrants. These courses include teaching in the Danish language as an integrated part of the vocational training.

#### **Individual assessment of competencies, qualifications, and skills**

AMU also offers individual assessment of qualifications in order to clarify the participant's existing qualifications and needs for continuing training, as well as to prepare a participant for an AMU programme.

The assessment of qualifications normally lasts between one day and 3 weeks and may be organised indi-

vidually or in classes. The participants are offered vocational guidance. They are also offered the opportunity to test their vocational and general skills and qualifications in workshops and through other means. In this way, individual assessment of prior learning enables participants and the training institutions to clarify together what kind of training would be suitable. It also serves as a preparation for participation in AMU training.

#### **From training needs for new training programmes**

New needs are constantly arising in step with the introduction of new technologies and changing work functions in enterprises. Enterprises and sectors can contact the continuing training committee within the area with their requirements for new training courses.

The continuing training committees are made up of representatives from the social partners. They are responsible for the development of new training programmes and may apply to the Ministry of Education for

grants for the development process. The Ministry of Education approves the training plan – normally for a period of 5 years.

The National Training Council is the overall body within the AMU system. The social partners are represented in the Council, which advises the Minister for Education on the needs for new programmes and setting up continuing training committees. The Council is also consulted regarding development tasks and approval of training plans.

#### **From training plans to teaching**

The training plans are a central tool in the AMU programmes. They describe the aims and objectives of the individual programmes, and constitute the foundation on which the training schools and centres organise their teaching. There are requirements as to the form of the training plans, which must always contain the following elements:

- The labour market policy needs of the programme





- The aims and objectives of the programme
- The place of the programme in an educational structure
- Participant qualifications and admission requirements
- The text of the certificate
- Quality assurance

The individual training school or centre is responsible for the implementation of the training plan into concrete teaching, and it is responsible for achieving the aims.

The training institutions are free to organise the training courses to match the work situation of the participants involved. Small and medium-sized enterprises may, for instance, have difficulties in releasing manpower for a whole week at a time. Therefore, the training courses can be organised both in the daytime and in the evening or at weekends, either as full-day or half-day courses, integrated or divided, with a full class or divided up into several smaller classes in the same workshop, where teachers teach several

different programmes at the same time.

The training institution may also choose to let the course take place at an enterprise or as distance learning.

Most courses consist of practical teaching in workshops and theory teaching linked to the workshop training. When the courses almost completed, the teacher makes an assessment as to whether the participant has attained the aims of the programme, and as to whether the course has been completed satisfactorily.

If this is the case, the participant will receive a certificate describing the skills and qualifications acquired.

#### **Quality assurance**

All AMU programmes are subject to a common quality assurance system. There are two overall quality requirements which all programmes must meet: Participants must acquire the skills and qualifications intended, and secondly, these skills must be relevant both to the participants, the businesses, and the labour market as such.

The training schools and centres are primarily responsible for assuring the quality of the training. They measure the results of the training provided by means of a set of common internet-based evaluation tools that are compulsory at all levels in the AMU system. This common quality assurance system gives an overall view of the quality of the training effort, and at the same time it used by the training institutions and the continuing training committees to assess how training can be improved.



## AMU in figures

### Three types of programmes

The AMU programmes in Denmark comprise three types of programmes:

- Vocational training programmes
- Longterm training programmes
- Individual assessment of competencies

In 2000 and 2001, the three programmes can be analysed as shown in the table.

*ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR SUBSIDIES IN PARTICIPANT WEEKS, DISTRIBUTED BY TYPE OF PROGRAMME*

	2000 Participant weeks	2001 Participant weeks
Vocational training programmes	314,400	321,900
Longterm training programmes	20,100	26,700
Individual assessment of competencies	3,400	7,300
<b>Activities, total</b>	<b>337,900</b>	<b>355,900</b>

### Different training schools and centres

AMU programmes are offered by 142 different training schools and centres. In 2001, the majority of programmes, 58 per cent, were carried out at the 15 AMU centres. 36 per cent were carried out at 95 vocational colleges, and 6 per cent were carried out at other training institutions. For instance these may include teacher training colleges, social and health schools or private course suppliers. In 2001, 355,900 participant weeks

*CHANGES IN ACTIVITY 2000-2001 IN PARTICIPANT WEEKS, DISTRIBUTED BY TRAINING PLACES*

	2000	2001	Change in %
AMU centres	204,900	205,000	0
Vocational colleges	114,200	129,800	14
Other training institutions	18,800	21,100	12
<b>Total activity</b>	<b>337,900</b>	<b>355,900</b>	<b>5</b>

were held at AMU. Participant weeks are an expression of the time participants attend courses, calculated in weeks.

## Age

25-50-year-olds dominate the vocational training programmes and make up approx. 70% of all partici-

pants. 35-39-year-olds make up the biggest age group.

## Distribution by gender

In 2001, 310,832 Danes participated in a vocational training programme. Of these, 38% were women and 62% were men. The table shows the distribution by gender from 1998 to 2001 for the formal competence courses.

*NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND DISTRIBUTION BY GENDER  
IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES, DISTRIBUTED BY PARTICIPANT WEEKS*

	1998		1999		2000		2001*	
Particip. having started	393,594		382,052		290,316		310,832	
Distrib. by gender (%)	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
<b>% in total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>62</b>

## Educational background

The AMU programmes are primarily directed at unskilled and skilled workers. The table shows the educational background of the participants who embarked on a formal competence course from 1998 to 2001. It appears that the proportion of participants without a vocational education and training qualification has been stable during the entire period. It made up 37% in 2001. The greatest change, however, occurred for the group of skilled workers who increased their share from 48% in 1998 to 60% in 2001.

*THE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS WHO EMBARKED  
ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES*

	1998	1999	2000	2001*
No vocational	36%	38%	37%	37%
Skilled	48%	51%	58%	60%
Higher technician**		6%	3%	2%
Short-cycle higher education	7%	3%	1%	1%
Long-cycle higher education	2%	1%	1%	1%
Undergoing educ.**	2%	1%	1%	1%
No data	7%	1%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Employed or unemployed

The table shows the proportion of employed and unemployed, respectively, participating in formal competence programmes during the period from 1998 to 2001. After some years with an increasing proportion of employed, the distribution has become more or less stable over the past two years.

*EMPLOYMENT STATUS FOR PARTICIPANTS  
IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES, IN %*

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Employed	68	82	91	92
Unemployed	24	18	9	8
No data	8	0	0	0

\* Due to changes in the statistical formats in the years 2000-2002, the tables may contain small deviations in relation to the final figures.

# Grants and allowances

A participant in a vocationally oriented adult education or continuing training programme (VEU) will normally be eligible for a so-called VEU-allowance which corresponds to the maximum daily unemployment benefit. The allowance is granted as compensation for the loss of income or work for participants in employment and self-employed participants.

Furthermore, the unemployed, who are eligible to six-weeks' training which they choose themselves, are eligible to an allowance for the full six weeks.

Programmes where participants are eligible for compensation are:

- AMU programmes
- Vocational education and training programmes (EUD) – single subjects under open education
- Social and health education programmes (SOSU) – single subjects under open education
- Basic educator credit programme (PGU credit)
- Clarification of skills and qualifications as part of a basic programme for adults (GVU)
- Taxi-driver courses
- Club-educator programme
- Programmes under the EU Social Fund.

A condition for eligibility for the VEU allowance is that the participant does not have an educational background beyond vocational education and training level. Holders of diplomas in specialised business studies, computer studies, and technical studies, as well as certain technicians and people with higher education qualifications are also eligible for the VEU allowance, if they have not used their qualifications for the past 5 years.

It is not necessary to be a member of a union in order to be eligible for the VEU allowance.

## Age limits

Participants between 20-24 years of age may, as a maximum, receive a VEU allowance for a total of 30 weeks, unless they have been exempted from these rules by the Ministry of Education.

For participants over 25 years of age, there is no limit for the duration of the allowance, nor is there any upper age limit. This is due the fact that the VEU allowance builds on the principle that allowance is granted to the participant, when he or she is affiliated to the labour market and the programme followed is relevant both vocationally and with regard to labour-market policy.

## Payment

The unemployment insurance funds administer and pay out the VEU allowance to participants who are insured (members of an "A-kasse), while the public employment service is responsible for paying participants who are not insured. Employers, who pay full wages to an employee during the programme, may receive the VEU allowance as compensation.

The VEU allowance is paid out for the period a person has actually attended a programme. This means that the allowance will be reduced if a participant is absent or performs part of his or her work activities during the course of the programme.



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