




Development Groups Summary

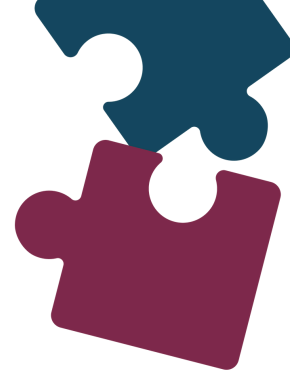
Country: Greece



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Stakeholders involved

135 participants representing various bodies and organizations attended the Partner Up Development Groups. There were stakeholders from the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport (in charge of planning, supervising and evaluating any VET actions, policies and programmes), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Special Management Secretariat of European Social Fund Programmes, National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications & Vocational (responsible for creating a policy framework for the development of lifelong learning and certification of qualifications in Greece, linking with the open market and responding to the needs of the citizens), Human Resources Directorate, of the Attica Region), Second Chance Schools (VET providers), General Secretary of Commerce of Greece (Coordinates the Greek unions / highly involved in adult learning), Adult Educators NGOs (The Hellenic Red Cross, UNICEF), Learners ,Greek General Secretariat for Social Solidarity & the Fight Against Poverty, Hellenic Open University, Career consultants, Institutes of Vocational Training, the Labor Institute of GSEE (scientific and research organization of the trade unions in Greece, for GSEE to make substantiated interventions at the social and economic level, in employment, education etc.) Youth & Lifelong Learning Foundation, Task Force for the Inclusion of Roma Communities and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

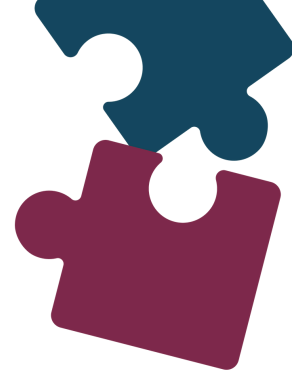
Activities and methods for stakeholder engagement

Meetings were held both, in person (at the Ministry of Education), and online. Speeches, presentations and workshops took place, on opportunities, challenges, and suggestions for collaborative action plans. The discussions were based on specific questions regarding:

- The main obstacles for the development of skills of low-skilled people and synergies - Possible solutions.
- Good practices from partnerships and other initiatives related to UP at the national or EU level that could be exploited.
- Resources, organisations or stakeholders that could be included in the collective effort to strengthen UP.
- Incentives that would encourage the participation and engagement of people with low skills in activities to upgrade their skills.
- Strategies that can be used to promote partnerships.
- Short-term and long-term objectives for the upgrading of skills – Responsible bodies and allocation of responsibilities.

As expected, the most engaging activity was the workshop, where stakeholders worked together and tried to find common ground for collaboration.





Opportunities

In the field of Upskilling Pathways, the Greek state relies on two public structures: the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The above two Ministries, at the same time constitute the two major channels that resources and economic funds are distributed to the country.

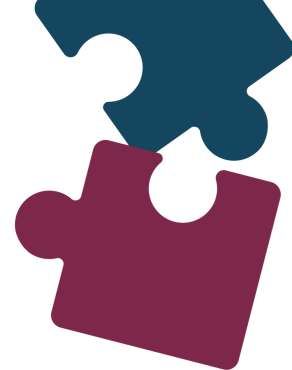
Some of the stakeholders, are tapping directly to EU funds, through a multitude of projects, in cooperation with Partners from all member countries. Such examples providing excellent results that are characterised as Best Practices are the training and certification of brewers as it was run the Hellenic Brewery of Atalanti (EZA), and the multitude of Upskilling Pathways actions implemented over the years by the Municipality of Larissa.

Regarding untapped resources, stakeholders that can be brought into the collaborative effort to enhance UP, it seems that though there is significant number of organisations that are active in the field, there is still scope in involving a greater number of actors. Such organisations are the local Chambers of Industry, Tourism, and Commerce. As for best practices from other regions or countries that can be adapted to improve collaboration in upskilling efforts, almost all of the ones that have been identified by the present Project can be transferred to Greece. The main obstacle would be the bureaucratic procedures that are problematic in our country and can prove to be cumbersome or even forbidding in some instances.

Challenges

Several challenges stakeholders identified that hinder effective collaboration: the fact that UP Initiatives come under the responsibility and jurisdiction of 2 separate Ministries (Education and Labor). Though both are responsible for national policy implementation, they have their own agenda and priorities, putting the UP initiatives at a different pace for each of the two. Also, the ability of UP providers to reach the target group through the “usual” communications channels is limited. The stakeholders argued that local projects are needed to address the specific needs of a geographic entity instead of broad-swiping initiatives that may not be in tune with their day-to-day labor and business reality. This is a valid point as we have seen that most local initiatives are highly successful and effective in providing the target group with skills that have helped them in changing their labor market position and constitute examples of best practices. Another obstacle is funding and resource allocation, which are not aimed at the same objectives, due to the lack of effective communication between the key actors. Other challenges are the lack of concrete connection of the relevant training programs to the local labor market needs, the lack of credible accreditation of acquired skills and low motivation of the members of the target group to participate in UP initiatives mostly because of low levels of self-esteem and traumatic past experiences from their participation in formal education.





Solutions

The solutions that were proposed were:

- The enhancement of the role of Second Chance Schools. This was put forward by the SDEs, the Ministry of Education and graduates who pinpointed the real-life benefits of attending them.
- The need for close cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor. They will have to be in constant communication to analyze the situation of the target group, identify possible opportunities for action, create contingency plans focused on the links between local labor markets needs and local target groups' needs, oversee the creation of Upskilling Pathway courses by the providers and distribute the required funds accordingly.
- Close cooperation between the local Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Tourism, etc., with the Professional Bodies and the support of the local government, ensuring the creation of viable programs to provide the target group with the required skills in the specific locality and labor market.
- There is a need for a comprehensive strategy regarding reaching, communicating, and motivating the members of the target group to take part in the relative actions. During our meetings with the developers, the fact that local government, public agencies, and providers have to become creative in order to address the specific target group, through other than the usual communications channels, was repeated. This singularity points to the need of close cooperation and common planning of all the actors involved.

