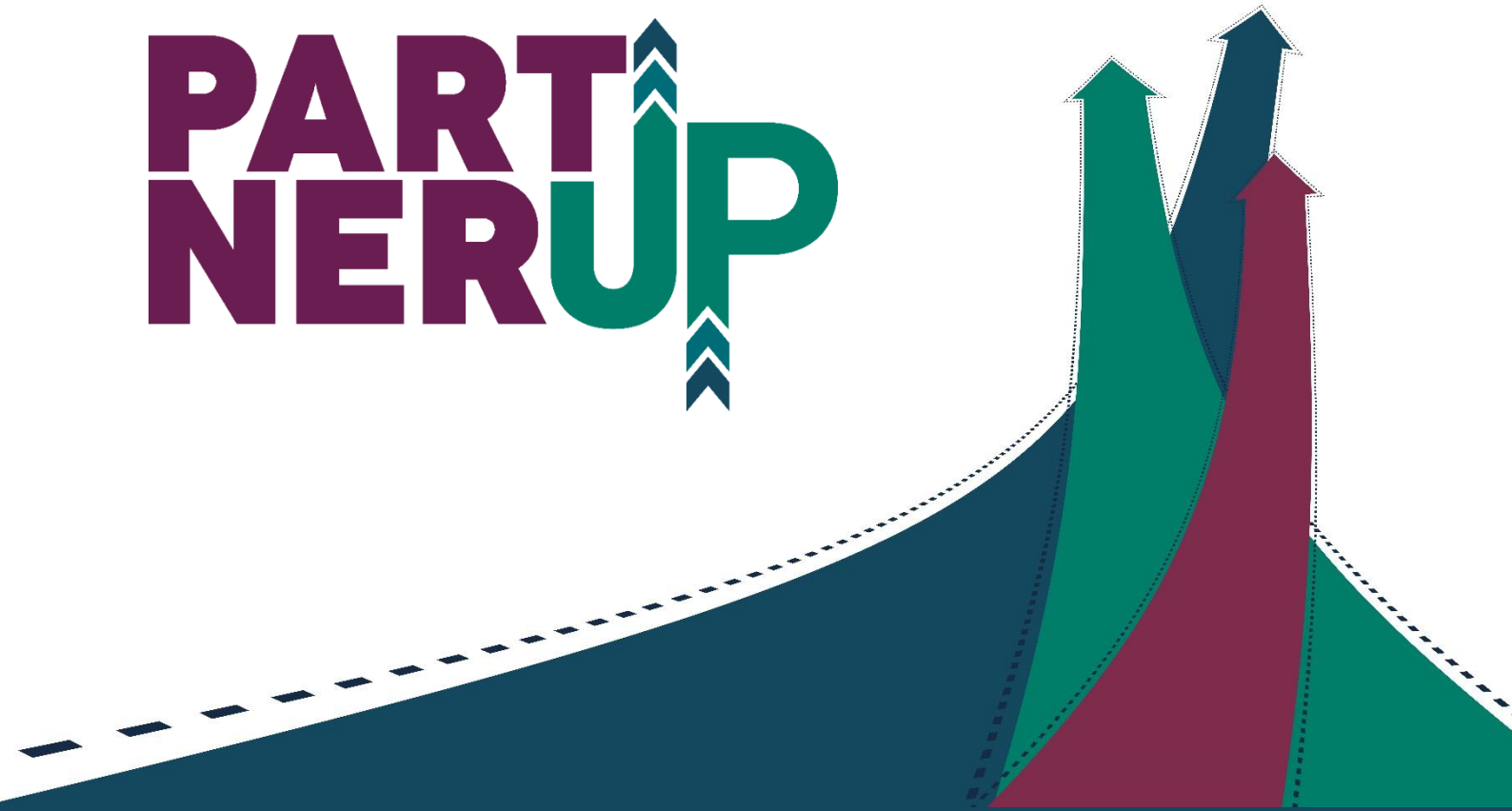


PARTNERUP



Global Lessons Learnt

D4.2 Study Visits and Peer Learning Lessons Learnt



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About Partner Up

The **Partner Up** project, Partnerships and stakeholder engagement for Upskilling Pathways, is a European co-funded project that has worked to improve the implementation of the **Council's Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways**.

The Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways was adopted by the Council of the European Union on December 2016. This is an ambitious policy addressing the learning needs of people lacking basic skills in Europe. Specifically, it aims to help people acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and a broader set of skills through a 3-step approach consisting of: skills assessment, learning offer and validation and recognition of prior learning.

People with basic skills have fewer job prospects and they are at a higher risk for facing poverty and health issues, they tend to participate less in society and have little sense of self-efficacy. The disadvantages that having none or minimal basic skills poses makes it absolutely necessary to increase participation in adult learning. The Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways underscores this and aims to give everyone in Europe an opportunity to upskill in order to enjoy full participation in society and in the labour market.

The Partner Up project has worked to strengthen the implementation of the Council's Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways through a variety of work packages:

WP2

In the first phase, **Stakeholder Analysis**, the project has researched existing and missing stakeholders, identified and engaged new ones, analysed cooperation mechanisms in place and gaps concerning Upskilling Pathways initiatives in the project countries and at the European level.

WP3

In the second phase, **Development Groups**, the project has carried out participatory meetings between the identified stakeholders to enhance cooperation, enable trust building and initiate discussions on how to improve the implementation of Upskilling Pathways in the different project countries and at the European level.

WP4

Throughout the project partners participated in **Study Visits and Peer Learning** to learn about each other's structures and practises, exchange experiences, challenges and best practices, and to discuss potential solutions to common issues.

WP5

In the final phase, **Implementation Plans**, the project will develop road maps to support cooperation mechanisms for the successful implementation of Upskilling Pathways, based on the results of the project so far.

About Work Package 4: Study Visits and Peer Learning

A crucial part of Partner Up's work was to conduct study visits and engage in peer learning with fellow partners. The goal of this work package was for partners to learn about different European contexts, hear directly from local organisations about their best practices and challenges, ask questions and share any other experiences related to upskilling.

The Partner Up project consortium, coordinated by EAEA, consists of 11 full and 4 associate partners. The study visits and peer learning activities have been conducted in 7 countries, in Croatia, Italy, Ireland, Cyprus, Romania, Greece and Latvia, and an additional study visit focused on the European level.

In Croatia, Ireland and Cyprus the study visits were held face to face and included a visit to a local organisation delivering upskilling activities. On the other hand, the remaining 4 country study visits and the European study visit, were held online and consisted of an overview of the context, followed by interventions from speakers from local organisations relevant to upskilling in that context.

Overall, the study visits were characterized by a high level of participations and exchange. As they were being held throughout the project and concurrently to the other work packages, they allowed partners to come together, collectively reflect and discuss overarching trends and challenges, be inspired by the different practices and interventions, brainstorm potential solutions and seek advice on issues that they might be facing.

This report aims to summarise and analyse the lessons learnt from the 8 study visits that took place as part of the Partner Up project. Following the same format for each study visit has ensured that the lessons learnt are comparable across a variety of points, resulting in a better analysis of the main issues, challenges and possible solutions. However, it must be noted that the 8 contexts analysed in this report are unique and thus there is a limit on the comparability of the findings. Additional country-level detail can be found in the individual lessons learnt reports.



Basic Information about the Study Visits and Peer Learning

The following study visits took place as part Partner Up WP4 Study Visits and Peer Learning:

01. Croatia

Date	1-2 February 2023
Modality	Face to face
Partner Organisation	ASOO
Host Organisation (face to face only)	Obrtničko učiliste

02. Italy

Date	12 April 2023
Modality	Online
Partner Organisation	FORMA.Azione srl
Host Organisation (face to face only)	N/A

03. Ireland

Date	28-29 September 2023
Modality	Face to face
Partner Organisation	AONTAS
Host Organisation (face to face only)	Local community education centre

04. EU

Date	23 January 2024
Modality	Online
Partner Organisation	EAEA and eucen
Host Organisation (face to face only)	N/A

05. Cyprus

Date	14-16 February 2024
Modality	Face to face
Partner Organisation	CARDET
Host Organisation (face to face only)	Human Resources Development Authority and Cyprus Productivity Centre

06. Romania

Date	17 May 2024
Modality	Online
Partner Organisation	Asociatia Euro Adult Education
Host Organisation (face to face only)	N/A

07. Greece

Date	13 June 2024
Modality	Online
Partner Organisation	Hellenic Adult Education Association
Host Organisation (face to face only)	N/A

08. Latvia

Date	14 June 2024
Modality	Online
Partner Organisation	State Education Development Agency (VIAA) and Latvian Adult Education Association (LPIA)
Host Organisation (face to face only)	N/A

Lessons Learnt from Croatia, Italy, Ireland, EU, Cyprus, Romania, Greece and Latvia

National legislation governing Upskilling Pathways and current challenges

Current adult education initiatives across Croatia, Italy, Ireland, the EU, Cyprus, Romania, Greece and Latvia reveal a diverse landscape of challenges and strategies.

With regards to adult education, **Croatia** faces issues with low participation and insufficient employer engagement despite a robust legislative framework, multiple institutions working in the sector, and efforts to align programs with labour market needs and provide financing through vouchers.

Similarly, **Italy** also is equipped with a notable legislative framework aiming to upskill and reskill the adult population through coordinated national strategies, but the pandemic has exacerbated the already severe issue of functional illiteracy, affecting 27.9% of adults, with a significant concentration in older age groups.

Ireland's Upskilling Pathways initiative is supported by key legislation like the Further Education and Training Act 2013 and the National Skills Strategy 2025. These aim to enhance adult employability through the Further Education and Training (FET) sector and quality oversight by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

At the **EU**-level, relevant legislation is the EU Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, the European Skills Agenda, and the New European Adult Learning Agenda. Despite these initiatives, challenges include an uneven implementation across EU members states, funding challenges and the need for better coordination and support from social and governmental organisations.

Cyprus is attempting to implement the EU Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways through various national policies. To enhance adult education and upskilling, Cyprus has established the Cyprus Productivity Centre, the University of Cyprus, the Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF), and programs such as Evening Gymnasias and State Institutes of Further Education. Despite progress, Cyprus faces challenges with digital literacy, adult participation in lifelong learning and a fragmented adult education sector, which the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027 aims to address through governance, upskilling and increased participation initiatives.

In **Romania**, the Law of Education 1/2011 promotes lifelong learning for all citizens through formal, non-formal and informal education, supported by public and private funds. Key initiatives include the Second Chance program for those who did not complete primary or secondary education, literacy and numeracy programs for adults and positive discrimination programmes to encourage Roma students to become teachers, despite challenges in cooperation and implementation effectiveness.



Until 2021, **Greece** lacked a national strategy for upskilling adults with low qualifications, however, with the introduction of the Strategic Plan for Vocational Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Youth in 2021, there has been a focus on enhancing access to Adult Learning and Education (ALE) through various pathways, including CVET and General Adult Education, though challenges persist in program accessibility and quality.

Latvia's adult education policy is integral to national development strategies such as "Latvia 2030" and the National Development Plan, aiming to increase adult participation in education and upskilling programs, notably through initiatives like the ESF-funded project targeting employed persons to improve professional competence, which involved significant collaboration with municipalities and the State Employment Agency.

Overall, legislation governing adult education initiatives across Europe underscores a varied landscape of legislative frameworks, challenges and strategies aimed at enhancing upskilling and reskilling efforts, though significant disparities in implementation, funding and stakeholder coordination persist among member states.

Cooperation mechanisms fostering the implementation of Upskilling Pathways

Across Europe, cooperation in adult education involves a complex interplay of stakeholders and mechanisms aimed at enhancing skills and employability. Each country faces unique challenges and employs distinct strategies to align educational initiatives with national priorities.

In **Croatia**, official interinstitutional cooperation in adult education involves collaboration among adult education institutions, employers, governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Science and Education and the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education, as well as other stakeholders, facilitated through meetings, workshops, consultations, and the development of official documents.

In **Italy**, cooperation mechanisms for implementing Upskilling Pathways involve collaboration among various stakeholders, including policymakers, government agencies such as ANPAL and the Ministry of Labour, as well as interprofessional funds aimed at enhancing worker skills through integrated service offerings, vocational training and territorial networks for lifelong learning, supported by initiatives like Repubblica Digitale and the National Group for Lifelong Learning (GNAP).

In **Ireland**, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science collaborates closely with SOLAS, Education and Training Boards (ETBs), community organisations, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and employers to ensure the alignment and quality of adult education and upskilling initiatives, leveraging partnerships to address workforce needs effectively.

At the **EU-level**, social partners play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue between EU regulations and national implementation of upskilling initiatives, supporting quality adult education investments by national governments, addressing training needs across different adult cohorts and fostering collaboration with social services and NGOs to ensure accessible and inclusive training services.

In **Cyprus**, the cooperation mechanisms include the implementation of the CyLLIS strategy and collaborative efforts among HRDA, Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance, Cyprus Productivity Centre, and MoESY departments to run programs, including those for adults with low qualifications, leading to employment in both private and public sectors.

In **Romania**, successful cooperation mechanisms in Romania include collaboration in the "Second Chance" Program involving schools, local administrations, NGOs and media to expand educational opportunities in disadvantaged communities and partnerships in literacy and numeracy programs led by Employment Agencies with municipalities and NGOs to enhance employment prospects for adults lacking basic skills, alongside collaborations in various EU-funded projects targeting rural populations and individuals with disabilities.

The **Greek** Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET) and adult education sectors face persistent challenges due to the absence of a unified strategy and centralized decision-making, limiting input from regional authorities, social partners, and education providers, thereby hindering effective collaboration and comprehensive approaches to address diverse learner and labour market needs.

In **Latvia**, in 2023, the establishment of the Human Capital Development Council, comprising ministers from the economy, education and science, and welfare, aimed to coordinate national adult education initiatives through the inter-sectoral Joint Adult Education Coordination Commission, tasked with defining training needs, aligning strategic goals for human capital development, and consolidating labour market forecasting under the Ministry of Economy for more effective management.

Throughout the study visits, the consortium was able to appreciate the unique challenges that each country faces. As time went on, it was clear that enhanced cooperation among stakeholders, supported by strategic national frameworks as well as EU-level policies such as Upskilling pathways, is crucial for addressing the evolving needs of adult learners and the labour market across Europe.

Challenges in the implementation of Upskilling Pathways and current mitigation practices

Despite the unique contexts of the study visits in question, common challenges in adult education and upskilling initiatives were identified. Recurring challenges include misalignment with labour market needs, insufficient stakeholder engagement, funding constraints and the need for flexible delivery models that can be adapted to learners.

In **Croatia**, efforts are focused on addressing challenges such as mismatches between labour market needs and educational programs and low learner motivation. In order to tackle this issue, initiatives under the Croatian Qualifications Framework Act include developing Occupational and Qualification Standards, enhancing cooperation with employers and chambers of commerce and introducing a new quality system. Adult education programs are now financed through vouchers to improve accessibility and effectiveness.

Italy faces issues of governance in adult learning. Aligning national strategies with EU directives like the European Skills Agenda and Pillar of Social Rights has been challenging, as well as being able to manage new financial instruments. The integration of Vocational Education and Training (VET) recommendations into national plans and improving lifelong skills among low-skilled adults are priorities that require enhanced skills audits, personalised educational paths and better validation systems.

In **Ireland**, efforts are underway to inform adults about upskilling opportunities through public awareness campaigns by government agencies, educational institutions and community organisations. Emphasis is placed on securing adequate funding and offering flexible delivery models such as part-time and online courses. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes validate experiential skills, while integrating digital literacy training into programs addresses employability needs.

At the **EU level**, implementing Upskilling Pathways encounters challenges like coordination issues and insufficient outreach and funding domestically. Proposed strategies include fostering partnerships, clarifying beneficiary criteria and making funding more accessible. Challenges also involve poor outreach efforts, affordability for SMEs and bureaucratic hurdles, highlighting the pivotal role of social partners in facilitating dialogue between policy levels.

Cyprus reported a lack of awareness of Upskilling Pathways as well as operational challenges in implementing it. They also face difficulties in conducting skills assessment, customising learning offers and validating skills. Recommendations include stakeholder collaboration via interactive platforms, raising policy awareness, enhancing outreach, centralising funding for efficiency and instituting robust evaluation mechanisms.

Romania grapples with myriad challenges in training and upskilling low-skilled individuals, including political commitment gaps, data accessibility issues, educational barriers, vocational training inflexibility and rural-urban training disparities. Additional hurdles include labour market mismatches, funding sustainability, employer apathy in sectors like HORECA and construction, motivation issues, workplace discrimination, digital and linguistic skill deficits, inadequate legal frameworks, and a need for promoting lifelong learning and adult education incentives.

Greece's CVET system faces persistent issues despite legislative and financial boosts, including low project quality, mismatched labour market alignment, educational gaps for low-skilled groups and human resource deficiencies. These concerns were underscored by experts in the ERASMUS+/REGALE (2023) project, calling for urgent reforms to enhance system efficacy.

Latvia identifies insufficient stakeholder engagement and motivation for adults with low basic skills as primary challenges. Recommendations emphasize communication strategies, tailored educational offerings and support measures. Shifting from project-based initiatives to establishing enduring cooperation mechanisms is essential for effective Upskilling Pathways implementation in adult education.

Overall, these countries are actively addressing multifaceted challenges through legislative reforms, strategic partnerships, enhanced funding mechanisms and targeted educational initiatives to foster lifelong learning and address the diverse needs of adult learners across Europe. One common solution that characterise the majority of these context is the need for increased and more coordinated stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder involvement in Upskilling Pathways

In **Croatia**, efforts are needed to enhance stakeholder cooperation related to Upskilling Pathways, including practical training in companies. Challenges to adult participation in lifelong learning include high program costs, personal and professional commitments, lack of program information, geographic distance to education providers, health issues and delayed program applications. Addressing these barriers is crucial for promoting adult education accessibility.

In **Italy**, cooperation in adult education involves government bodies, educational institutions, NGOs and employers to promote diverse learning opportunities. The Ministry of Education oversees formal adult education, while regional authorities manage vocational training and non-formal education. Universities and adult education centres play key roles, alongside NGOs specializing in specific areas like language learning. Collaboration with employers ensures curriculum relevance, bridging education to employment gaps. Research institutions support evidence-based policy and program improvements, aiming to enhance collaboration among stakeholders and address regional disparities in adult education provision and recognition of prior learning.

At the **EU level**, the vital involvement of diverse stakeholders in Upskilling Pathways, includes education ministries, social partners, NGOs and community centres. Collaboration gaps were noted despite current efforts. Social partners, like unions, play a pivotal role in advocating for adult training and addressing social exclusion, particularly regarding digital skills. In Europe, emphasizing cooperation over competition among stakeholders remains critical for effective implementation.

Key stakeholders involved in Upskilling Pathways in **Cyprus** include the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, the Human Resource Development Authority, the Cyprus

Productivity Centre, and private adult education providers. However, gaps exist in their collaboration impacting the effectiveness of implementing Upskilling Pathways initiatives.

Implementation of Upskilling Pathways in **Romania** involves a wide array of stakeholders: government authorities like Ministries of Labour, Education, and Finance, VET providers, validation centres for non-formal and informal learning, NGOs, educational institutions, chambers of commerce, trade unions, employers and others. Identified gaps include lacking a common understanding of Upskilling Pathways, challenges in strategy implementation, unequal regional distribution of policies, and issues with legal frameworks and cooperation among stakeholders.

In **Greece**, Upskilling Pathways involve key stakeholders such as the Ministries of Education and Employment, social partners, Second Chance Schools, private VET providers and NGOs. Identified issues include centralized program design without input from social partners and employers, inadequate support for regional upskilling initiatives, and a lack of internal evaluation in CVET programs as per Law 4921/2022.

In 2024, **Latvia** has achieved successful involvement of major national stakeholders from public and private sectors in Upskilling Pathways. Continuous coordination efforts are necessary for sustained active participation. The newly established Joint Adult Education Coordination Commission shows promise for task implementation, yet effective stakeholder engagement at municipal and regional levels remains a work in progress.

Across all these contexts, when it comes to upskilling, there are a wide range of stakeholders involved. However, despite their involvement, there are noted gaps in cooperation and coordination, hindering effective implementation. Interestingly, Italy and Greece seem to be affected by an opposite issue: on one hand Italy has a clear division of responsibilities between national and regional authorities in managing adult education, whereas Greece face challenges with a centralized program design without adequate regional support.

Lessons Learnt from a Specific Organisation

In this section of the report, we aim to compare the experiences at the level of the organisation participating in the study visits, instead of the overarching country or European context.

Organisational contribution to Upskilling Pathways

The **Agency for Vocational and Adult Education (ASOO)** in **Croatia** undertakes various projects to enhance adult education, including developing strategic documents, Occupational and Qualification Standards and curricula. ASOO also evaluates programs, provides professional assistance to institutions, trains andragogic workers, supervises institutions and implements quality systems in adult education.

FORMA.Azione, established in 1997 in **Italy**, implements ESF-funded Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Adult Education programs. Currently, it focuses on upskilling and reskilling adults in Umbria under the GOL-PNRR National Plan. It coordinates European initiatives for adults with low qualifications, emphasizing outreach, guidance and skills validation. The organisation also addresses digital skills through projects like GEMMA, promoting lifelong learning and digital inclusion in Umbria.

AONTAS in **Ireland** contributes to Upskilling Pathways through research, advocacy, EU projects, and policy submissions. Their efforts aim to influence policy, improve access to education for adults, and enhance recognition of prior learning, supporting lifelong learning initiatives across Europe.

CARDET plays a pivotal role in adult learning in **Cyprus** through EU-funded projects like DIMA 2.0, OVERCOME, and EVOLVE, focusing on improving skills and integration. Their AdultDigitalUp initiative targets digital literacy among adults in Cyprus. CARDET also collaborates with HRDA and CPC to promote upskilling pathways, emphasizing tailored learning solutions and aligning training with labour market needs.

Asociatia Euro Adult Education has been active since 2005 in **Romania**, implementing ESF and ERASMUS+ projects tailored to specific target groups. Their project "RURAL FORCE" aimed to enhance job opportunities for 940 rural residents through skills development, job search training, and professional certification. The project successfully integrated 160 individuals into the labour market and provided extensive information on education and training opportunities.

The **Hellenic Adult Education Association (HAEA)** in **Greece** focuses on enhancing cooperation among stakeholders through awareness campaigns, webinars, and projects like the Accreditation of Greek Trainers. They train and accredit adult educators, notably through partnerships like ERASMUS+ KA3 projects and initiatives addressing severe disabilities. HAEA also publishes journals and conducts seminars for Second Chance Schools.

The **State Education Development Agency in Latvia** focuses on implementing adult education policies and Upskilling Pathways through EU Structural Funds projects and national regulations. Meanwhile, the **Latvian Adult Education Association** enhances Upskilling Pathways by networking adult educators, leading projects in adult education and proposing legislative amendments, emphasizing non-formal education and civic participation. Their collaboration creates synergies across formal and non-formal education sectors.

The organisations described contribute to Upskilling Pathways and adult education through various initiatives. Overall, these organisations share a commitment to enhancing adult education but differ in their specific focuses and approaches, ranging from digital skills to rural employment and policy advocacy.

Organisational challenges in implementing Upskilling Pathways

Overall, the above-mentioned organisations face common challenges in implementing Upskilling Pathways. These include inadequate stakeholder cooperation, fragmented policies, insufficient funding, stigma and the need for clearer guidelines on skills validation. Despite these challenges, the commitment to improving adult education and upskilling pathways is evident, with each country and organisation aiming to address these issues through tailored approaches and partnerships.

For **the Agency for Vocational and Adult Education (ASOO) in Croatia**, the challenges include inadequate stakeholder cooperation, outdated regulations and low-quality adult education. There's poor participation in lifelong learning, especially among low-skilled, elderly, rural and long-term unemployed. Employers' involvement in skill forecasting and program evaluation is lacking, alongside insufficient training information and support for andragogic workers.

For **FORMA.Azione in Italy**, the challenges include fragmented ownership of adult learning policies, hindering coherence and implementation. Public-private partnerships lack sustained incentives, especially among employers focused on vocational education. Effective outreach to adults with low qualifications is crucial, requiring innovative approaches. Recognition of non-formal and informal competencies needs clearer guidelines. ALE teachers' professionalism is often undervalued, lacking specific training requirements and recognition.

AONTAS faces challenges linking Upskilling Pathways to green and digital policies, aligning with EU ALE policies, and addressing diverse target groups. Funding remains an issue, relying on Erasmus+ or government funds without a dedicated stream. Stigma around "low-skilled adults" persists, requiring a shift to more inclusive terminology and approaches.

At the **EU level**, the **European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion** noted evident progress in Upskilling Pathways despite persistent challenges. These include enhancing staff professionalism, countering stigmatization and addressing funding gaps, especially domestically. Despite strides in flexible learning, barriers remain in integrating



skills validation and raising awareness. Future strategies should prioritize partnerships, increased investment in skills and leveraging Council recommendations.

In **Cyprus**, organisations like the CPC, HRDA, CARDET, and the Ministry of Education face challenges in implementing Upskilling Pathways, including fragmented adult education systems leading to duplication and quality gaps. Awareness gaps among stakeholders hinder alignment with EU policies, potentially limiting the impact of training initiatives despite their relevance to Upskilling Pathways.

In **Romania**, there are significant challenges in implementing Upskilling Pathways, including poor outreach to low-skilled adults, limited understanding of the concept among stakeholders and companies, unclear steps outlined in the EU Recommendation, insufficient legal support for training low-skilled individuals, and inadequate incentives for public/private partnerships. Validation of non-formal and informal competencies remains poorly promoted and understood.

For the **Hellenic Adult Education Association (HAEA)** in **Greece**, the challenges include insufficient synergies among programs and a lack of customization to trainees' needs due to the absence of a coordinated strategy and limited stakeholder involvement. This rigidity fails to accommodate diverse learner profiles, impacting program effectiveness and appeal.

In **Latvia**, the challenges include enhancing the identification of learning needs, designing targeted activities for individuals with low education/skills, and implementing support measures. Strengthening collaboration with municipalities and establishing systems to assess and monitor the quality of adult formal and non-formal education are also crucial.

In conclusion, while these organisations share common challenges, their approaches reflect local contexts and priorities. It is evident that addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts, increased stakeholder engagement, innovative approaches and sustained investment in adult education to foster inclusive growth and economic resilience across Europe.

What can we learn from stakeholders engaging with the participating organisations

All the above-mentioned organisations engage with a wide range of stakeholders including government bodies, educational institutions and NGOs to enhance adult education through policy development, training programs and advocacy.

The **Agency for Vocational and Adult Education (ASOO)** in **Croatia**, collaborates with adult education institutions, employers and relevant ministries to develop and implement key documents, conduct seminars, workshops and conferences to enhance adult education in Croatia.

FORMA.Azione collaborates extensively with Employment Agencies, Public Employment Services (PES), CPIAs, CSOs, enterprises, local public entities, and ALE networks to

implement training programs. They engage these stakeholders for outreach, guidance, training design, and delivery, particularly under ESF funding, ensuring alignment with competence profiles and project goals.

AONTAS engages adult learners through advocacy and research, collaborates with practitioners in FET and higher education, influences policymakers and government agencies on adult education policies, and partners with community organisations to support marginalized groups in education.

CARDET engages with educators for innovative pedagogy, collaborates with policymakers and researchers for evidence-based reforms, and partners with diverse stakeholders to advance adult education locally and internationally.

The **Hellenic Adult Education Association** engages with a wide array of stakeholders including government ministries, educational institutions, vocational training centres, municipalities, NGOs, private providers, and industry bodies to collaborate on policy development, training programs, and educational initiatives across Greece.

Both **VIAA** and **LAEA** engage extensively with national, regional, and local stakeholders in Latvia to develop upskilling pathways. Their collaboration spans across various levels to ensure comprehensive participation in the process, as detailed in the Latvia Country Report "Development Groups."

Overall, these organisations emphasize collaboration across borders to enhance adult education, upskilling pathways and lifelong learning, reflecting a commitment to improving educational opportunities and societal development across Europe.

Common Challenges and Lessons Learned

The study visits have highlighted several common challenges and lessons related to adult learning in Europe.

Overall, common challenges identified across these study visits include ineffective synergies among organisations involved in upskilling pathways and governmental instability affecting program continuity. Partner countries are actively seeking to adopt effective approaches to enhance their upskilling initiatives based on shared insights and best practices.

Lessons learned emphasise the urgent need for increased funding for Upskilling Pathways, better collaboration among EU policy makers and national governments and improved validation of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning. These findings are consistent across study visits, highlighting gaps in stakeholder involvement and the necessity of recognising prior learning experiences.

Insights from Cyprus, focusing on addressing fragmentation in adult education, aligning national policies with EU directives and navigating funding constraints, resonate with challenges identified in visits to Ireland, Italy and the broader EU context. These lessons inform strategies for achieving policy coherence and sustainable financing of education initiatives throughout Europe.

The study visits have facilitated an exchange of insights and experiences. Key contributions include:

1. **Policy and Funding Mechanisms:** Participants discussed challenges in securing funding and aligning policies with EU directives, emphasising the importance of funding mechanisms that bridge gaps between education and the labour market.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** There was a consensus on the significance of stakeholder engagement and collaboration, exemplified by successful partnerships across government agencies, employers and educational institutions.
3. **Innovative Practices:** Insights were shared on integrating innovative educational practices and technologies into adult learning, addressing opportunities and challenges associated with digitalisation and online learning.
4. **Bottom-Up Approaches:** Effective bottom-up approaches and the importance of investing in teachers and educational managers' networking skills were highlighted, emphasising local context sensitivity.
5. **Lessons Learned and Good Practices:** Participants appreciated learning about good practices, fostering collaboration and enhancing skills development through the study visits

Overall, these exchanges have enriched participants' understanding of different approaches to tackling common challenges in adult education and Upskilling Pathways, paving the way for potential collaborations and tailored adaptations of successful practices across European contexts.

Conclusion

The analysis of the 8 study visits revealed several trends from which the following conclusions can be drawn.

Importance of Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout all study visits, partners consistently emphasised the critical role of collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, employers, NGOs and community centres in fostering upskilling initiatives. Effective partnerships are essential for leveraging resources, sharing best practices and addressing common challenges in adult education.

Alignment with Labor Market Needs and EU Policy Priorities

There is a clear consensus on aligning adult education programs with labour market demands and EU policy priorities, particularly with Upskilling Pathways. This alignment ensures that training programs are relevant, responsive to skills gaps and enhance employability, thereby supporting lifelong learning opportunities crucial for economic competitiveness.

Promotion of Inclusive and Equitable Access to Education

The need to promote inclusive access to adult education was highlighted, particularly for vulnerable groups and underrepresented communities. Policies and practices should address barriers to participation, ensure cultural sensitivity and provide tailored support services to meet diverse learning needs, fostering social inclusion and empowerment. Educational activities must be learner-centred, engaging and adaptable to meet individual and labour market needs effectively. Finally, improving accessibility must include accessible funding mechanisms. Additional funding is crucial to sustain and expand successful initiatives and make upskilling even more accessible.

In conclusion, the study visits have facilitated a robust exchange of knowledge, highlighting common challenges and innovative solutions in adult education across Europe. The emphasis on collaboration, alignment with labour market needs, inclusivity and sharing of good practices underscores the collective effort needed to advance adult education policies and support mechanisms effectively.