


Development Groups Summary

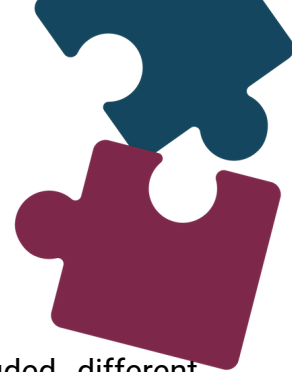
Country: Italy



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Stakeholders involved

The Development Groups for the PARTNER UP initiative in Italy included different stakeholders at both national and regional levels, such as public authorities, educational institutions, networks, and organisations. In total, 125 stakeholders participated, with 106 attending online and 19 in person.

Key stakeholders included:

- **National Coordinator for the Adult Education Agenda** under the National Institute for Public Policy Analysis, focusing on lifelong learning and policy alignment.
- **INDIRE**, managing the Erasmus+ programme in adult education.
- Networks like **RIDAP**, **RUIAP**, and the **Forum del Terzo Settore**, which support lifelong learning and community initiatives.
- Local and regional actors, including territorial networks and public authorities, fostering collaboration among adult education providers, employers CSOs and community organisations.

Their roles included designing and implementing upskilling programs, promoting lifelong learning policies, coordinating efforts among stakeholders, and advocating for policy changes to support inclusion and employability. They played a key role in aligning the initiative's objectives with labour market and community needs.

Activities and methods for stakeholder engagement

The main activities to engage stakeholders, foster collaboration and generate actionable insights suggestions for improving the Upskilling Pathways are the following:

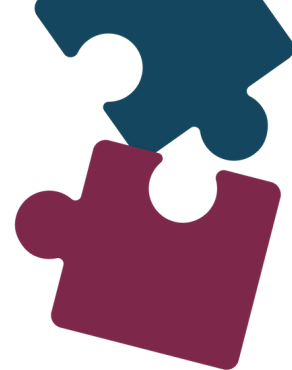
Interactive sessions supported by group work and digital tools like Jamboard or Padlet, enabling active participation, collaboration and the exchange of perspectives. These sessions were highly effective in generating concrete recommendations and fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders.

Webinars with expert contributions and testimonials providing valuable context and examples, enhancing participants' understanding of UP and motivating them to engage actively in discussions.

Panels and roundtables which brought together experts from various sectors, offering different viewpoints and facilitating informed and multidisciplinary discussions. This format helped highlight best practices and policy recommendations for improving UP.

These methods successfully engaged participants by promoting dialogue, encouraging collaboration and building a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities within the UP framework at national level. They also strengthened stakeholder networks, paving the way for sustained partnerships and implementation effort.





Opportunities

In Italy, several collaborations and initiatives at local, regional, and national levels align with the goals of the Upskilling Pathways (UP) initiative, presenting valuable opportunities for enhancement:

Territorial networks for lifelong learning at local or regional level in Bologna, Monza-Brianza, Campania, and Sardinia foster collaboration among stakeholders such as public authorities, adult education providers, employers, and social organisations. They address local labour market demands and promote tailored educational pathways. Expanding these networks to other regions could enhance UP by leveraging shared resources, expertise, and innovation.

EPALE Platform - the European platform provides opportunities for knowledge sharing, partnerships, and access to best practices from other EU countries. Italian stakeholders can leverage EPALE for training resources, case studies, and collaborative projects to improve UP efforts.

Third Sector engagement - organisations within the Forum del Terzo Settore, along with social enterprises, represent untapped resources for engaging marginalised groups. Their inclusion can ensure the development of inclusive, non-formal educational opportunities.

Chambers of Commerce and employers - these entities can offer insights into emerging skill demands and collaborate on the design of relevant training programs, enhancing UP's labour market alignment.

Challenges

Stakeholders in Italy identified several significant challenges hindering effective collaboration in the Upskilling Pathways initiative:

- Limited funding and resources hampering the development and sustainability of upskilling programs. Public Adult Education Centres (CPIAs) face severe challenges due to inadequate facilities, staffing, and equipment, as well as insufficient funding proportional to their needs.
- Inconsistent or overlapping policy frameworks across education, employment, and social sectors that hinder collaboration. The 2021 National Strategic Plan for Adult Skills Development has been poorly implemented, creating gaps in alignment between local needs and national objectives.
- Weak involvement of employers and Employment Services operating regionally with limited connection to educational and social services. This results in a mismatch between training programmes and market demands.





- Adult Education professionals facing insufficient training opportunities and lack of formal recognition, leading to undervaluation of their role and challenges in adopting innovative practices.
- Adults, particularly those with low qualifications, are often unaware of education and validation processes. Cultural and systemic barriers further restrict their participation in lifelong learning programs.
- Limited Third Sector involvement in non-formal education and outreach, despite its potential.
- Lack of clear guidelines, defined roles and mechanisms for recognising prior learning, which undermines collaboration and effectiveness.

Solutions

Public-private partnerships involving employers, industry associations and third-sector organisations are recommended to share resources and co-fund initiatives. Organising national events like the General States of Lifelong Learning aims to raise policy makers' awareness and promote investments by showcasing successful models of lifelong learning networks.

Employers are encouraged to engage in upskilling efforts through incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies, particularly for programmes tailored to workforce needs. Collaboration among formal education providers, vocational training centres and third-sector organisations is essential for developing comprehensive and inclusive upskilling pathways.

Policy reforms are critical for addressing legal and regulatory barriers. Stakeholders suggest to work for expanding Territorial networks for lifelong learning, with formal agreements among stakeholders to create integrated systems that address specific regional needs. Moreover, integrating adult learning into broader educational and labour strategies ensures its relevance and alignment with societal and economic priorities.

National campaigns and initiatives should highlight the **transformative role of adult learning** in personal development, social inclusion and economic growth, fostering a cultural shift that values these contributions. **Valuing adult learning** at both policy and societal levels is essential to address the challenges faced by educators and trainers, allowing to recognise their professionalism and impact through improved policy frameworks and societal awareness campaigns. **National awareness campaigns** are also needed to inform adult at risk of marginalisation about lifelong learning opportunities. Establishing Territorial networks for lifelong learning would provide guidance and support, ensuring accessible programs for diverse groups.
