





Analysis Report Summary

Country: Romania



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1. Upskilling Pathways Implementation

Context for implementation

Partner UP project unites European countries committed to advancing the Upskilling Pathways (UP) initiative. In Romania, ASOCIATIA EURO ADULT EDUCATION leads national efforts.

In Romania, the UP project focused on stakeholders from North-East (Suceava and Botoșani) and South-West Oltenia regions, including public authorities, adult learning providers (formal and non-formal), vocational education and training (VET) institutions, NGOs, employment services, employers, trade unions, social services, schools, libraries, and adult education centers.

Development Group Meetings

Romania organized five Development Group meetings to engage stakeholders:

- 1. Face-to-Face Meetings (August 24 & November 28, 2023, Suceava):** 46 participants, including government representatives, educational institutions, employers, and NGOs, discussed upskilling, VET, and community development.
- 2. Face-to-Face Meeting (November 29, 2023, Botoșani):** 30 participants from local bodies emphasized collaboration in adult education.
- 3. Online Meetings:** Participants from schools, companies, libraries, and NGOs contributed virtually, enhancing collaboration and suggesting online study visits.

The five meetings included roundtables, group work, and workshops that engaged the participants effectively. The discussions centered on the following topics:

- Understanding Upskilling Pathways: Discussions centered on the concept and practical steps for implementation.
- Challenges and Solutions: Stakeholders discussed the obstacles to upskilling low-skilled adults and potential solutions, with an emphasis on cooperation between public, private, and non-governmental sectors.
- Good practices from partnerships in Romania and other initiatives from Europe related to UP that could be exploited.
- Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning.
- Resources, organizations, or stakeholders that could be included in the collective effort to strengthen UP; opportunities and collaboration between stakeholders,
- Responsible bodies and allocation of responsibilities.
- Short-term and long-term objectives for improving collaboration between stakeholders and implementing the UP.





Identification of the main Target Groups:

- Unemployed individuals, particularly those with low qualifications.
- Inactive individuals, who are harder to reach and often excluded from formal systems.
- Adults who have not completed their studies, particularly in rural areas with limited access to training facilities.
- Roma communities, where generations of unemployment and low educational attainment prevail.
- Refugees and individuals from migrant backgrounds, who face language and cultural barriers.
- Older adults, including retirees seeking opportunities for skill development.

To engage these target groups requires targeted outreach; it is needed to have a partnership, including working with local authorities, learning/ training providers, social services, civil society networks, employment services, employers, social partners, chambers of commerce, libraries, cultural houses, church groups, schools. Sometimes financial incentives are a source of motivation to bring them to training provider courses or back to school.

2. Stakeholder Cooperation in UP

Cooperation mechanism established among stakeholders

The interactive and collaborative approach of the Partner UP project in Romania successfully united diverse stakeholders. Through workshops, roundtables, and online meetings, the initiative generated practical solutions and strengthened the collective commitment to UP challenges.

The process brought through others, a clarification of the concept of 'Upskilling Pathways for low-qualified individuals' because we found that some of the stakeholders did not have the same understanding of this concept, as well as of the term low-qualified adult. During the development meetings, it became evident that stakeholders had varying interpretations of these terms, which necessitated structured discussions to reach a consensus. This shared understanding became the foundation for aligning efforts.





The project engaged a wide array of stakeholders, including those addressing specific target groups, such as Employment Agencies focusing on unemployed individuals, and NGOs targeting multiple categories of low-qualified adults through European-funded projects. We believe that the discussions and consensus-building during the development group meetings significantly improved stakeholders' commitment and enhanced their contribution to the UP initiative.

Gaps and challenges in cooperation that need to be addressed

The participants focused on the gaps and challenges and found the solutions to the challenges.

Despite progress, several gaps and challenges remain. The major barriers and challenges hindering effective collaboration in upskilling initiatives, as identified by stakeholders, following the brainstorming and working groups from our development groups meetings include:

Awareness and Understanding:

- Limited information and awareness on different levels about the Upskilling Pathways.
- A common understanding of the concepts of Upskilling Pathways for low-skilled adults.
- A lack of shared understanding of Upskilling Pathways concepts and steps, as defined in the 2016 EU Recommendation.
- Lack of responsibilities distributed among the state offices with a big gap in communication and cooperation.

Policy and Governance Issues:

- Maintaining stable political commitment for implementing UP and tackling fragmented governance
- Unequal distribution of policies and programs across regions further hinders effective implementation.
- Inconsistent or fragmented policy frameworks across different sectors and levels of governance to encourage training for low-skilled individuals, relying heavily on ESF-funded projects.
- Number of projects there was no continuation or putting into practice and exploitation on a permanent base the projects' findings or results once the projects were finished.





Insights from stakeholder mapping processes, including internal reflections and findings from development groups

Development group discussions highlighted several recommendations to address these gaps:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch information campaigns at various levels, tailored to the complexity of the target groups, to highlight the importance of qualifications and upskilling.
- **National Event:** Organising a national event to highlight the issue of upskilling pathways and promote opportunities and positive examples, with involvement of various stakeholders, including media.
- **Skill Realignment:** Restructure training programs to better align with labor market needs.
- **Family Support:** Provide targeted support for disadvantaged families, including mediators and advisors for vulnerable groups.
- **Institutional Support:** Appoint dedicated contact persons in public institutions for the guidance of families from the Diaspora
- **Improved Data Systems:** Maintain updated databases on target groups and gather feedback on program effectiveness.
- **Funding Utilization:** Maximize the use of existing funding programs, such as ESF and Erasmus+, for sustainable initiatives.

Despite these challenges, stakeholders recognize the potential of UP to foster a cohesive support system for low-qualified adults. By leveraging EU mechanisms such as ESF and Erasmus+ and fostering collaboration, Romania aims to promote lifelong learning and address systemic barriers.





3. Lessons Learnt

It is important to bring together decision-makers for discussion and consultation because they can influence the process of change and improvement of upskilling pathways for low-qualified adults and can also continue involvement in our development group.

The development and implementation of the Road Map provided several key lessons, which will inform future efforts and improve the planning process. These lessons emerged from the interactions during face-to-face meetings, online sessions, and stakeholder collaboration.

- **Value of Working Groups for Concrete Outcomes**

One of the most significant insights gained from the face-to-face meetings was the importance of small, focused working groups. These groups allowed participants to dive into specific issues and generate actionable suggestions. They also fostered a productive environment where ideas were exchanged freely, and concrete outcomes were reached.

- **Importance of Continuity and Expertise**

Maintaining continuity among participants helped in building a common understanding and ensuring that ideas developed over time could be refined and elaborated on progressively. Experts and moderators played a crucial role in guiding discussions, helping to ensure that outcomes were not only comprehensive but also practical and relevant.

- **Interactive and Engaging Methods**

A combination of interactive sessions such as roundtable discussions, workshops, and expert contributions proved to be highly successful in engaging participants. These methods created an open environment where stakeholders could contribute ideas and share experiences, which helped to clarify concepts, foster collaboration, and build mutual understanding. In particular, working groups and roundtables were especially effective in generating actionable and specific suggestions.





- **Effective Collaboration Requires Clear Communication**

One of the key challenges observed was ensuring that all stakeholders had a shared understanding of goals and expectations. Clear communication and good moderator were essential for aligning stakeholders. By fostering open communication channels, stakeholders were better able to collaborate, share resources, and identify common objectives.

- **Balancing Face-to-Face and Online Engagement**

While face-to-face meetings were invaluable for building relationships and trust, online sessions offered flexibility for those unable to attend in person. The mix of both formats allowed for broader engagement but underscored the need for continuity and focused participation in smaller, more intensive working groups

Challenges of Upskilling Pathways

The discussions highlighted common challenges in the implementation of Upskilling Pathways, such as the need for stronger validation mechanisms for non-formal and informal learning, and the necessity of aligning regional efforts with national policies. Addressing these challenges will require ongoing collaboration between stakeholders and the integration of best practices from other European projects.





Priorities for Development Groups

The priorities for the Development Groups, based on the focus groups meetings and on the desk research were the following:

- Clarification of the concept of Upskilling Pathways and Common understanding of the Recommendation of Upskilling Pathways adopted in December 2016 by the Council of European Union.
- Identification of the target group that the project refers to low-qualified persons.
- Dissemination of good practices that members of the development group have and lessons learned.
- The limits of competence of the stakeholders and the responsibilities between stakeholders.
- Improve the tracking mechanism of low-qualified persons and find solutions to be better guided on the labour market needs regarding their skills.
- Involvement of the companies in the learning and evaluation process for the low-qualified persons and motivation of the companies.
- Discussion on how to improve flexible learning pathways, but also outreach, and skills assessment for the target group.
- Discussion and find solutions for improving cooperation structures between stakeholders.
- Continuous capacity building for trainers who are involved in the upskilling target group.
- Dissemination and exploitation of other European partner's experiences regarding Upskilling Pathways.

Conclusion

The interactive and collaborative approach of the Partner UP project in Romania successfully united diverse stakeholders. Through workshops, roundtables, and online meetings, the initiative generated practical solutions and strengthened the collective commitment to addressing Upskilling pathways challenges.

