



# Learning between tradition and transformation

A survey on digital learning of members of staff and works councils

Executive Summary

Within the project



Sponsored by the



# Learning between tradition and transformation

## A survey on digital learning of members of staff and works councils

The report *“Learning between tradition and transformation. A survey on digital learning of members of staff and works councils”* (original title: *Lernen zwischen Tradition und Transformation. Eine Erhebung zu digitalem Lernen von Betriebs- und Personalratsmitgliedern*) presents the results of a survey amongst 425 members of staff and works councils on specific learning needs, learning preferences and preconditions for digital learning. It provides valuable indications for user oriented (digitally supported) learning: When and where do members of staff and works councils wish to learn? Which learning methods do they prefer? Are they open and ready for digitally supported learning? As the respondents represent several industrial and service sectors and perform statutory employee representation voluntarily, the results can reasonably be transferred to other (voluntary) employees of non-profit organisations (NPOs) with similar working conditions.

The study closes a research gap, as little is known about voluntary employees of NPOs and their digitally supported learning (cf. Korge, Zaiser and Flex 2021, p. 27 et seq.)<sup>1</sup>.



### Survey Information: The survey was conducted

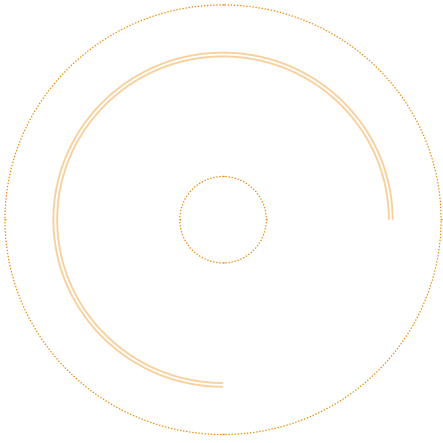
- in form of an online questionnaire,
- from December 2020 to February 2021,
- by ver.di Bildung + Beratung (ver.di b+b, Düsseldorf, Germany), a trade union education provider mainly for staff and works councils, in cooperation with the applied research organisations Institute of Human Factors and Technology Management (IAT, University of Stuttgart, Germany) and Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering (IAO, Stuttgart, Germany),
- within the joint research project Digital-labor für Non-Profit-Organisations 4.0 (DigiLab NPO) ([www.digilab.site](http://www.digilab.site)), funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the program “Innovation for Tomorrow’s Production, Services, and Work (funding number 02L18A230ff) and managed by the Project Management Agency Karlsruhe (PTKA).

One objective of the research project DigiLab NPO is to develop and test new concepts for digitally supported trainings for (voluntary) employees of NPOs. As NPOs often lack the resources for fundamental transformation, e. g. to develop their own learning programmes and learning platforms, the specific challenge is to find the optimal balance: How much digitalization is necessary for maximum user-oriented learning and learning success, and how much digitalization is possible with respect to the limited resources of the providing NPO?

The survey aims at the first question: When and where do staff and works councils wish to learn? Which learning methods do they prefer? Which formats of digitally supported learning do they know and prefer? Are they well equipped for digitally supported learning?

Although the target group is characterised by great heterogeneity in professions, learning biography and learning targets, the respondents agreed in several respects.

<sup>1</sup> G. Korge; H. Zaiser; M. Flex. *Erhebungen des Bedarfs an digitalem Lernen. Die Befragung von ehrenamtlich Mitarbeitenden der Evangelischen Altenheimat.* In: M. Freitag. *Digitale Transformation von Non-Profit-Organisationen*, 2021, pp. 27-41. <https://publica-rest.fraunhofer.delserv/api/core/bitstreams/a4eda5ed-0acc-4373-a021-2bb05bfb9ba/content>



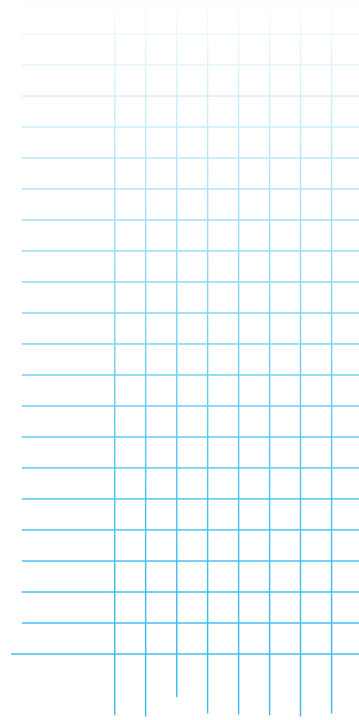
The most popular way to learn is – maybe out of habit – to meet during official working hours in a seminar or conference room. This corresponds to the favorite learning methods, as the respondents prefer learning methods that are as practical as possible and generate direct benefit for day-to-day (staff or works councils) operations: solving practical tasks, maybe supported by a mentor and/or followed by discussions and the exchange of experiences.

Nevertheless, the respondents are open-minded towards digitally supported learning – if the course comes with a trainer and offers opportunities to gain and exchange experience. The technical prerequisites exist: The respondents have – at work and at home – access to a PC or laptop or tablet, equipped with headset and camera and with access to the internet.

Further analysis showed some differences, e. g.: For women it is more important than for men to have more say about when and where to learn. Younger respondents (younger than 40 years) are more open-minded towards learning at home, learning after work and learning on a daily or hourly basis.

The survey results provide concrete indications what learning providers should take into consideration if it comes to develop new digitally supported learning programmes for members of staff and works councils – or (voluntary) employees of NPOs in general. The most important ones are: The trainer has a guiding role; the course should provide many opportunities to gain experience; the learning platform should support intensive exchange of experience among learners.

Furthermore, ver.di b+b has drawn the conclusion that the success of digitalization of vocational education will crucially depend on embedding the learning strategy into a corporate digitalization strategy and in actively involving all stakeholders in the design of digitally supported learning.



This document is an extract from:



Gabriele Korge; Maxie Wolter; Karin Hamann; Helmut Zaiser. Lernen zwischen Tradition und Transformation. Eine Erhebung zu digitalem Lernen von Betriebs- und Personalratsmitgliedern, Rainer Nägele; Ralf Wilde (eds.), Stuttgart 2022.

<https://doi.org/10.24406/publica-47>

## Contact

**M.A. Gabriele Korge**  
Competence Management  
Phone +49 711 970-2261  
[gabriele.korge@iao.fraunhofer.de](mailto:gabriele.korge@iao.fraunhofer.de)

Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial  
Engineering IAO  
Nobelstrasse 12  
70569 Stuttgart, Germany

**M.A. Helmut Zaiser**  
Competence Management  
Phone +49 711 970-2027  
[helmut.zaiser@iao.fraunhofer.de](mailto:helmut.zaiser@iao.fraunhofer.de)

Institute of Human Factors and  
Technology Management IAT  
Nobelstrasse 12  
70569 Stuttgart, Germany

