

PARTNERUP

PARTNER UP Analysis Reports National level

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Executive Summary

The following national reports represent the outcome of the initial desk analysis carried out by the project partners in Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Romania with the aim to deepen the actual state of the art in the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative (UP) in each project Country and at EU level.

The desk analysis allowed the partners to investigate and share knowledge about several aspects related to the UP initiative: legislative context and measures, key measures in place, wide target groups addressed, main challenges in reaching out the target groups, main challenges in skills assessment, provision of tailored learning and validation and recognition of skills acquired, actors delivering Upskilling Pathways, cooperation mechanisms in place.

It was based on stakeholders' contributions, on recent literature review, and on the consultation of National/EU documents on both Adult Learning and Education policies and Upskilling Pathways, published by European Commission or elaborated by European networks/associations.

The outcomes of the Analysis put the basis for the policy and practice work of the project.



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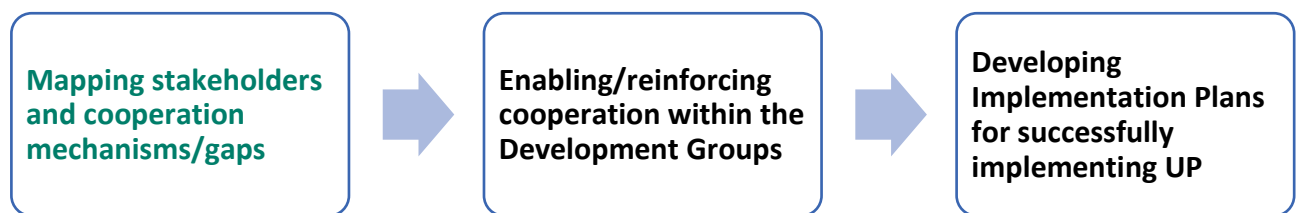
1 Introduction

The following national reports represent the outcome of the initial Analysis carried out by the project partners in Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Romania with the aim to deepen the actual state of art in the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways initiative (UP) in each project Country and at EU level.

Specifically, the Analysis was meant at collecting quantitative and qualitative data and information about:

- existing and missing stakeholders,
- existing cooperation mechanisms and structures,
- gaps in cooperation,
- good practices with reference to the Upskilling Pathways implementation in the Partner UP Countries and at EU level,

in order to **provide the basis for the policy and practice work of the project.**



The Analysis process allowed the partners to investigate and share knowledge about several aspects related to the UP initiative, by:

- analysing the main challenges in the UP implementation, in view of defining strengths and weaknesses in cooperation, identifying existing coordination structures, missing stakeholders and how this has impacted on a regular process of implementation;
- mapping and analysing a list of possible/useful stakeholders to engage, so as to make clear their added value and expected contribution;
- defining how they can further enable the implementation of UP.

In order to collect highly qualitative data, the Analysis is carried out according to two different methodologies, both aimed at defining gaps in cooperation and identifying opportunities for reinforcing positive/meaningful relationships already in place and involving and engaging missing and/or new stakeholders: **Desk Analysis** and **Stakeholder Mapping**.



The **Desk analysis** was mainly intended at deepening the actual state of art in the implementation of the UP initiative in each project Country and at EU level, by investigating:

- legislative context and measures;
- key measures in place;
- wide target groups addressed;
- main challenges in reaching out the target groups;
- main challenges in skills assessment, provision of tailored learning and validation and recognition of skills acquired;
- actors delivering Upskilling Pathways;
- cooperation mechanism in place.

It was based on recent literature review and on the consultation of National/EU documents on both Adult Learning and Education policies and Upskilling Pathways, published by European Commission or elaborated by European networks/associations.

The mapping of Stakeholders was developed at country level through different activities:

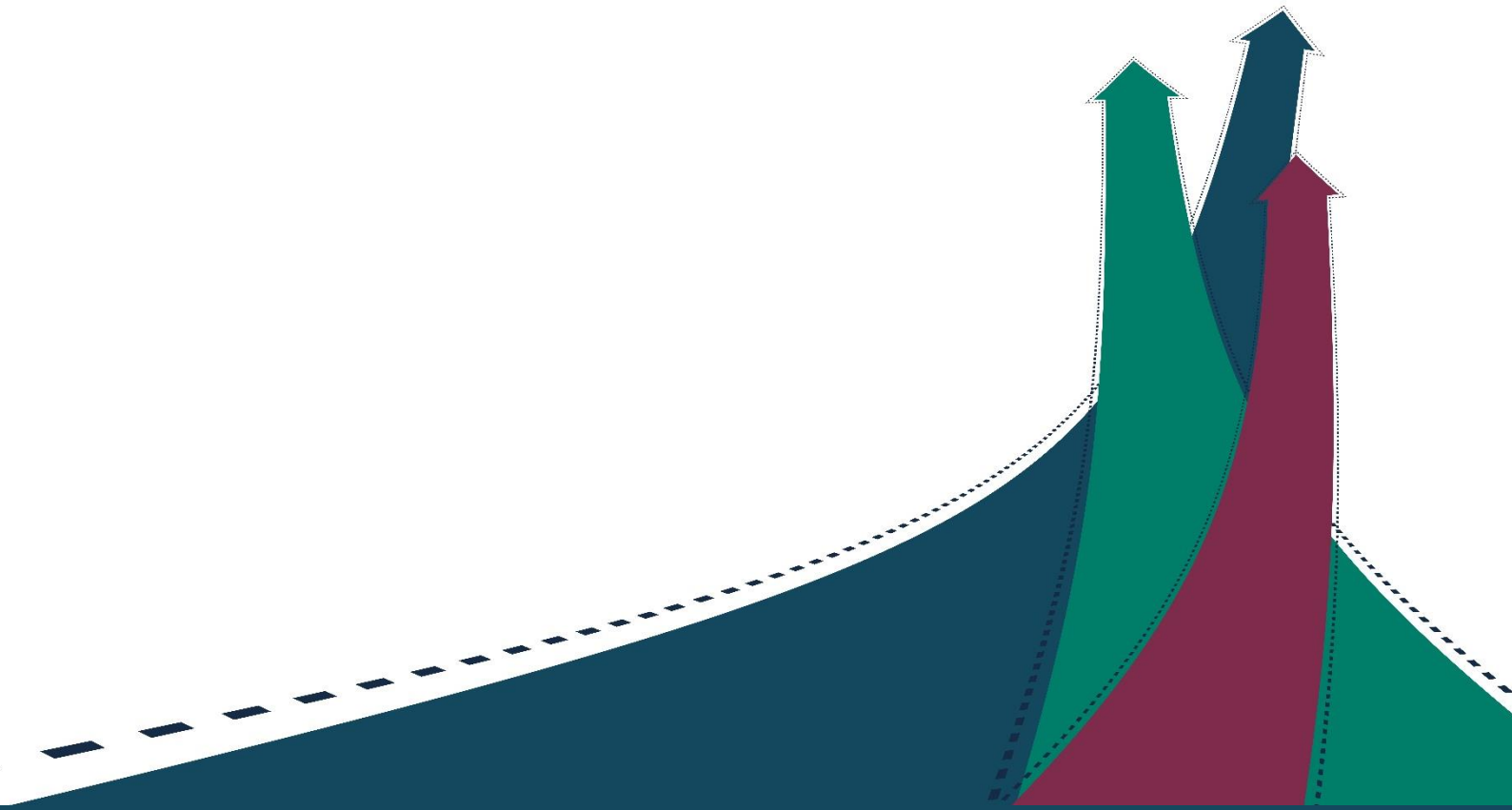
- **internal reflection** in partner organisation and/or in national project team, developed by collectively brainstorming about specific key questions, so as to share a common view of the main needs and objectives for the development of cooperation with/among stakeholders;
- **focus groups / interviews** with national stakeholders according common Guidelines, with the main aim to guide them in self-assessing their role in Upskilling Pathways, their relevance and their main contribution.

As results of the methodologies applied, the partners/national team produced an **Analysis Country Report** and a **Stakeholder Mapping Table**, as follows.



2 Analysis reports

Report of the analyses that have taken place at the respective national level



Country Analysis CYPRUS

Country Analysis - Cyprus

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Country | Cyprus |
| Responsible organisation/s | CARDET – Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology |

Upskilling Pathways in each country: state of art in the implementation, main target groups, challenges

The Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults was launched in 2016 (“the Recommendation”) and revised in 2020 within the wider framework of the European Skills Agenda. The Recommendation is a policy initiative, calling EU member states to develop national strategies and policies to support upskilling and reskilling, particularly for vulnerable individuals and individuals with low qualifications. The goal of Upskilling Pathways is to empower individuals to navigate transitions in their careers, especially in the face of technological advancements and evolving job requirements, through a three-steps approach: skills assessment, tailored learning offer and validation and recognition. By investing in upskilling, individuals can improve their employability, increase their earning potential, and adapt to new roles or industries. Cyprus, as many other EU member states, may choose different ways of implementing the Recommendation, e.g. as part of existing lifelong learning strategies utilising existing adult education policy and legislation, as separate pilot projects or as part of broader upskilling programmes (European Commission, 2019).

Historically, Cyprus started placing emphasis on adult education and overall developing its education system after its independence from the British Empire in 1960. In the 1960s and 1970s, adult education and upskilling opportunities expanded, having the government, along with various institutions and organisations, establishing programs and initiatives to address the needs of adults. The creation of the Cyprus Productivity Centre in 1973 aimed to enhance the productivity and skills of the workforce through training and development programs. The University of Cyprus, established in 1989, was a landmark for the educational system in Cyprus, providing higher education opportunities for both traditional and adult learners. Cyprus membership in the European Union (2004) has further influenced its adult education and upskilling pathways, supporting adult education projects, promoting lifelong learning, skills development, and employability.

Towards the aim of addressing these challenges, Cyprus proceeded in implementing policy objectives and reforms. A milestone for the adult education sector in Cyprus was the publication of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007-2013, focusing on the following pillars: a) the promotion of access to education and training systems and coherent links among education and training and the labour market, b) the launch of research regarding the socioeconomic outcomes of lifelong learning, c) the improvement of infrastructures for improving the lifelong learning activities and d) the establishment of efficient governance mechanisms and tools in lifelong learning systems.

In 2012, the Council of Ministers established the Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF) which adopted the 8 levels of the European Qualifications Framework. The CyQF includes the system of vocational qualifications developed by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA), enabling the validation and comparability of qualification of learners in a variety of lifelong learning activities (formal, non-formal and informal). This adoption of CyQF, therefore, facilitates the mobility of learners, while improving the quality assurance of training programs and activities (Cedefop, 2020a). The National Qualifications Authority has been established, leading the implementation of CyQF at operational level, whereas the CyQF council has been established at an advisory level, aiming to support the collaboration between stakeholders (Cedefop, 2020b). The CyQF council, focuses specifically in consulting stakeholders on developing and implementing the CyQF, promoting the dissemination of the CyQF and advising the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture and Youth.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Youth (MoESY) established pathways for adults to complete secondary education, or basic education. Evening Gymnasia, Evening Technical Schools, and New Modern Apprenticeship (for younger ages) are illustrative examples of these programs. Programs for non-formal education are also run by the MoESY Adult Education Centres offering various courses without, though, providing official certification. State Institutes of Further Education also provide courses such as ICT, bookkeeping, language. The latter act as preparatory lessons for the assessments of external stakeholders (for example IELTS or IGCSE of Cambridge, ECDL or ICT Europe for PCs and so on.). The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) has had the greatest impact over the years, running several programs that help people who are unemployed to get back into the workforce and provide them with opportunities for lifelong learning and development. Subsidies for businesses and employers to provide training for new and existing employees enable the implementation of those programs. More than 45,000 trainees participated in lifelong learning activities by spending €15.7 million in 2018. However, trainees and funding are significantly lower for those with greater needs (unemployed and inactive).

Still, despite the development of various initiatives in adult education, Cyprus still lags in comparison with other EU-member states. As described in the most recent report of Cedefop for Cyprus (2021), Cyprus faces various challenges in relation to students' basic skills, adults' digital literacy and digital skills, adult participation in vocational education and training and in adult participation in lifelong learning activities, which all remain below the EU average level. Literature in the Cypriot context signifies the lack of an authority supervising all the activities on adult learning and an absence of a mechanism monitoring and evaluating activities on a national level for lifelong learning (Cedefop, 2020; CyLLIS, 2022). In addition, the adult education sector seems to be fragmented, considering the absence of coherent assurance processes. Furthermore, it is reported a lack of collaboration between academia, research, and industry to support the skills and employability of new graduates, while there are few career guidance and counselling services to support youth and adults with low qualifications.

The introduction of the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (2021-2027) (CyLLIS, 2022) aimed to address these gaps, aspiring

'to provide a long-term strategic framework towards the development of a knowledge-based society, where all citizens are provided with learning opportunities, to develop the knowledge,

skills, and attitudes that will facilitate their personal and social growth, professional advancement, social inclusion, resilience, and well-being.’ (CyLLIS, 2022: 6)

The CyLLIS 2021-2027 (p. 6) report sets four strategic priorities and objectives to achieve until 2027: a) establish the governance, monitoring, and evaluation framework, involving the development of action plans with clearly delineated stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities; b) decrease youth unemployment and upskill/reskill youth and the workforce, providing learning opportunities associated with market needs, while putting emphasis on enhancing the skills of adults with low qualifications; c) increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning, by providing incentives, eliminating barriers and strengthening communication; d) enhance the professional practice of adult educators and trainers, while providing support to educators of all education levels to enhance lifelong learning skills. Overall, the CyLLIS aims to create the necessary synergies amongst various stakeholders involved in adult learning to assist the implementation of strategic objectives. An Action Plan accompanies the CyLLIS, providing indicative actions and timelines for the authorities involved, as well as a common framework for implementing the strategy. These advances are still in progress.

Stakeholder cooperation in UP: successful cooperation mechanisms, missing stakeholders and gaps in cooperation

Stakeholders participating in interviews and focus group discussions identified some successful cooperation mechanisms, but also several gaps and challenges in implementing the Upskilling Pathways as well as in adult learning in the Republic of Cyprus. These are discussed in detail in the below subcategories.

1. Progresses in adult learning and successful cooperation mechanisms

Some participants referred to the progresses made in adult learning so far as similarly described in the Literature Review above. Some stakeholders also referred to the successful cooperation mechanisms between different organisations. For example, the HRDA runs various programs (including programs for adults with low qualifications) in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance, the Centre of Productivity of Cyprus, various departments of the MoESY, and some of these lead to the employment of people in private and public organisations. Likewise, the representatives of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth highlighted the collaboration efforts between different stakeholders during the process of developing the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021 – 2027.

2. Challenges and gaps

Stakeholders provided a plethora of challenges and gaps in the implementation of UP, as well as in adult learning generally.

2.1. Gaps and challenges in adult learning provision

2.1.1. Definitions and conceptual confusions in adult learning

a. Defining adult education

Stakeholders noted a conceptual confusion of what adult education involves. Adult education in Cyprus, as well as across the globe, encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning. Adult education may also include acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, vocational training, language learning, personal development courses, and continuing education for professional advancement. All these different directions and different formats of adult education, lead to unclarity on what can be considered as adult education or not. For example, universities (e.g., the University of Cyprus) offer academic education to adults – students. However, they may also recognize as accreditation, non-formal training received outside the universities (e.g., participation in conferences, and training). However, this is not something that they disseminate to students, as they prefer to provide themselves with educational training. Some stakeholders noted that the conceptual unclarity of what adult education entails, also relates to the absence of collaboration between stakeholders (see relevant subsection below), leading some participants to characterise this as ‘a systemic issue’.

Another conceptual confusion involves the different philosophical strands of adult education. Adult education may encompass a competency-based education in adult learning (e.g., see Chappell et al., 2020), which is rooted in the philosophy of developing practical, job-related skills and knowledge that are directly applicable in the workplace. It may also involve a philosophy of learning that emphasises the importance of learning throughout an individual’s life, aiming to provide to adults a wider set of skills that enable their active participation in the civil society (e.g., see Aspin and Chapman, (2011) and Degener, 2001).

As participants noted, the plethora of different directions and theories about adult education contribute to some extent to a confusion of what adult education involves in the Cypriot context.

b. Defining adults with low qualifications and promoting relevant programs

Some stakeholders- especially those involved in preparing training material, organising training, and running relevant EU-funded projects, raised a difficulty in how to present and broadcast these training/projects as the term ‘low skilled adults’ is derogative. They also mentioned a challenge in how to invite trainers to participate in master’s training programs specifically designed for ‘low skilled adults’. Apart from the derogative elements of these terms, these stakeholders also mentioned an unclarity of what the term ‘low skilled adults’ encompasses: does it refer to people who have completed up to secondary education? Or it may also refer to people who, despite being in the process of completion of tertiary education or having just completed it, may still lack basic numeric, digital and literacy skills.

c. Defining digital skills:

Some stakeholders noted a misunderstanding of what digital skills involve. Do they refer to basic digital skills, like researching information online, communicating via email, using video calls, online calendars, or it also include technical digital skills (like, learning how to use a specific software, using online banking systems)?

d. Defining ‘skills’ and ‘competences’:

Some stakeholders also mentioned a confusion on using the terms 'skills' or 'competences'. Despite the differences in these terms, e.g., skills are more specific and relate to specific abilities, job requirements, whereas competences have a broader focus and may involve a variety of skills, stakeholders noted that these terms in Europe may be used interchangeably. Also, some EU countries show a preference either to 'skills' or 'competences' but assigning them with the same meaning.

2.1.2. Validation of non-formal and informal learning in adult education

All participating stakeholders considered that the validation of non-formal and informal learning in adult education is one of the most daunting and challenging tasks in adult education in Cyprus and abroad. As they noted, in Cyprus there is a lack of a coherent system to assess and recognise training received in adult learning, resulting in each organisation providing its own qualification. This has implications in the employability of people receiving adult education from different organisation bodies, since particular organisations do not recognise a certification by another organisation on the same focus of expertise in Cyprus. There is also a lack of recognition of various certificates issued in Cyprus abroad. For example, a certified HRDA adult educator in Cyprus, cannot use this certification to work as an adult educator abroad. Overall, in the Cypriot context stakeholders reported that only the System of Professional Qualifications that offers qualifications in the fields of retail, tourism, manufacturing, construction, hair saloon and other industries is nationally recognized. Stakeholders reported that despite some workshops and meetings being organised in the Cypriot context to address this issue (e.g., during the stage of conceptualising the Lifelong Learning Strategy), there were no actual results. Stakeholders noted that even though most authorities involved in adult learning are governmental authorities, they act competitively, trying 'to reinvent the wheel.'

2.2. Challenges in the governance of adult education

2.2.1. Collaboration challenges

Another great obstacle in adult education is the fragmentation of the sector, as similarly reported in the literature review of the Cyprus context. Almost all participating stakeholders considered that there is no organised, coherent system for adult learning in Cyprus; most activities organised are scattered; training may take place but without providing validation and accreditation widely accepted by the stakeholders. A stakeholder characterised this phenomenon as if organisations involved in adult learning 'belong to different worlds', each being interested in promoting their own interests. The absence of a framework that defines the range of activities that a stakeholder organisation may undertake, results in many overlaps, as well as disagreements/ conflicts between the stakeholders, on e.g., who will receive the greatest funding, who will be the policy strategic leader, both for the public and the private sectors. Stakeholders noted that currently there is an absence of a common platform of communication and public consultation between the stakeholders involved (ministries, semi-governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations) to facilitate collaboration and exchange of information. The lack of a coherent system on adult learning has also an impact in the transparency of activities, strategies, and implementations, inhibiting the dissemination and management of resources. Also, it does not

facilitate the harmonisation of the activities provided by various authorities, including the harmonisation of HRDA with the European and National agencies and stakeholders in collecting, analysing and presenting data for Cyprus (e.g., gathering data per adult age, sex, level of education).

2.2.2. Funding challenges

Many stakeholders also raised funding challenges. As they noted, currently there is a lack of centralised funding and resources to support the development and quality of adult education programs. Various EU-funded projects and initiatives contribute to the development of this sector, however, there is no sustainability in their outcomes after funding ends.

2.2.3. Challenges in recruiting and educating adult educators

Stakeholders noted a lack of interest of adult educators in participating in training/sessions to promote the learning of adults with low qualifications, due to the lack of incentives (financial, credits/recognition for their career progression). Many adult educators, despite providing various training to adult learners, do not proceed with the HRDA accreditation, as they will have to pay the cost (€800) using their own resources.

2.3. Access and participation barriers

Most participating stakeholders noted several barriers hindering the participation of adults with low qualifications in education and training. These included: 2.3.1.) barriers to accessing adults with low qualifications; 2.3.2.) identifying skills' needs.

2.3.1. Barriers to accessing adults with low qualifications

All stakeholders mentioned a persistent gap in the education for adults with low qualifications, that is the difficulty in outreaching to and recruiting this population. As some stakeholders noted, considering that adults with low qualifications do not possess a basic set of skills- including digital ones- it is even more difficult to be informed of available training opportunities, as, for example, online and social media campaigns cannot be fully utilised.

Apart from the lack of awareness for the available opportunities for training, these adults also face financial and time constraints. In many cases, adults with low qualifications are employed in industry sectors (e.g., retail) where employers do not offer the possibility for their employees to receive training during work hours. Therefore, in most cases, most of these adults, even if they are aware of available training, do not attend them in their personal time. Stakeholders also identified a difficulty in recruiting unemployed people with low qualifications, as many of them do not see usefulness for receiving training, especially when this takes place in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, time constraints were mostly a barrier for women, who usually are responsible for the household.

Finally, there seems to be a societal issue regarding the facilitating of the employment of unemployed adults with low qualifications in the labour market. As stakeholders noted, despite

having adults with low qualifications receiving training, they had difficulty in finding businesses that would employ them. In addition, there were many cases of adults with low qualifications, who after receiving training that would lead to employment, they selected not to proceed, preferring to receive benefits from the state.

2.3.2. Identifying skills needs

Stakeholders observed a mismatch between the skills demanded by the labour market and those assumed by adults with low qualifications. For example, a study conducted by an NGO (Institute of Development) as reported by its representative during the interview, found that across four European countries, people reported a different set of skills needed to be employed than the set of skills reported by employers. Particularly, the study indicated that employees paid more attention to digital and literacy skills, whereas employers gave more emphasis to soft skills, along with some basic literacy and digital skills.

2.4. Evaluation and monitoring challenges

According to MoESY representatives, there is absence of evaluation and monitoring of the various activities run by the different organisations on adult learning. This, bears consequences: a) on the quality of programs offered as there is no systematic way to assess whether the programs are meeting their intended goals and objectives; b) on measuring the effectiveness of the learning programs and whether the desired educational outcomes are met; c) on misallocating resources on programs that do not meet the desired outcomes; d) on adapting the offered programs based on the feedback received by learners and the emerging best practices in adult education.

2.5. Challenges in implementing the EU policy on Upskilling Pathways

2.5.1. Awareness challenges

Some stakeholders were not aware of the existence of this EU policy, nor were they aware of the three steps approach embedded in the policy. Most stakeholders mentioned that the EU policy recommendation, in a similar vein reported in the literature (see previous section) is not implemented as a separate action/activity in adult learning, but it is included – to some extent – in many programs targeting adults with low qualifications.

For example, the representatives of the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) of Cyprus described various programs (of single-business entities, of multiple-business entities), as well as other programs offered through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan for Cyprus that focus on educating adults on digital skills, green skills, blue skills, and business skills.¹ These programs, though not directly related to UP, involve actions/initiatives that support the education of adults with low qualifications. HRDA stakeholders also reported how they run various courses designed for the needs of specific job sectors, e.g., for cooks, salespeople, and adult caregivers.

¹ For more see the relevant page in the website of HRDA [here](#).

2.5.2. Challenges in adopting the three-steps approach

Participants of all participating organisations mentioned the challenges faced in adopting the three steps approach entailed in UP, i.e.:

- a. **Skills assessment:** stakeholders considered a difficulty in identifying the existing skills and upskilling needs for adults with low qualifications. Available training/programs are usually designed the vice versa, i.e., they are designed either for specific employment sectors, or generally for adults with low qualifications.
- b. **Learning offer:** as described in the relevant EU policy, this step refers to the provision of a learning offer tailored to the diverse needs and circumstances of adult learners. This step, according to most stakeholders, is again a challenge for Cyprus, noting a lack of customization and flexibility in current programs in ways that support the personalised needs of adults with low qualifications.
- c. **Validation and recognition:** this step strongly relates to the challenges described previously in the validation and recognition of adult learning. Apart from the System of Professional Qualifications in Cyprus recognized only in Cyprus, there is a lack of coherent systems and frameworks across Europe to assess and recognize these skills. After receiving training, an individual may seek validation in HRDA, by requesting from the authority to examine whether this training is in accordance with the criteria/standards of the Professional Qualifications in Cyprus. However, it is upon the individual's responsibility to seek further validation, meaning that this is not provided in advance by participating in the training. Also, the authority provides subsidies for training, i.e., the HRDA, it does not provide subsidies for the exams of other standards (CISCO, ISO). In addition, stakeholders noted that even though the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy created an online platform which seems to follow the first two steps of Up, it does not include the latter step, i.e., the validation and recognition.

Overall, the lack of assigning programs as 'upskilling', contributes to the non-direct implementation of the EU policy through the three steps approach.

3. Suggestions

To address these challenges, stakeholders provided various suggestions discussed below.

3.1. Suggestions on the collaborations between stakeholders:

Some stakeholders suggested the development of a *common interactive platform for stakeholders*, in which stakeholders will have the opportunity to upload/ describe the learning opportunities offered by their organisation. In this way, other organisations will be aware of the kind of activities that are offered on a national level, therefore enabling a better alignment of

stakeholders involved in adult learning. A similar process has been initiated by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy.

3.2. Suggestions on the implementation of Upskilling Pathways

Many stakeholders provided suggestions on how to address the challenges in the implementation of Upskilling Pathways.

First, stakeholders suggested the importance of designing and delivering training that directly refers to the relevant EU policy recommendation. This, on the one hand, will increase awareness of this EU policy amongst stakeholders and adult learners, and on the other hand, will enable its implementation by adopting the three- steps approach.

Concerning the three-steps approach, stakeholders provided specific suggestions:

Step 1: Skills assessment: Stakeholders suggested the importance of conducting a comprehensive labour market analysis to identify current and future skills needs.

Step 2: Learning Offer: Stakeholders noted the importance of providing training to adult learners tailored to their needs. Personal guidance and support, flexible and alternative methods of teaching (see section on Good Practices) and collaboration with the businesses to ensure that the skills taught are in alignment with industry needs, were all considered as leading to the successful implementation of this step.

Step 3: Validation and recognition: Stakeholders noted the importance of creating a common validation and recognition framework that can be shared and recognized amongst the stakeholders involved. In this way, learners will be provided with opportunities to have their skills and competences assessed and accredited.

3.3. Suggestions on the professionalisation of adult educators

Stakeholders suggested further promoting the professionalisation of adult educators, by establishing consistent standards, qualifications, and professional development opportunities to ensure high-quality teaching and learning experiences in adult education programs.

3.4. Suggestions on outreaching activities

Stakeholders considered that outreaching activities are essential for ensuring access to information of adults with low qualifications. The purpose of these activities is to raise public awareness for the available learning opportunities, as well as for the benefits of upskilling to the individual and the society (social, economic, emotional). As one HRDA stakeholder noted, it is important to have plenty and easily accessible information about available training opportunities that will attract people, instead of providing some information about which people will have to seek for more details. Stakeholders noted the importance of organising e.g., national campaigns and info days by all stakeholders involved in adult learning.

3.5. Suggestions on Funding

Some stakeholders- mostly the representatives of HRDA – suggested the provision of *central* funding, incentives, or subsidies to support learners in accessing upskilling pathways.

Considering that currently the funding is provided to specific organisations, which often work competitively to others, these stakeholders highlighted the importance of having central

funding that will be allocated to different organisations according to the activities they run. In this way, it will also avoid the double funding of the same activities run by different organisations.

3.6. Suggestions on evaluation and monitoring

Representatives of MoESY emphasised the importance of establishing robust evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of their adult learning program.

For further information, see **Stakeholder mapping table** [here](#)

Qualitative information about the analysis process

Most Stakeholders during the interviews/focus group discussions showed a pessimism for adult learning in Cyprus, as well as for the implementation of Upskilling Pathways, due to the challenges listed above. Despite that most – if not all- were willing to take actions to contribute to the implementation of Upskilling Pathways, they noted the several obstacles/challenges of adult learning in Cyprus listed above, highlighting mostly the lack of collaboration mechanisms amongst stakeholders involved. Also, the fact that the Lifelong Learning Strategy has been recently implemented in Cyprus, without, though, leading to actual changes and results so far, it further contributed to the stakeholders' pessimism that no significant changes in adult learning will occur in due course.

The stakeholders' analysis had an impact in the relationship with stakeholders, since the focus group discussions and the interviews provided a common framework to discuss and elaborate issues on adult learning. Some stakeholders show to be willing to address some challenges. However, this positive attitude was mostly expressed on a personal rather than institutional level, due to the lack of a collaboration mechanism amongst stakeholders and the different strategies/practices for the validation and recognition, which were considered as the main barriers for adult learning in Cyprus.

Good practices

N.B. 'Good practices' are defined, in this context, as strategies, approaches and/or activities that have been shown through research and/or evaluation to be effective, efficient, sustainable and/or transferable, and to reliably lead to a desired result in supporting identification, engagement, commitment of stakeholders as well as cooperation among them, with specific reference to the UP initiative. The Good practices can be local, regional, national or international ones.

Stakeholders during the data collection, provided some good practices/suggestions that have been shown to be effective, sustainable and/or transferrable.

1. Engaging adult learners with low qualifications in the learning process

Many stakeholders (mostly those involved in adult training) noted as a good practice the engagement of adult learners with low qualifications in the learning process using alternative methods of learning. These included:

- lessons conducted outside the boundaries of conventional learning (e.g., in a classroom),
- lessons conducted in learners' workspace,
- lessons engaging learners in practical activities,
- organising study visits,
- lessons adopting the approaches of 'learning by doing' and 'participatory learning'.

All these were highly valued by the stakeholders, while noting that this is the preferred way of learning followed by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority² as well.

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of adopting the approach of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the learning process of adults with low qualifications, since this approach offers a flexibility and provides greater opportunities to learners to be engaged with the learning material.

2. Validation and recognition

As supported by the European Commission³ stakeholders suggested the offering of micro - credentials for the validation of shorter courses; establishment of a common validation and recognition framework that is recognized both at a national and a European level.

3. Skills needed for adult learning

Some stakeholders drew on previous research and practices adopted by multinational companies like Google on the most important skills needed in the labour market. As some stakeholders noted, these companies pay more attention to soft than academic skills, as they are considered essential for people to work within a team. Also, a stakeholder noted the results of a recent survey across four European countries conducted for the purposes of Erasmus+ projects. This study indicated that employers need skills such as Communication skills, digital skills and English.

Priorities for Development Groups

In light of the discussion above, it seems that the following dimensions should be set as priorities for the Development Groups:

- 1. Focus on strengthening the collaboration mechanisms between the stakeholders:** we could discuss with the stakeholders, ways of collaboration for the successful implementation of UP, setting up advisory boards/working groups responsible for the

² For more see <http://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/en/index.html>

³ For more see <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials>

development, implementation and monitoring of strategies, and focus specifically on ways of collaboration for adopting the three-steps approach of UP.

2. **Discuss the development of more coherent policies:** Stakeholders may discuss how to contribute to the development of a more coherent governance system in adult learning, that ensures the successful implementation of UP.
3. **Discuss ways of increasing participation:** the development groups may discuss ways of increasing participation, particularly focusing on the participation of vulnerable groups and those who lack basic digital skills. Specific issues that can be discussed may involve the development of a dissemination plan, organising info days and national campaigns and overall finding ways of increasing access to information.
4. **Discuss the validation and recognition dimension:** stakeholders may draw on good practices from other countries and discuss whether these cases may be applicable to the current context and how. Also, stakeholders may communicate the validation and recognition system used amongst their organisation and discuss whether/how their organisation may also recognise training and accreditation received by another local or international organisation. Furthermore, stakeholders may discuss ways of developing a mechanism for the recognition and accreditation of qualifications, similar to the one used in Higher Education.
5. **Discuss the financial support:** stakeholders may discuss the provision of financial incentives or subsidies to support learners in accessing upskilling pathways, e.g., scholarships, grants, or employer - funded programs.
6. **Discuss the importance of non-formal educational practices for adult education:** stakeholders may discuss the role of non-formal educational practices in adult education and their positive influence in learning (e.g., offering flexibility, targeted and relevant learning, contributing to lifelong learning, enabling social integration).

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