





Analysis Report Summary

Country: Italy



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Upskilling Pathways Implementation

In Italy, the implementation of the Upskilling Pathways (UP) initiative is grounded in a robust legislative framework that aligns with the National Strategic Plan for Upskilling and Reskilling. This plan covers the years 2021–2023 and aims to enhance adult education through improved service accessibility, skill personalisation and adaptation of educational offers according to labour market's needs.

The initiative targets adult populations, particularly those with low literacy level and qualifications, a group constituting 27.9% of Italians aged 16–65. Among these, older adults (55–65 years) are predominant, although younger age groups also contribute to the statistic. Challenges include ensuring coordination across multi-level governance, optimising financial resources, addressing regional disparities in educational offerings, and enhancing digital and transversal competences.

Different stakeholders are relevant to Italy's UP framework. These include the government (via the Ministries of Education and Labour), universities, vocational training centres, adult education institutions, NGOs and employer associations. Public and private employment services collaborate to tailor education to labour market needs. However, gaps remains in stakeholder coordination, particularly with employers and civil society organizations, which hampers outreach and the alignment of training with employment opportunities.

Efforts are underway to address these gaps through initiatives like territorial lifelong learning networks, digital inclusion programs like Repubblica Digitale, and targeted European projects such as MOVE-UP and ONE. These programs emphasize personalized education paths, validation of non-formal learning, and active stakeholder collaboration. Italy's UP implementation underscores the importance of regional cooperation, effective use of funding and stronger ties between education and the labour market. Despite challenges, the initiative offers a promising model for addressing adult learning needs, fostering employability and promoting social inclusion.





Stakeholder Cooperation in UP

The implementation of the Upskilling Pathways (UP) initiative in Italy relies on a complex ecosystem of stakeholders, each contributing to adult learning and education (ALE) at various levels. Key mechanisms of cooperation include:

- **Territorial networks for Lifelong Learning**, which bring together public and private actors including educational institutions, regional authorities, NGOs, trade unions and employers. They aim to promote lifelong learning, skills validation and citizenship training. Coordination by regional governments enhances integration and proximity of services but remains inconsistent across regions.
- **Collaborative national and regional programmes as GOL** (Garanzia di Occupabilità dei Lavoratori - Guaranteeing the employability of workers) programme under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), which foster public-private collaboration in areas like labour market access, reskilling and disability support.
- **Interprofessional funds**, which facilitate workforce upskilling through employer and employee contributions, supporting continuous vocational education and training.
- **Digital inclusion initiatives as Repubblica Digitale**, which coordinates public and private actors to address the digital divide, supporting ICT education and promoting digital transformation.
- **National Group for Lifelong Learning (GNAP)** which mobilises stakeholders through public consultations, events and working groups, ensuring representation of diverse perspectives in policymaking.
- **European Projects** like like MASTER, MOVE-UP, and ONE have demonstrated the benefits of multi-stakeholder approaches by involving ALE professionals, public services, employers, and NGOs to design innovative pathways for education and employment transitions.





Despite these efforts, significant **gaps in stakeholder cooperation** remain:

- A lack of consistent collaboration among national, regional, and local actors creates disparities in ALE offerings across regions. This limits access and creates inefficiencies in resource allocation.
- Employers and Public Employment Services are not fully integrated into ALE systems. This leads to an ineffective alignment of learning programmes with labour market needs and outreach to vulnerable learners.
- CSOs, key actors for outreach and guidance, are often excluded from formal ALE frameworks. This weakens efforts to engage vulnerable groups and align educational opportunities with community needs.
- Processes for recognising non-formal and informal learning are inconsistent, with unclear guidelines and mechanisms. This limits the portability of skills and hinders transitions to education or employment.
- Collaboration with technology providers to enhance digital infrastructure and access to digital literacy programs is insufficient, especially in rural and peripheral areas.

The stakeholder mapping process, which included focus groups, interviews, and surveys, highlighted the following:

- Stakeholders at the regional level, such as those involved in Territorial Networks for Lifelong Learning, showed strong commitment to ALE, benefiting from the proximity and alignment with local priorities.
- The process facilitated horizontal links among stakeholders, fostering collaboration on joint initiatives and advocacy for ALE at regional and national levels.
- The mapping highlighted that many stakeholders, especially employers and CSOs, do not perceive themselves as ALE actors, showing the need for better communication and inclusion strategies.
- Promote partnerships with technology companies to ensure affordable and inclusive digital tools for ALE.





Lessons learnt

Positive outcomes

- Stakeholders at the regional level showed increased engagement, particularly through initiatives like the Territorial Network for Lifelong Learning. This alignment supported their missions and development priorities, fostering mutual learning and cooperation.
- The analysis helped strengthen the role of FORMA.Azione as a facilitator among stakeholders, building horizontal links that encouraged joint initiatives and advocacy efforts, particularly in Adult Learning and Education (ALE).
- Stakeholders gained new perspectives on strategies, tools, and methodologies for lifelong learning, enhancing their capacity to design and implement innovative solutions.

Challenges

- Employers and civil society organizations were underrepresented, which weakened the connection between training programs and labour market needs.
- Variations in regional implementation created inconsistencies, leading to gaps in accessibility and service quality.
- A lack of effective communication and coordination among stakeholders hindered the alignment of national policies with local needs.

Lessons Learned

- Greater efforts are needed to involve different stakeholders, especially employers and community organizations, to bridge gaps in ALE systems.
- Establishing defined roles, guidelines, and processes for recognising non-formal and informal learning can improve programmes' effectiveness and accessibility.
- Collaboration with technology companies is critical to ensure digital infrastructure and literacy for adult learners.





Priorities for Development Groups

- Addressing the **gap between national policies and local needs**. Ensuring the coherence of adult learning systems by fostering better collaboration and coordination among national and local actors.
- Improving implementation of National Action Plans through sufficient funding and clear regulations to prevent self-referential networks and undervaluation of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) as a tool for personal, professional and citizenship development.
- Increasing incentives for **public-private partnerships**, focusing on aligning ALE outcomes with labour market demands. Employers should be encouraged to engage in these efforts beyond vocational education and training (VET) initiatives, ensuring greater participation in general upskilling processes.
- Developing creative and effective strategies to **identify and engage adults with low qualifications**. Given their limited awareness of learning needs, targeted outreach campaigns, tailored guidance, and inclusive information channels are essential to encourage participation in education and validation opportunities.
- Establish **clearer roles, guidelines and mechanisms for recognising non-formal and informal learning**. This includes making the validation process consistent across regions and integrating it with employment pathways, thus maximizing the value of adults' prior experiences.
- Strengthening the **professional profile of ALE teachers/trainers**. Current frameworks lack specific training requirements for ALE professionals, which diminishes their recognition at both policy and community levels. Tailored training programs and enhanced career development opportunities are vital to elevate their status and effectiveness.

