Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways

Volume 2: Cedefop analytical framework for developing coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults

CEDEFOP

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Foreword

Upskilling and reskilling of adults is an urgent priority for European policy-makers and stakeholders. Rapidly changing labour markets and multiple challenges, such as digitalisation and its consequences for the future of work, technological changes, the environment, ageing societies and social inclusion, require strong skill foundations and constant updating and acquiring of new skills, knowledge and competences.

This reference publication forms part of the Cedefop project *Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways.* The purpose of this project is to support the design, diffusion and implementation of VET policies and measures helping adults, especially the low-skilled, to achieve the knowledge, skills and competences required for work, employability and lifelong learning.

Investing in upskilling and reskilling of low-skilled adults has become even more urgent as our societies and economies are confronted with the unprecedented consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. In the first volume of this series, Cedefop estimates that some 128 million adults in the EU-28, Iceland and Norway are either low-educated, have low digital skills, low cognitive skills or are medium-high educated at risk of skill loss and obsolescence.

However, the magnitude of the challenge is not all that European countries are facing. Cedefop work also shows that low-skilled adults are a highly heterogeneous population, comprising people with very different characteristics and needs. Unlocking this potential calls for a renewed approach bringing tailored training offers together with guidance services, validation and recognition of prior learning, and all other VET-related supporting measures, in a coordinated manner and coherent strategy.

In support, the theme of this second volume is the creation of a useful and adaptable framework that can be employed by Member States in developing coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. Policy learning activities organised by Cedefop over recent years have clearly shown that all national and European stakeholders see this as a main challenge and opportunity at the same time: pulling together

various resources while exploiting synergies across the different measures and policies already in place in Europe, empowering every low-skilled adult through individual upskilling opportunities.

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Executive summary

The outbreak of the Covid-19 health pandemic is having unprecedented consequences on our economies and societies. Measures of social distancing implemented to curb the spread of the virus, are deeply affecting labour markets, both in terms of job losses and in terms of new organisation of work through new technologies and digital means. Ensuring that every adult has lifelong opportunities to update existing skills and acquire new ones to help them navigate uncertain times and thrive in their life and career is more important than ever.

Upskilling pathways is about pulling together resources and creating the right synergies for supporting every (low-skilled) adult towards an individual path to empowerment. It is about creating a comprehensive approach to the upskilling and reskilling of the low-skilled adult population. This approach should be able to address their needs in a coordinated and coherent way and ensure that they have all the tools and support to embark on sustainable learning pathways leading to their full potential and fulfilment.

The Cedefop analytical framework has been developed to sustain this unique vision of upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. Its value-added aspects involve the development process, its core foundation and its multidisciplinary contents. The development of the framework:

(a) is based on an iterative process integrating both qualitative research and two rounds of stakeholder consultations;

(b) is grounded in a lifelong learning perspective and focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary;

(c) is in line with the principles and frame of reference provided by the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation.

Development of the analytical framework was based on an iterative process following four main stages:

(a) scanning of official sources, relevant literature and policy documents to identify interesting practices for upskilling pathways;

(b) analysis of good and promising practices aimed at identifying important systemic features for the development of a unique approach to upskilling

of low-skilled adults, grounded in lifelong learning and based on the idea of flexible, adaptable and sustainable pathways tailored to individual needs;

(c) stakeholder consultations aimed at gaining important stakeholder feedback and input to the two draft versions of the analytical framework developed during the research process;

(d) continuous organic coordination of Cedefop knowledge and resources (Department for learning and employability) in adult learning, early leaving from education and training, financing, guidance and outreach, validation, and work-based learning.

Each of these four stages or processes of framework development is outlined below, beginning with the analysis of good and promising practices.

Analysis of good and promising practices

Taking as a reference point the principles underpinning the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation, 21 good and promising practices in relevant policy fields have been identified across Europe; 13 have been selected for their particular relevance to the development of the analytical framework.

The analysis of good and promising practices is organised along three levels of the policy process: on this basis, the results of the analysis were categorised in three lists of specific elements of lessons learned, corresponding to each of the three levels of the analytical framework.

Decision-making level
Decision-making is about adapting and streamlining existing structures and resources to unlock synergies, paving the way for coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways and for the right support and implementation. Analysis of the practices suggests several important systemic elements at decision-making level, including:

(a) a shared vision, grounded in political commitment at the highest level and characterised by strategic allocated and/or earmarked funding and coordination of multiple relevant policy domains in a holistic fashion;

(b) well-defined planning strategy for the definition and identification of target groups and of current and future skills needs;

(c) inclusive multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms involving efficient coordination and engagement of relevant stakeholders at all levels, in order not only to reach diverse adult beneficiaries/learners, but also to serve their potentially comprehensive needs;

(d) systematic and sustainable monitoring and evaluation system grounded in an agreed concept of quality.

Support level

Support, continuous and of quality, is about ensuring that coherent and coordinated approaches developed under the decision-making phase are sustained, with the right support for inclusive and accessible learning pathways. Several important systemic elements have been identified in the analysis of good and promising practices:

(a) appropriate level of funding based on a cost sharing mechanism grounded in the idea that investing in upskilling is a shared responsibility;

(b) well targeted financial instruments, complemented with targeted non-financial support, for both individuals and companies, especially SMEs;

(c) integration of appropriate strategies to reach out to, motivate, engage and support, low-skilled adults to navigate upskilling pathways opportunities;

(d) capacity and contribution of community and other non-traditional actors is acknowledged, valued and strengthened.

Implementation level

Implementation is about grounding the comprehensive, inclusive and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways on the idea of an adaptable and flexible learning pathway; this should be targeted to individual learner needs and built around skills assessment, tailored learning offer and validation and recognition of skills and competences. Three main systemic elements have been identified in the good and promising practices at implementation level:

(a) flexible, adaptable and tailored pathways building on prior (formal, non-formal and informal) learning, tailored learning and training opportunities, and allowing for validation and recognition of skills and competences;

(b) centrality of the individual;

(c) sustainability is linked to quality assurance and relies on creating the right synergies and promoting stakeholder engagement and cooperation. Success and usefulness depend on the trust of stakeholders.

Stakeholder consultations

The Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for adults is mostly conceived as a tool for reflection and inspiration for policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders. As such, its development relies on stakeholder engagement and feedback.

Two rounds of stakeholder consultations provided essential stakeholder feedback and input to the two draft versions of the analytical framework developed during the research process:

(a) the first round of stakeholder consultations involved selected national stakeholders in France, Ireland, Italy, Romania and Sweden who provided important feedback to the first draft version of the analytical framework developed in December 2018;

(b) feedback from the first round of stakeholder consultations contributed to the development, in February 2019, of a second draft version of the analytical framework which was thoroughly reviewed by the European and national stakeholders participating in the Second policy learning forum on upskilling pathways for adults: a vision for the future ([1]).

Reflection points

Participants in both rounds of stakeholder consultations largely agreed that Cedefop's analytical framework is a useful source of inspiration and a tool to facilitate reflection and identification of key areas for action. Among others, participants highlighted that a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways requires a shift in mind-set grounded in a shared vision for inclusive, accessible and flexible learning pathways. The shift in mindset implies:

(a) strong political commitment, infused with strong stakeholder engagement and buy-in, cooperation and partnerships at all levels and strengthened capacity and role of community-based approaches; strengthened engagement of employers from the private sector, such as SMEs as well as social partners;

(b) change in service culture to proactive career guidance service, moving decisively towards lifelong and life-wide process support logic able to

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[1] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/second-policy-learning-forum-upskilling-pathways-vision-future

reach out to people in their own contexts and support them towards sustainable, career and life transitions;

(c) valuing, promoting and visibility of all learning and training, including learning and training in non-formal and informal settings;

(d) establishment of an overarching monitoring and evaluation system informed by a comprehensive and integrated data collection linked to quality assurance and sustained by appropriate level of funding;

(e) secure appropriate level of funding accompanied by appropriate financial instruments based on cost-sharing mechanisms and specific support for SMEs (e.g. partnerships, administrative support);

(f) provisions for multiple paths for broad, transitional and flexible training offers both in the formal and non-formal systems and depending on individual needs with clear links to formal qualifications constituting points of reference for the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of learning outcomes.

Final revised contents of the Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults

Building on the systemic features identified in the analysis of good and promising practices in the field of upskilling pathways, and on feedback from national and European stakeholders, the final version of the analytical framework reflects multiple areas of policy related to upskilling, which form an integrated whole:

(a) it articulates a clear grounding in a lifelong learning perspective and is focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary;

(b) it is articulated around important systemic features needed for a coherent and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults;

(c) it contains 10 key areas of the policy process organised according to three levels: decision-making, support, and implementation; and

(d) it is articulated horizontally, in promoting coordination and cooperation across the 10 key areas, particularly within the decision-making level: it unlocks synergies and fosters complementarities, but it also contributes to the enrichment of knowledge and evidence within each key area.

Although it may appear to present a normative stance, Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults is not intended as an exhaustive list of necessary conditions or an assessment tool. It works as a frame of reference for stimulating discussion and reflection on design and implementation of upskilling pathways. It is intended as a source of inspiration for policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders and to support them in identifying key areas for action. The 10 key areas and essential features of the analytical framework are summarised below.

Decision-making: creating the right synergies, paving the way for coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways

Key area 1: Integrated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults
(a) Embedded in a vision of sustainable, inclusive, flexible, adaptable and tailored upskilling pathways grounded in the principle of lifelong learning.
(b) Political commitment and strategic allocated and/or earmarked funding at all appropriate levels (including for capacity building) ensuring sustainability and efficiency over time. These are necessary preconditions paving the way for a sustainable vision of upskilling pathway.
(c) Appropriate communication and promotion strategies using a shared and common language, adapted to the local context ensure promotion of the vision and secure the necessary stakeholder engagement.
(d) Vertical and horizontal policy coordination to maximise policy coherence and effectiveness.
(e) Centrality of the individual's starting point and needs.

Key area 2: Planning strategy for identification of target groups
(a) Comprehensive and integrated information on the different potential adult populations supported by effective skills anticipation mechanisms based on labour market intelligence.
(b) Flexible approach to adapt to changing target groups and needs.
(c) Key public and private stakeholders and social partners, including civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as employers and beneficiaries are involved in the identification

and anticipation process and in the nationally organised data collection methods.

Key area 3: Governance (multilevel/multi-stakeholder)
(a) Engagement/participation of stakeholders at all levels, including learners/beneficiaries, with clearly defined and shared goals, responsibility and accountability.
(b) Governance in the context of upskilling pathways emphasises the strategic role of the diverse local/community partners especially for their role in reaching and engaging those most hard to reach and vulnerable low-skilled; it also implies the need for capacity-building strategies.
(c) Effective communication practices, with a shared language, among those involved in governance facilitate dissemination of information, support, and feedback.

Key area 4: Monitoring and evaluation
(a) Monitoring and evaluation on two levels: across all areas of upskilling pathways to ensure that synergies are in place and sustained, as well as within those individual areas.
(b) Underpinned and linked with quality assurance systems. This also implies an agreed concept of quality that intersects with all individual areas (including support, implementation, provisions, programmes, initiatives) that have their own dedicated monitoring and evaluation systems and mechanisms.
(c) Informed by a comprehensive and integrated data collection mechanism and requiring the involvement and engagement of all appropriate stakeholders.
(d) A good communication strategy may facilitate stakeholder engagement and ownership.

Support: ensuring inclusive and accessible pathways

Key area 5: Financial and non-financial support
(a) Appropriate level of funding is secured and sustained through cost-sharing mechanisms.

(b) Effective financial support acknowledges the heterogeneity of the low-skilled adult population and is carefully designed (eligibility criteria, level of subsidy) to target diverse groups of low-skilled adults.

(c) Financing instruments are accompanied by non-financial support such as information, advice and guidance, raising awareness of benefits of learning, tailored training delivery, and/or promoting partnerships to enhance company capacities. These are particularly relevant for SMEs.

(d) Existing financial and non-financial support measures for individuals and companies are reviewed; their effectiveness in reaching low-skilled adults and their efficiency are assessed.

Key area 6: Outreach

(a) Grounded in user centrality and geared to development of individual autonomy and readiness to engage in learning and work; includes the target group voice, their knowledge and understanding in the development of alternative approaches.

(b) Central administration financing, technical support and monitoring is well coordinated with local/regional operational management and implementation. Municipalities, local employment offices or regional one-stop shops may run processes and coordinate the efforts of local stakeholders.

(c) Guidance and outreach services are well coordinated, are a stable feature of skills development and adult learning policies and are ideally framed by national agreements across political forces (national strategies, budgets). Effectiveness is enhanced if coordinated with validation/recognition systems, as well as flexible learning options. Individual portfolios can document and support the progress of beneficiaries.

(d) Holistic and adapted services, supported by interdisciplinary teams; whenever necessary, providing support with financial, housing and integration issues.

Key area 7: Lifelong guidance system

(a) Support for a lifelong and life-wide process: integration across support services addressing different life stages and contexts depending on country setting, including employment services, social services, and municipal services.

(b) Guidance activities are organised around the principle of user centrality. Services aim at long-term individual autonomy in career management, by encouraging the development of career management skills.

(c) Service is provided in a holistic and networked way, coordinated with outreach strategies and sustained by local and regional cooperation (and coordination); municipalities can play a central role coordinating local efforts, with local cooperation based on partner strengths in specialised areas; local cooperation is also key to sourcing labour market intelligence.

(d) Career guidance support is professionalised in all relevant areas (education, training, employment), follows clear standards of service and has an outcome-oriented approach based on improvement of individual/ social welfare, labour market outcomes and learning results.

(e) Integrated information and guidance services involving multi-channel delivery (web, telephone, face-to-face) and adapted to beneficiaries' needs; individuals are provided with an appropriate blend of digital, phone and face-to-face services as well as peer support, as needed.

Implementation: offering tailored, adaptable and flexible upskilling pathways

Key area 8: Skills assessment

(a) All learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning is valued.

(b) Coordinated with guidance and validation, supporting individuals in the discovery of their existing competences. Skills assessment is a potential input to the tailored learning offer and to validation.

(c) Aligned methods and proof of learning with the type of learning assessed/ identified. Tools need to be adapted to the individual's characteristics and needs while remaining coherent with the overall process of upskilling.

(d) The output must be understood and trusted by key third parties (training providers, employers, civil society organisation) so that it is useful for individuals accessing further learning, a validation process or for employment. This relies on quality assurance systems.

Key area 9A: Tailored learning offer leading to a qualification

(a) More than one path in IVET/CVET for an adult to acquire a formal qualification; all paths are able to make use of skills assessment, validation and/or recognition of prior knowledge.

(b) Tailoring of the offer does not affect the learning objectives of a given qualification and guarantees comparability and quality of the learning results irrespective of the path taken.

(c) Adults of different learning profiles benefit from a range of flexible and adaptable pedagogies and methods, course formats, and forms of final assessment.

(d) Tailored learning offers depend on the capacity of the implementing institutions to make available the paths provided for at the institutional/ framework level, and to adapt to the individuals' learning profiles and needs.

Key area 9B: Tailored learning offer with work-based learning

(a) Providers are aware of, prepared for, and supported to use diverse forms of work-based learning (WBL) (not only workplace learning) to tailor their learning offer to adults' needs; innovative approaches are encouraged and shared;

(b) Employers need to buy into employee training and also to assume responsibility. More broadly, there is need for local-level collaboration and networks and ownership among all parties involved.

(c) Company staff attitudes need to be positive towards adult learners as individuals, and potentially as individuals belonging to a particular group (e.g. refugees). Companies, particularly SMEs, have the pedagogical capacity to work with adults; in-company trainers and staff are informed of adult learners' needs and expectations.

(d) Apprenticeship training is open to adults, with companies, particularly SMEs, incentivised (financially and non-financially) to offer placements to adults.

(e) Apprenticeship training provision is tailored to adults' needs/profiles (taking account of prior learning and work experiences, individual constraints).

Key area 10: Validation and recognition of skills and competences

(a) Centrality of the individual to the objectives and processes undertaken.

(b) Clear connection between guidance, skills assessment, training provision and validation. Regardless of the different forms of validation and skills

assessment, their integration creates a continuum that the individual can easily navigate.

(c) Purpose of the validation and recognition process is clearly defined and communicated to individuals and society. Multiple stakeholders, with clearly defined roles, are informed and involved in different aspects, aware of and trusting the outputs.

(d) Tools used are reliable, valid, transparent and adapted to individual needs and circumstances; various assessment and certification methods are used.

The value and relevance of the analytical framework

Upskilling pathways is about pulling together resources and creating the right synergies for supporting every (low-skilled) adult towards an individual path to empowerment. It is about creating a comprehensive approach to the upskilling and reskilling of the low-skilled adult population. This approach should be able to address their comprehensive needs in a coordinated and coherent manner and ensure that they have all the tools and support to embark on sustainable learning pathways leading to their full potential and fulfilment.

The Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults has been developed to sustain this unique vision of upskilling pathways.

The framework's value-added aspects involve the development process, its core foundation and its multidisciplinary contents. The development of the framework:

(a) is based on an iterative process integrating both qualitative research and two rounds of stakeholder consultations;

(b) is grounded in a lifelong learning perspective and focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary;

(c) is in line with the principles and frame of reference provided by the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation;

(d) involved the continuous organic coordination of Cedefop knowledge and expertise in the Department for learning and employability, in the fields of adult learning, early leaving from education and training, financing adult

learning, lifelong guidance and outreach, validation and recognition of prior learning, and work-based learning;

(e) was derived from an analysis of interesting systemic features found in a selection of good and interesting practices collected for the project.

Cooperating on a comprehensive approach to empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways

This reference publication is part of Cedefop's research on empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. The purpose of the project is to support the design, diffusion and implementation of VET policies and measures helping adults, especially low-skilled adults, to achieve the knowledge, skills and competences required for work, employability and lifelong learning.

Supporting this general aim, the objective of the report was to describe the conceptual and collaborative development of the analytical framework for upskilling pathways for adults with low skills. In presenting its final contents in detail it aims to support policy-makers and stakeholders in designing and implementing sustainable, coordinated and coherent policy approaches.

The next step will be to apply the analytical framework in a selection of countries who agree to participate in thematic country reviews specifically focused on upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. There will also be further follow-up involving the analytical framework during the forthcoming 'Third policy learning forum on upskilling pathways: a new vision for the future' in November 2020. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to share the latest developments in upskilling pathways, including their knowledge, innovative experiences and practices, challenges and inspirations, with a focus on the identification of key areas for action.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

The first volume in this research series (Cedefop, 2020) focused on understanding the magnitude of the low-skilled adult population and identifying which groups of adults are most at risk of low skills, and in which skills. The magnitude and heterogeneity of the adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling (ibid.), as well as the economic and social cost associated with low skills (Cedefop, 2017b) call for a renewed approach to upskilling (low-skilled) adults, both comprehensive and strategic; this should allow the pulling together of various resources and creating synergies from different measures and policies already in place across European countries. A coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling (low-skilled) adults also needs to be able to reach those most at need of upskilling and engage them in the process.

The overall purpose (general aim) of this report is to support the development of coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults by putting forward an analytical framework, which can support policy-makers and stakeholders in developing such approaches.

1.1. Background and policy context

Digitalisation and technological changes, as well as challenges such as climate change, ageing societies and social inclusion, are changing the way we work and our societies in general. This is even more relevant now, as our economies and societies are confronted with the unprecedented consequences of the Covid-19 health pandemic outbreak. Measures of social distancing implemented to curb the spread of the virus are deeply affecting labour markets, both in terms of job losses and in terms of re-organisation of work through new technologies and digital means. Initial ILO estimates point to significant consequences in terms of global job losses as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, ranging from an increase of 5.3 million jobs lost globally

in a low scenario and 24.7 million in a high scenario ([2]) (ILO, 2020a). Further, according to an ILO nowcasting model, in the first quarter of 2020 global working hours declined by an estimated 4.5% (equal to 130 million full-time jobs with a 48 hours working week) compared to pre-crisis levels (last quarter of 2019), and are expected to decrease by 10.5% compared to the last quarter of 2019 in the second quarter of 2020, equivalent to 305 million jobs (ILO, 2020b). Preliminary results of a Cedefop analysis on coronavirus social distancing risk (Cov19R) carried out to assess which individuals face a higher risk of coronavirus exposure doing their jobs, and therefore needing greater social distancing, conservatively estimate that about 45 million jobs in the EU-27 labour market (23% of total EU-27 employment) are faced with a very high risk of disruption due to Covid-19 (Pouliakas and Branka, 2020).

Against this background, ensuring that every adult has lifelong opportunities to constantly update and acquire new skills to navigate uncertain times and to thrive in their life and career is ever more important. This is of even more concern as, according to recent Cedefop estimates, there are 128 million adults in the EU-28 Member States, Iceland and Norway (hereafter referred to as EU-28+) with the potential for upskilling and reskilling (46.1% of the adult population). These adults may present low education, low digital skills, low cognitive skills or are medium-high educated at risk of skill loss and obsolescence. The estimates paint an alarming picture and hint to a much larger pool of talent and untapped potential than the 60 million low-educated adults usually referred as low-skilled in the EU-28 (Cedefop, 2020).

At EU policy level, the right to quality and inclusive, education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills enabling every citizen to participate fully in society and in the labour market is the first principle of the European pillar of social rights ([3]) jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on 17 November 2017 at the *Social summit for fair jobs and growth* in Gothenburg, Sweden (European Commission, 2017). Building on the European pillar of social rights and on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council draft conclusions (2020) call on Members States to promote and implement

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[2] These estimates are calculated from a base level of 188 million in 2019. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_738742/lang--en/index.htm

[3] See European Commission; Government Offices of Sweden (2017).
See also the European pillar for social rights booklet: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf

initiatives of reskilling and upskilling as a basis for increasing sustainability and employability, in the context of supporting economic recovery and social cohesion. Further, the European Commission communication on a strong social Europe for just transitions (European Commission, 2020) stresses the importance of empowering people through quality education, training and skills, and the need to place skills, employability and human capital centre stage through the update of the *New skills agenda* and the proposal for a European vocational education and training (VET) recommendation.

The *New skills agenda* and the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation were adopted at EU level to ensure that every adult in the EU has the chance to realise his/her potential fully.

1.1.1. A *New skills agenda for Europe* and *Upskilling pathways: new opportunities for adults*

The Commission's communication *A new skills agenda for Europe: working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness* of 10 June 2016 (European Commission, 2016a) set out a joint agenda for the EU Member States and stakeholders to work towards a shared vision and commitment regarding the strategic importance of skills for sustaining jobs, growth and competitiveness. The *Skills agenda* was centred on three key work strands:
(a) improving the quality and relevance of skills formation;
(b) making skills and qualifications more visible and comparable;
(c) improving skills intelligence and information for better career choices.

The *Upskilling pathways* initiative is one of the 10 actions launched to move the *New skills agenda* forward. The recommendation (Council of the European Union, 2016) was adopted by the European Council on 19 December 2016 to support low-skilled adults in acquiring a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and/or acquiring a broader set of skills by progressing towards an upper secondary qualification or equivalent (EQF 3 or 4). *Upskilling pathways* is a progression route along which a low-skilled individual can move to improve basic skills levels in literacy, numeracy and digital skills through:
(a) a skills assessment: to enable adults to identify their existing skills and any needs for upskilling. This may take the form of a skills audit, a statement of the individual's skills that can be the basis for planning a tailored offer of learning;

(b) a tailored and flexible learning offer: the beneficiary receives an offer of education and training meeting the needs identified in the skills assessment. The offer should aim to boost literacy, numeracy or digital skills or allow progress towards higher qualifications aligned to labour market needs;

(c) validation and recognition: the beneficiary has the opportunity to have the skills acquired validated and recognised.

The recommendation recognises that many countries already offer elements of *Upskilling pathways,* so implementation of the initiative should build on existing national arrangements and financial frameworks and it varies across Member States.

Delivery of the initiative is underpinned by:

(a) coordination and partnerships;

(b) outreach, guidance and support measures;

(c) follow-up and evaluation.

1.1.1.1. *Developing Upskilling pathways: progress and challenges*

Upskilling pathways is about a new vision for low-skilled adults' empowerment, embedded in the principle of comprehensive, sustainable, inclusive and flexible learning pathways tailored to the individual learner's needs.

Lack of coordinated and coherent approaches necessarily hinders the full potential of the initiative. Addressing this issue is complex, as the upskilling and reskilling needs of adults are generally treated in a fragmented manner, with insufficient crossover and policy coordination between relevant policy areas. While some cooperation and coordination between authorities and policy fields may exist, this is often structured in siloes, which creates challenges in terms of overlapping areas of responsibility and lack of overall coordination (see Cedefop, 2013; Desjardins, 2017; European Commission and ICF, 2015; European Commission, 2016b).

As reported in the European Commission staff working document tacking stock of implementation of the recommendation (European Commission, 2019), since the adoption of the recommendation, Member States have taken various positive steps. Some countries launched new ambitious agendas to support the upskilling and reskilling of the adult population; generally, most initiatives focus on unemployed adults, though increasing support is also dedicated to low-skilled workers in employment. Many of the actions are related to validation and on provision of digital skills.

Despite progress, the report also highlights remaining challenges:

(a) scale: the small scale of implemented initiatives compared to the magnitude of the low-skilled adult population with potential for upskilling and reskilling.

(b) basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills): few initiatives explicitly focus on basic skills provision.

(c) coherent three-step approach: few initiatives adopt a pathway approach encompassing the three steps.

(d) outreach, guidance and support measures: little emphasis is placed in strengthening guidance services to reach out and support adults effectively.

(e) coordination and partnerships: many fragmented initiatives exist without evidence of mechanisms for coordination or partnerships between providers and other stakeholders.

(f) sustainability: few initiatives adopt a long-term systemic approach with appropriate funding resources and mechanisms.

Several of these challenges had been already identified by the European stakeholders participating in the Cedefop and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) *First policy learning forum on upskilling pathways: a vision for the future,* which took place in February 2018 ([4]).

Discussions during the learning event demonstrated that, while many countries are already equipped to provide skills identification, training provision tailored to individuals' needs, and/or validation and recognition of prior learning, much needs to be done in bringing together these policies and services in a coordinated manner and within a coherent strategy. A coordinated and coherent strategy for the upskilling of adults also needs to be embedded in a system recognising the heterogeneity of the low-skilled population, with its different needs and characteristics (Cedefop and EESC, 2018).

([4]) Cedefop and EESC policy learning fora on upskilling pathways are a series of policy learning events on the topic aimed at providing a platform for countries to come together to learn from one another and explore common challenges in upskilling adults with a low level of skills. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/policy-learning-forum-upskilling-pathways-vision-future-0

1.2. Research methods, aims and objectives, report structure

The overall aim of this report is to support the development of coherent and coordinated approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. The work presented here builds on previous work done in this area.

With this general aim, the objective of this report is to develop an analytical framework for upskilling pathways for adults with low skills, which can support policy-makers and stakeholders in designing and implementing coordinated and coherent approaches for comprehensive, sustainable, inclusive and flexible pathways tailored to the individual needs.

As such, this report illustrates the conceptual development of Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults.

1.2.1. Developing the Cedefop analytical framework for upskilling pathways for adults with low skills: methods and tasks

The development of the analytical framework was through an iterative process integrating both qualitative research and stakeholder consultations, carried out during the project period.

It involved:

(a) scanning of official sources and relevant literature and policy documents to identify potentially good (and promising) practices pertaining to the multidisciplinary policy field of upskilling pathways;

(b) analysis of good and promising practices aimed at identifying important systemic features for the development of a unique approach to upskilling of low-skilled adults, grounded in lifelong learning and based on the idea of flexible, adaptable and sustainable pathways tailored to individual beneficiary needs;

(c) stakeholder consultations (European and national level) aimed at gaining important feedback and recommendations on the two draft versions of the analytical framework developed during the research process;

(d) Continuous organic coordination of the Cedefop Department for learning and employability knowledge, expertise and resources in adult learning, early leaving from education and training, financing, guidance and outreach, validation, and work-based learning.

The first phase of the research (January to August 2018) was aimed at identifying important systemic features for developing a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. Identification and analysis of these important features was carried out through analysis of good (and promising) practices in the policy fields pertaining to upskilling pathways.

Good and promising practices were identified through desk research of official sources, relevant literature and policy documents. They were selected according to a set of criteria, particularly relevant to inform the development of the analytical framework. Criteria are discussed in Section 2.1.

Findings from the analysis of identified good and promising practices were complemented with various resources and knowledge generated within the Cedefop Department for learning and employability in the areas of adult learning, early leaving from education and training, financing, guidance and outreach, validation, and work-based learning. Within this second phase (September to December 2018), the research team established the necessary links and bridges across the policy areas, unlocking synergies and complementarities across several Cedefop areas of expertise, creating an organic approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. Outcomes of the first two phases of the research informed the development of a first draft of the analytical framework (December 2018).

The analytical framework is conceived as a supporting tool for policy-makers and other stakeholders, and its development relies on stakeholder engagement and feedback. Hence, the third phase of the research (December 2018 to January 2019) involved a pilot test of the first draft version of the analytical framework aimed at gaining preliminary national stakeholder feedback. Selected country stakeholders in Ireland, France, Italy, Romania and Sweden had the opportunity, in two focus groups per country (between December 2018 and January 2019), to provide feedback to the draft analytical framework developed in the first two phases.

Building on the feedback from the country focus groups, a second draft version of the analytical framework was developed ([5]) (February 2019). This was presented and thoroughly discussed with national and European stakeholders participating in the Cedefop and EESC Second policy leaning

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([5])   https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/cedefop_af_upskilling_pathways_20-21.05.2019.pdf

forum on upskilling pathways: a vision for the future ([6]) which took place in May 2019. Building on stakeholder feedback, the analytical framework was further revised and emerged in its final version presented in Chapter 3 of this report.

To sum up, the timeline of framework development comprised the following procedures, some being carried out in parallel:

(a) good and promising practice analysis aimed at identifying important systemic features for developing a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. (January-August 2018);

(b) findings from the analysis were complemented with various resources and knowledge generated within Cedefop (September to December 2018);

(c) outcome of the first two research phases informed the development of the first draft of the analytical framework (December 2018);

(d) pilot test of the first draft version of the analytical framework (December 2018 - January 2019);

(e) development of a second draft (February 2019) according to the feedback received in the country stakeholder consultations;

(f) presentation and in-depth discussion and analysis of the second draft version of the analytical framework (May 2019);

(g) development of the final Cedefop analytical framework for upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults incorporating policy learning forum stakeholder feedback ([7]) (June to December 2019).

1.3.   Outline of the report

The remaining chapters of this report are organised as follows:

(a) Chapter 2 details the identification of the important systemic features for developing coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for adults. It reports findings from the good and promising practices analysis as well as the summary findings from the stakeholder consultation processes;

([6])   https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/
second-policy-learning-forum-upskilling-pathways-vision-future

([7])   https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/
second-policy-learning-forum-upskilling-pathways-vision-future

(b) Chapter 3 presents the final version of Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults;

(c) Chapter 4 concludes the report.

Coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults: essential features

Taking the principles underpinning the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation (Section 1.1.2) as a starting point and frame of reference, the analysis presented in this chapter contributed to the identification of the essential features needed for a unique approach to upskilling pathways for adults with low skills. This approach is articulated according to a lifelong learning perspective and focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary.

2.1. Good and promising practices in relevant policy areas

Good practice analysis is a key way of increasing knowledge-sharing and learning mechanisms in various sectors to promote discussion, disseminate innovations, support learning of effective experience and improve results.

While policy practices that work in a specific context are often referred to as 'good' or 'best' practices, using both terms in an interchangeable way, there is no basic and shared common definition and/or univocal understanding of both terms and of their peculiar differences.

Within this report, we use the term good practices, along with the distinction between 'promising practices' and 'good practices' as in Hall and Jennings (2008).

Apart from understanding what constitutes and how to identify a good/best practice, as discussed in Annex 2, one of the main limitations of best/good practice analysis relates to contextual differences that can hamper transferability and implementation (Maynard, 2006). It is unlikely that best

practices are universal, or that their applicability is independent of time, place, and organisational, social, and political context.

Since the adoption of the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation, countries have made considerable progress in providing upskilling pathways opportunities. However, given the comprehensive nature of upskilling pathways this is a complex and ambitious process to gear up. The aim of the good practice analysis carried out for this report was to review existing good practices in the policy fields pertaining to upskilling pathways and to identify within these practices interesting systemic features relevant for the development of the analytical framework.

The methodology adopted for identifying and selecting good practices in the relevant policy fields is presented below.

2.1.1. Methodology for identifying and selecting good practices

Good practices were identified through desk research of official sources and relevant literature and policy documents; and were selected according to a set of criteria described in Table 1. The criteria/indicators are based on general and specific criteria. General criteria are related to general issues that can be applied to good practices in different fields while specific criteria specifically focus on elements relevant to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. Specific criteria have been selected according to the principles and frame of reference underpinning the development of upskilling pathways as outlined in the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation and its staff working document (European Council, 2016; European Commission, 2016b).

While good practice should ideally meet all the above criteria, this has proved very difficult. Therefore, practices explored in this study have been categorised as good practices when they meet at least the first two general criteria, effectiveness and clarity, as well as the first three specific criteria: cooperation and coordination, sound and appropriate methodology and flexibility. The remaining practices are classified as promising practices.

2.1.2. Good and promising practices in upskilling pathways policy fields

Adopting the methodology illustrated above, 21 practices belonging to policy fields relevant to upskilling pathways have been identified and reviewed as part of this research. Of these, 13 have been selected as particularly relevant to informing the development of the analytical framework. Table 2 illustrates the practices identified and which criteria they meet. According to our

categorisation, 11 practices are classified as good, while 2 are classified as promising.

The selected good and promising practices are summarised in Table 3. More details on the practices, including the systemic features relevant to the development of the analytical framework, can be found in the fiches in Annex 1.

Table 1. **Criteria for categorisation of good practices**

General criteria	
Effectiveness	The contribution made by results to achievement of the purpose, and how assumptions have affected project achievements with specific reference to the benefits accruing to target groups.
Clarity	Clarity in the definition of objectives, activities to be carried out, stakeholders, target groups and expectations.
Consistency	Consistency between set goals and implemented activities
Sustainability	The capacity of the adopted practices to be sustainable in the future, being able to produce the necessary financial resources or to get them from other sources and according to the efficiency already shown (how project results have been achieved at reasonable cost).
Specific criteria	
Has established successful coordination, cooperation, support and improved communication between all organisations involved	Coordination, cooperation, support and improved communication are intended at policy level between the relevant ministries and national institutions responsible for employment policy, education and training and social affairs, and also at programme level between employers, social partners and training institutions, centres for adult education and any other key stakeholders.
Adopts sound and appropriate methodological and didactic approaches to stimulate and involve low-skilled adults also through supportive guidance systems	Low-skilled adults may have negative perceptions of learning, which often stemmed from negative experiences in the initial stages of education that contributed to building resentment, even fear, of learning. They are also less 'used' to training and can show lack of engagement and/or difficulties in learning. Good practice should then use different and tailored didactic methodologies and approaches to stimulate their attention and involvement and being effective. The inclusion of a supportive guidance system could increase the possibility of success.

Specific criteria	
Has a flexible structure able to be adapted to different needs of the target group	Low-skilled adults are a complex and differentiated target group. Defining key competences that are most relevant for specific target groups within the wide, general low-skilled adult main target group is another crucial issue best practices need to tackle and embed coherently in policies and concrete programmes. Focus on particular key competences such as literacy, numeracy, communication and digital competences should go along with soft skills such as workplace conduct, as well as development of motivation, confidence and self-esteem. Any programme considered as good practice should then be flexible enough to guarantee that specific needs are considered and a good mix of basic, work-related and soft skills are included.
Ensures recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning	This is important because learning among low-skilled adults often happens outside formal education. Many actions have been taken in this direction at European and national levels. Good practice should include this aspect in connection to the national, regional and/or local policy and regulatory framework.

Source: Cedefop, adapted from European Council (2016), European Commission (2016b) and EIGE (2013).

Table 2. **List of good and promising practices and their match to general and specific criteria**

Country	Title	General criteria				Specific criteria			
		GC1	GC2	GC3	GC4	SC1	SC2	SC3	SC4
Good practices									
Austria	Initiative for adult education *(Erwachsenenbildung)*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
France	Personal training account *(Compte personnel de formation,* CPF)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Germany	On the job training programme *(Weiterbildung Geringqualifizierter und beschäftigter älterer Arbeitnehmer in Unternehmen - WeGebAU)*	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Italy (Lombardia)	Unique labour endowment ([8]) *(Dote Unica Lavoro,* DUL)	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Ireland	*Skillnet*	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Netherlands	Language at work *(Taal op de werkvloer)*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Norway	*SkillsPlus*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Portugal	New opportunities initiative *(Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades - NOI)*	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Portugal	*Qualifica* programme	X	X	X		X		X	X
UK	*Union Learning Fund* (ULF)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
UK	Mid-life career review	X	X	X		X	X	X	

([8]) Dote Unica Lavoro, DUL is also known in English as 'Unique labour dowry'. This publication will refer to the programme as 'Unique labour endowment'.

Promising practices									
Austria	Labour foundations *(Arbeitsstiftungen)*	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Spain	*Vives Emplea:* team empowerment for labour integration	X	X	X		X		X	

NB: See Annex 1 for a description of each practice and sources.

Legend:
GC1: Effectiveness
GC2: Clarity
GC3: Consistency
GC4: Sustainability
SC1: A GP has established successful coordination, cooperation, support and improved communication between all organisations involved
SC2: A GP adopts sound and appropriate methodological and didactic approaches to stimulate and involve adults also through a supportive guidance system
SC3: A GP has a flexible structure able to be adapted to different needs of the target group
SC4: A GP ensures recognition of prior learning and validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning

Table 3. **Good and promising practices, summary table**
A. Good practices

Practice, country	Brief description	Objective	
Good practices			
SkillsPlus, NO	National programme providing basic skills training with a workplace-training component. Since 2014 the programme has included verbal communication in combination with other skills and since 2016 Norwegian for speakers of other languages. It is part of the Norwegian strategy for skills policy 2017- 21.	To support the development of basic competences for working life: providing working-age adults, the opportunity to acquire basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy, and digital skills.	
Skillnet, IE	National agency dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of workforce learning. It facilitates the establishment of regional and sectoral networks of companies (Skillnet networks) that identify training needs and organise training for companies in the network as well as free training for job seekers.	To promote and facilitate workforce learning in Ireland.	
Language agreements *(Taalakkoorden),* NL	National Initiative whereby employers enter into a language agreement to improve the language skills of their employees; and receive a subsidy to provide language courses at or outside the workplace.	To encourage businesses to invest in the language skills of their employees.	
Initiative for adult education *(Erwachsenen-bildung),* AT	National initiative aimed at increasing the number of individuals with completed lower secondary education as well as increasing general skill levels in the population. The Initiative comprises two programmes: basic skills training training to complete lower secondary education (ISCED 1)	To enable adults who lack basic skills or never graduated from a lower secondary school (ISCED 1) to continue and complete their education.	

	Target groups	Level of implementation	Stage of implementation	Funding
	Low-skilled employed adults (low-qualified adults with at most ISCED 2 qualification and those with low levels of literacy, numeracy and/or digital skills). People with Norwegian as a second language. Adults recruited through NGOs with no requirement of employment (since 2015).	National	Continuous since 2006	National
	Employees of companies belonging to one of the sectoral/regional Skillnet networks. Registered unemployed in receipt of a welfare payment from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) or who meet alternative criteria laid out by Skillnet.	National	Continuous since 1999	National funding + a joint investment model, part-funded by matching contributions from participating businesses in Skillnet networks.
	Employees with low and medium language skills in companies that want to address the issue of low language skills at the workplace.	National agreed at regional level	Continuous since 2016	Co-funding arrangements in which employers bear part of the training costs and, at the same time, can apply for a subsidy paid by National funding.
	Individuals over 15 years with basic educational needs regardless of language, nationality and qualifications held. Individuals aged over 15 without a lower secondary education qualification (ISCED 1).	National	Continuous since 2012	National and province funding since 2015, co-funded by the ESF.

Practice, country	Brief description	Objective	
Good practices			
Union Learning Fund (ULF), UK	National fund aimed at funding unions for delivery of learning opportunities for their members and to develop the capacity of union learning representatives (ULRs). ULF is managed and administered by Unionlearn, the learning and skills organisation of the Trade Union Congress.	To develop the capacity of trade unions and union learning representatives (ULRs) to work with employers, employees and learning providers to encourage greater take-up of learning in the workplace.	
Personal training account (Compte personnel de formation, CPF) FR	National programme aimed at empowering all labour market active individuals by acquiring training rights that can be mobilised throughout their working lives. Until 2018, individual beneficiaries accumulated 24 hours per year (capped at 150 hours) while since 1 January 2019, they accumulate EUR 500 per year (capped at EUR 5 000). Until 2018, low qualified (ISCED 0-2) benefitted from 48 hours per year with a ceiling of 400 hours. From 1 January 2019, this group can accumulate EUR 800 per year up to EUR 8 000.	To support individuals to continue learning throughout their working lives, enabling them to identify their own training needs and providing them with control over the learning/ training with the aim to maintain employability and secure the professional career path.	
On the job training, *(Weiterbildung Geringqualifizierter und beschäftigter älterer Arbeitnehmer in Unternehmen, WeGebAU),* DE	National programme offering a combined wage and training subsidy scheme for improving basic qualifications among low-skilled workers in SMEs as well as of older workers.	To improve the employability of low-skilled and older workers and prevent unemployment by encouraging further training.	

	Target groups	Level of im-plementation	Stage of implementation	Funding
	Employees with low levels of skills, mostly older low-skilled workers	National	Continuous since 1998	National
	All labour market active individuals. Low-qualified individuals have a right to a higher ceiling.	National	Continuous since 2015 with revisions	Financed through a compulsory training levy. Self-employed contribute 0.2% of turn-over through a training fund. PES and regions can complement funding for training for unemployed.
	Older employees (since 2007, 'older' ones must be at least 45 years of age). From 1 April 2012, qualified employees under 45 years can be funded but only if the course costs are at least half paid by the employer, and only when the training begins before 31 December 2019. Low-skilled employees in small and medium-sized firms who: have no vocational qualification; have a voca-tional qualification, but who have not performed the job for which they had acquired this qualification for at least four years; are employed in low-skilled jobs and can no longer perform the learned job.	National	Continuous since 2006	National and ESF

Practice, country	Brief description	Objective	
Good practices			
Unique labour endowment *(Dote Unica Lavoro,* DUL), Lombardia Region, IT	Regional programme providing free of charge personalised learning and employment pathways. It provides an integrated approach to learning and employment pathways, grounded in lifelong learning, guidance and personalised approach.	To support the employment/re-employment and upskilling/reskilling of individuals in the Lombardia region.	
New opportunities initiative *(Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades,* NOI), PT	National initiative providing upskilling pathways with a strong component of validation and recognition of prior learning.	To improve the qualification levels of the population.	
Qualifica programme, PT	National programme aimed at improving the qualification levels of adults by offering them tailored learning pathways, based on a process of validation of prior learning. The *Qualifica* programme moved from the re-design of the *New opportunities* initiative and from the resizing of its national network (NOI centres).	To improve the qualification levels of the population.	
Mid-life career review, UK	National programme aimed at improving lifelong guidance and career management services for older adults (45-64) to their understanding of own upskilling needs, interests and aspirations.	To enable older adults (45-64) to make informed decisions on their future by tacking stock of their individual options in work and in life.	

	Target groups	Level of implementation	Stage of implementation	Funding
	Individuals up to 65 years who reside in Lombardia and are either: - unemployed; - enrolled in a 1st and 2nd level university master; - working in the armed forces. Individuals up to 65 years, employed in a company in Lombardia affected by reduced working time or temporary suspension of work under a wage compensation scheme (wage guarantee fund, solidarity contract, solidarity agreements etc.) if they are not already benefiting from other active policy measures. Young people up to 29 years do not access the DUL as they can benefit from an endowment activated under the *Youth guarantee.*	Regional	Continuous since 2013	Regional and ESF
	Working adults, either in employment or not, needing to acquire a qualification through recognition of competences. Young people aged 15-18 who had only completed lower secondary education and/or who had dropped out of the education system before completing 12 years of schooling.	National	2005 to 2012	National and ESF
	Less qualified adults. Unemployed people. NEET (not in education, employment or training).	National	Continuous since 2016	National and ESF
	Adults (employed and unemployed) aged 45-64.	National	Continuing. Piloted (in EN) in 2013-15, Mainstream since 2015	National

B. Promising practices

Practice, country	Brief description	Objective	
Promising practices			
Austria labour foundations *(Arbeits-stiftungen),* AT	National initiative set up by social partners at company or regional level aimed at promotion of upskilling, reskilling and reintegration in the labour market. When a large company in economic difficulty has to lay off employees (outplacement foundations, type 1) or when particular staffing bottlenecks occur in relation to specific skills (in placement foundations, type 2). There are also target group foundations (type 3), which are implemented for upskilling specific target groups such as persons aged 45+, women, refugees.	To support job seekers to upskill, reskill and reintegrate into the labour market.	
Vives Emplea: team empower-ment for labour integration, ES	National project consisting of the creation of a working team of unemployed people at risk of exclusion working together to improve their social skills and skills for employment.	To improve people's employabil-ity through their participation in teamwork pathways for social and labour integration, helping them to access the job market or return to education.	

2.2. Good and promising practices: interesting features for developing the analytical framework

This analysis is organised along three levels of the policy process: decision-making, support and implementation. The three levels are also used to structure the key areas of analytical framework.

Decision-making is about adapting and streamlining existing structures and resources to unlock the right synergies, paving the way for coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways and for the right support and implementation conditions. It includes:

(a) integrated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults;

(b) planning strategy for identification of target groups;

(c) multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance;

(d) monitoring and evaluation.

	Target groups	Level of implementation	Stage of implementation	Funding
	Registered unemployed whose jobs have become redundant due to restructuring or economic difficulties, with special attention being paid to older job seekers and young job seekers.	National and regional	Continuous since 1987	National (PES and the provincial government) and the company/ies involved.
	Unemployed people registered as job seekers, aged between 18 and 60: they must have knowledge of the Spanish language, a basic literacy level and a basic knowledge of new technologies	National	Continuous since 2013	National and ESF

Support is about ensuring that coherent and coordinated approaches, developed under the decision-making phase, are sustained with the right support for inclusive and accessible learning pathways. This requires continuous quality support and includes:

(a) financial and non-financial support;

(b) outreach;

(c) lifelong guidance system.

Implementation is about grounding the comprehensive, inclusive and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways developed in the previous two phases, in the idea of an adaptable and flexible learning pathway tailored to individual learner needs and built around skills assessment, tailored learning offer, and validation and recognition of skills and competences. It includes:

(a) skills assessment;

(b) tailored learning offer;

(c) validation and recognition of skills and competences.

2.2.1. Decision-making: creating synergies for coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways

Upskilling pathways is about adapting and making use of existing structures and resources to unlock and exploit the synergies leading to comprehensive and sustainable pathways.

2.2.1.1. *Integrated approach to upskilling pathways*

At decision-making level, which creates the optimal conditions for the support and implementation levels, facilitating and sustaining upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults starts with an integrated approach. This ensures vertical (connecting decision-making and implementation, national, regional and local entities) and horizontal coordination of all relevant policy areas (such as education and training, employment, social, economic, welfare, justice, migration, family, health and related policy areas) and systems. It aims to improve policy coherence and effectiveness, thereby increasing the chances that the highly diverse potential target groups will be reached and that the needs of vulnerable low-skilled adults will be addressed (European Commission, 2016b). Grounded in a shared vision of sustainable and inclusive lifelong learning pathways, an integrated approach to upskilling pathways must be comprehensive and inclusive, and offer a combination of flexible, adapted and tailored learning with personalised support which also allows for recovery of the inactive and long-term unemployed, leading to social and economic gains, as well as long-term welfare savings [9]. An optimal mix of components or features of the approach can create the conditions for consolidating, developing, and implementing upskilling pathways in a sustainable way, despite changing target groups, skills needs, and governments, over time.

Since the adoption of the recommendation on upskilling pathways, countries have made considerable progress but, given the comprehensive nature of the pathways, this is a complex and ambitious process to gear up. Consequently, the aim of the good and promising practice analysis was not to identify and review existing practices specifically designed for upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults, some of which are existing practices predating the recommendation. The aim was to review existing good (and promising) practices in the policy fields of upskilling pathways and identify

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[9] On the economic and social benefits in upskilling the low-skilled EU adult population see, for example, Cedefop (2017b).

interesting systemic features which may be of interest for the development of the analytical framework.

A shared vision, embedded with political commitment at the highest level and characterised by strategic funding and coordination of multiple relevant policy domains in a holistic fashion, are important systemic features for an integrated approach to upskilling pathways. For example, strong political commitment and earmarked and allocated funding ensuring the initiative's sustainability, together with an integrated approach to the training programme design, implementation and delivery, are regarded as success factors of the Norwegian *Skills Plus* initiative. Strategic financial planning is also one of the key elements of *Erwachsenenbildung,* the Austrian initiative for adult education: the three-year funding period increases planning certainty among key stakeholders, including learning providers, and contributes to greater professionalisation of adult learning delivery. An integrated approach to offering adaptable, flexible and tailored learning pathways embedded with guidance, skills assessment, tailored learning/training and validation are the main features of the *Unique labour endowment (Dote Unica Lavoro,* Lombardia region, IT) and the Portuguese *Qualifica programme. Qualifica* is implemented in dedicated *Qualifica* centres, progressing from the redesign of the *New opportunities* initiative (NOI) *(Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades)* and from the resize of its national network (NOI centres). NOI was characterised by a pathway approach encompassing the three steps as well as several other upskilling pathways components. The experience of NOI contributes to emphasising the pivotal role of political commitment and strategic funding at appropriate levels to ensure sustainability and efficiency over time: while initial strong political commitment translated into substantial budgetary and other structural support for the initiative, a change in government, during a severe economic and financial crisis, together with heavy reliance on European funding (European Social Fund), resulted in the programme being discontinued despite its achievements.

Centrality of the learner is another systemic element emerging from the good practice analysis. Placing the individual at the centre of the learning process and enabling the learner to take the responsibility, ownership and control of their own learning, is an important feature of the French personal training account *(Compte personnel de formation, CPF) the Qualifica* programme, *Skills Plus,* the Lombardia region *Unique labour endowment (Dote Unica Lavoro, DUL),* the Spanish *Vives Emplea:* team empowerment for labour integration as well as of *Mid-life career*

review (UK). For example, *Mid-life career reviews* are an innovative tailored approach to providing lifelong guidance and career management services to older adults (45-64). Reviews adopt a person-centred approach which goes beyond employment and learning needs and considers the individuals' whole life: these include family, health, caring responsibilities, financial circumstances, interests, aspirations and motivations. Reviews aim at tacking stock of the individual adult's options in work and life more broadly and supporting them for the future.

2.2.1.2. *Planning strategy for the definition and identification of target groups*

Implementing a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways that supports the shared vision involves a well-defined planning strategy for defining and identifying target groups. Depending on the strategy, it can imply a prioritisation of specific groups of low-skilled adults or a more universal approach that targets a diverse set of groups in need, or a combination of both. The approach may depend on many factors, such as policy planning cycles, societal conditions and ideologies, but also on the shared views on inclusion favoured in a country/region. The value of upskilling pathways may be in its ability to facilitate sustainable access for all target groups.

Identification of target groups involves the study of comprehensive and integrated information on the different potential adult populations and their needs. It also requires in-depth understanding of current and future skills needed in the labour market. An effective strategy, therefore, requires effective skills anticipation mechanisms ([10]); these rely on official statistics/data sets, and other labour market intelligence resources, which support the identification process and increase opportunities to analyse data on adult skills and competences of potential target groups as well as labour market needs. In Poland, for example, the *Bilanz Capitalu Ludzkiego* (BKL) is a large-scale study on human capital. It surveys employers, the general population and training providers with the aim of understanding the country's skill needs in terms of both demand and supply of skills. The survey is conducted every two years, with smaller mid-term surveys in between to track development over time (European Commission, 2018).

([10]) Consult Cedefop work on skills anticipation at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/assisting-eu-countries-skills-matching

A comprehensive information system on the needs of both low-skilled adults and the labour market (current and future), relies on an integrated approach to the governance of skills anticipation mechanisms. This implies putting in place appropriate institutional structures (intermediary, formal or informal, skills bodies), operational processes (regulation, management, financial and non-financial incentives) and dissemination channels (online or offline platforms) that may facilitate a feedback loop between relevant stakeholders and sustain policy reaction based on reliable labour market information signals (Cedefop, 2017a).

The Portuguese qualification needs anticipation system, *Sistema de Antecipação de Necessidades de Qualificação* (SANQ), was created in 2015 in Portugal with the aim of providing comprehensive analysis of skills supply and demand. SANQ brings together data from various skills anticipation exercises to inform government policy-making (at central, regional and local levels) on skills and in planning education and training provision, both in the public and private co-financed sectors. The comprehensiveness of the SANQ is seen as one of its strengths, especially in linking skills assessment with funding of the vocational education and training (VET) system (Skills Panorama, 2017).

2.2.1.3. *Multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance*

The inclusive and comprehensive nature of upskilling pathways relies on effective and inclusive multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms. This involves the efficient coordination of stakeholders at all levels, including local/community actors, in order both to reach diverse adult beneficiaries/learners and also to serve their potentially comprehensive needs. While governance will be expressed according to national specific institutional settings and needs, a coordinated and coherent approach is embedded in the shared vision of sustainable and lifelong learning pathways.

This form of governance can widen access to different pathways and empower even those further from the labour market, or who are most vulnerable, to participate fully in a lifelong learning society. The meaningful involvement of multiple actors at different levels and systems can demonstrate that all stakeholders are valued, and their contributions recognised. Governance in the context of upskilling pathways emphasises the strategic role of the diverse local/ community partners, especially for their role in reaching and engaging those hardest to reach and who are vulnerable low-skilled; it also implies the need for capacity-building strategies.

Strong partnership and cooperation among stakeholders (State/ employers/training providers/social partners, learners' representatives), with strong engagement and accountability, are among the core features of the *Skills Plus* initiative, one of the initiatives of the three areas of work of the Norwegian strategy for skills policy 2017-21; this was developed by a wide range of stakeholders including five ministries, the Sami Parliament, four employer associations, four trade union associations and one organisation representing the voluntary sector and adult learning associations. The strategy aims to ensure that individuals and businesses have the skills that give Norway a competitive business sector, an efficient and sound public sector, and an inclusive labour market. To achieve this objective the partners have agreed on three areas of work: informed choices for the individual and societies; promoting learning and effective use of skills in the labour market; and specific support for low-skilled adults with weak labour market attachment ([11]). The strategy includes several measures aimed at improving coordination at different levels, including the establishment of a future skills needs committee. Implementation of the strategy is monitored by a Skills Policy Council (Norwegian Ministry of Education, 2017).

Effective multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance is one of the key features of several practices analysed for this report. Shared governance through a multilevel partnership between the Federal level, the provinces and accredited education and training providers (for the delivery) is one of the characteristics of the Austrian initiative for adult education *(Initiative Erwachsenenbildung),* while the *Unique labour endowment (Dote Unica Lavoro)* (Italy, Lombardia) adopts a multi-stakeholder governance approach based on shared responsibility and public private partnerships. The social partners play a pivotal role in upskilling low-skilled adults: they hold vital information on training needs and can inform on priorities to be set and most suited training and learning delivery modes. Austrian labour foundations *(Arbeitsstiftungen)* aim at promotion of upskilling, reskilling and reintegration in the labour market in the event of large layoffs (outplacement foundations, type 1) specific skill shortages (in placement foundations, type 2) or targeted to specific target groups (such as persons aged 45+, women, refugees, type 3). While social partners at company or regional level are responsible for their establishment, labour foundations are characterised by strong cooperation and partnerships at all levels, including involvement of different adult learning

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([11]) For this area of work refer to the fiche on *Skills Plus* schemes in Annex 1.

providers or VET institutions in training delivery within the labour foundation. In the UK, *Unionlearn* is the learning and skills organisation of the Trade Union Congress and works to assist unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members as well as for managing the *Union Learning Fund* and training union learning representatives (ULRs). Low-skilled adults may include particularly vulnerable people with complex needs and/or difficult life situations, who may not normally seek support or engage with institutional actors. Effective governance in upskilling pathways recognises and values the active involvement and contribution of the local and community level, as well as of non-traditional actors. In the UK, *Mid-life career review* is grounded in local partnerships while in Spain *Vives Emplea: team empowerment for labour integration* supports the creation of multiple alliances with public and private actors, private companies, private foundations and other social entities consolidated within the third sector.

2.2.1.4. *Monitoring and evaluation*

A coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways can be effective and efficient only if it is sustained by a systematic and sustainable monitoring and evaluation system and strategy, operating on two main levels. It intersects with all individual areas (including support, implementation, provisions, programmes, initiatives) that should have dedicated monitoring and evaluation. It is also overarching, since it is closely related to planning and designing strategies for identification of target groups and is a key component of an integrated upskilling pathways approach, without which, there can be no consistent and continuous feedback to improve systems and make them accountable to stakeholders and beneficiaries. Monitoring and evaluation contribute to the improvement of many aspects of policy and strategies for upskilling pathways, such as: the shaping of strategic goals, the planning of services, the development of programmes, the identification of gaps in service delivery, the consistency between services offered, the training needs of professional practitioners and the optimal use of resources and of investment in delivery. Monitoring and evaluation also address accountability issues, support identification and mainstreaming of best practices and allow for the timely identification of potential problems during implementation. An overarching monitoring and evaluation approach needs to be informed by a comprehensive and integrated data collection system to guarantee the effectiveness of upskilling pathways interventions and policies; alignment of data collection systems and indicators used

within countries and systems at all levels is indispensable. Involving the appropriate stakeholders can aid effective data collection and address some of the challenges, such as low response rates and data sensitivity. Raising awareness among data collectors of the importance of having accurate data, but also communicating the monitoring and evaluation results back to the different levels, (national, regional and local) may facilitate and encourage stakeholder engagement and ownership.

Monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of the Austrian initiative for adult education *(Initiative Erwachsenenbildung)* and it has helped provide a robust evidence base of what works and under which conditions, resulting in useful learning for all stakeholders. All institutions taking part in the initiative commit to continuous monitoring and evaluation and the entire process and its results are supervised by a monitoring board. The feedback loop between initiative implementation and monitoring and evaluation ensures that issues are identified and addressed in a structured and timely fashion, with resulting changes leading to programme improvements.

2.2.2. **Support level: inclusive and accessible upskilling pathways**

Once existing structures and systems have been adapted and streamlined, and resources allocated, earmarked and budget secured, it is important that these are sustained with the right support enabling low-skilled adults to take full advantage of these learning and upskilling opportunities. This support is sometimes directed to individual beneficiaries via employers and companies, as well as through education providers. Support is conceived of as targeted and flexible, of quality and continuous.

2.2.2.1. *Financial support*

Despite considerable progress in recent years, many member states are still far from the desirable number of adults engaged in learning activities (15%) and this is even more of a concern for low-skilled adults (Cedefop, 2020). According to Eurostat's Adult education survey (AES), the most significant barrier to adult participation in education and training is lack of time because of family responsibilities and conflicting training and work schedules. The associated financial cost is another important factor: according to the AES, 28% of adults in the EU in 2016 did not participate in education and training (formal, non-formal and informal learning) due to its cost. Similarly, high financial cost also hinders company provision of training. According to Eurostat's continuing vocational training survey

(CVTS), 28% of companies in the EU cited the cost of training as the reason for not providing training in 2015.

Lack of necessary financial resources may be an even more significant barrier for low-skilled adults as research shows that they are more likely to be unemployed or inactive and tend to be employed in low-skilled occupations or in precarious work when in employment (Cedefop, 2017b). Well-targeted financial support may help to reduce this barrier and attract low-skilled adults to participate in education and training, as well as encourage employers to invest more in training of their (low-skilled) employees.

Paid training leave may help to overcome both time and financial constraints and encourage low-skilled adults to undertake education and training. Suitable financing instruments targeting individuals include grants, vouchers/learning accounts; subsidised, income-contingent loans; and paid training leave of adequate duration (long enough to acquire higher qualifications). Instruments targeting companies include levy-grant mechanisms, tax incentives, grants, and payback clauses.

Effective financing instruments for supporting individuals to take up, and companies to offer, upskilling pathways opportunities need to be carefully designed to ensure effective targeting of low-skilled adults. This may include preferential treatment towards low-skilled adults and ensuring that training low-skilled employees is in-built in financing mechanisms, such as granting these groups higher levels of subsidy or priority for funding. Eligibility criteria (in terms of groups and type of education and training) should be carefully determined to target diverse groups of low-skilled adults. The amount of subsidy must be adequate/attractive, taking into consideration both direct and indirect costs of education and training, and must be provided in advance, before education and training takes place (important especially for low-income individuals). When designing and implementing effective financing instruments, complementarity of existing instruments needs to be assured and possible drawbacks (such as heavy administrative burden, dead-weight losses) considered.

The German *On the job training* initiative *(Arbeitnehmer in Unternehmen WeGebAU)* is a financial instrument targeted at low-skilled workers in SMEs and workers aged 45+; since 1 April 2012 the instrument has also financed adults younger than 45 but only if the employer covers half of the training cost. It uses financial incentives to promote both employee and employer engagement: wage subsidies incentivise employer engagement while the voucher system guarantees reimbursement of training costs for employees.

The instrument envisages strategic use of the funding: to avoid funding being used for training that would have been carried out even without the financial support, WeGebAU does not support employer or task-specific training. For low-skilled workers, subsidies are only available for accredited courses leading to a certificate, though this requirement may be lifted for SMEs. Courses must last at least four weeks and the employer is obliged to ensure leave of absence. The Austrian *Initiative for adult education (Erwachsenenbildung)* relies on strategic financial funding as accredited providers are funded only if there is a need and a target group for the accredited learning offer.

Analysis of the good (and promising) practices carried out for this study also revealed the importance of allocating an appropriate level of funding, and of joint funding mechanisms. The financing structure of the Austrian labour foundations – *Arbeitsstiftungen* – is always the result of a negotiation process involving company management, the social partners, public employment services (PES) and other financing authorities such as the provincial government. During participation in the labour foundation, workers receive unemployment benefits while additional allowances for course-related costs (such as travel expenses or childcare) can also be granted. Foundations are regarded as cost-intensive but also as highly effective. Co-funding mechanisms are also a major feature of *Language at work (Taal op de werkvloer, NL)* and of the Irish *Skillnet:* while *Skillnet* Ireland, as a national agency, has national funds, it operates under a joint investment model, partly funded by matching contributions from participating businesses in *Skillnet* networks.

2.2.2.2. *Non-financial support*

Financing instruments may work or fail depending on the broader economic, social and educational context. They might not be successful in the absence of a more comprehensive approach addressing additional obstacles to participation and so need to be complemented by targeted non-financial support to both employers and individuals. This includes information about the existence of the financing instrument, advice to companies and guidance for learners on the use of the instrument, raising awareness on benefits of learning (through public relations campaigns and marketing measures), tailored training delivery, consultancy services for companies, and quality assurance. This aspect of the support level crosses with the area of lifelong guidance systems (see below and in the analytical framework), particularly

concerning guidance for the employed, which can be provided in different settings and involve public and private actors/owners ([12]).

As SMEs may lack the necessary (financial and non-financial) resources to promote and provide upskilling pathways opportunities to their employees, specific support should be provided for them. This could include information and guidance on funding opportunities, consulting services in defining SME training needs, administrative support in applying for funding, promoting partnerships to increase SME training capacity and innovative learning approaches to adapt to specific SME needs and constraints (using coaches at the workplace to teach new tasks, self-regulated learning or distance learning, use of networks and pooling of resources). *Skillnet,* for example, through the establishment of company networks, promotes workforce upskilling in small and micro enterprises, which may not have the resources and capacity to provide upskilling opportunities to their workforce.

2.2.2.3. *Outreach and lifelong guidance system*

Ensuring that a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways is inclusive and sustainable implies the integration of appropriate strategies and services to reach out to, motivate, engage and support low-skilled adults to access and navigate relevant opportunities. Such an approach needs strategic coordination within the area of outreach measures and lifelong guidance systems accompanied by a change in service culture that is proactive, decisively moving towards a lifelong and life-wide process support logic. This should enable better access for beneficiaries and adults with potential for upskilling, reaching individuals in their own life contexts, to increase support needed not only for sustainable career and life transitions, but also for developing career management skills needed for individual empowerment in a constantly challenging and changing societal context.

Among the good (and promising) practices analysed, *Vives Emplea: team empowerment for labour integration* (Spain) adopts an innovative methodology to reach out to different individuals and to foster their empowerment. Municipalities, other private foundations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) cooperate to reach out to potential

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([12]) For more information on 'guidance for the employed', see the dedicated section in the recently launched European inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices. https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/inventory-lifelong-guidance-systems-and-practices

beneficiaries and to disseminate potential benefits. This is aided by strong cooperation and partnerships: multiple alliances among public and private actors, private companies, private foundations and other social entities consolidated in the third sector actively cooperate to bring success. The innovative methodology is based on teamwork sessions with a coaching approach and includes individual coaching sessions, an employment intermediation programme and a corporate volunteer programme. This approach aims at creating the right synergies to sustain a transformative process among participants in terms of self-knowledge and reinforcement of their personal, social and employment skills. While individuals are responsible for their own learning process and have the leading role in the project performance, they are supported by a coach-coordinator in charge of developing individualised sessions and guiding the team to achieve its own objectives.

In the UK, *Union Learn* adopts training advocacy through union learning representatives (ULRs) to engage learners, including those that are otherwise hard for providers to reach, and offer support and guidance to learners throughout their learning/upskilling pathway: they offer information, advice, guidance, carry out initial assessments of skills, link learners with providers, assist learners through Union Learning centres, arrange flexible provision for shift workers, and plan next learning steps.

Mid-life career reviews are an innovative tailored approach to providing lifelong guidance and career management services. Along with adopting a person-centred approach, they are grounded in the principle of learning as a human right. They use local partnerships to maximise participation, reflect the diversity of individual needs and aspirations, promote learning across the lifespan with their focus on older adults, overcome negative stereotypes related to ageing, provide age-proof services and encourage intergenerational relationships.

2.2.3. Implementation: tailored, adaptable and flexible upskilling pathways

At implementation level, a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways is grounded in the idea of adaptable and flexible opportunities and learning pathways tailored to individual learner needs. Skills assessment, a tailored learning offer and validation and recognition of skills and competences are key elements.

Upskilling pathways that lead to continuing higher and/or adult education and training, or other forms of learning, are generally based on the idea that all learning is valued, promoted and made visible. In consequence, low-skilled adults can progress towards individual empowerment by embarking on a sustainable upskilling journey, tailored to their own specific needs. The process may be short-term (one-off skills assessment and validation, recognition of prior learning (RPL), or a work-based learning (WBL), training module), intermittent and alternate between employment and education and training, or it may involve a longer-term and continuous learning commitment leading to a qualification; but it is always built on the idea of a pathway towards individual empowerment and grounded in lifelong learning.

2.2.3.1. *Skills assessment*

This journey may start with skills assessment. As experience demonstrates, low- skilled adults may be all but low-skilled. While adults may lack some basic skills or qualifications, they likely have acquired other important skills throughout their lifetimes, including in employment. Inactive and long-term unemployed individuals might have been involved in domestic work or voluntary activities that provided a broad or specific source of learning and competence development. Immigrants might have undocumented sets of skills valuable for host-country labour markets. Particularly for low-skilled adults, identification of previously acquired skills and competences will aid engagement and motivation for further learning, as well as provide pathways to meaningful employment. For some, the discovery and increased awareness of their own capabilities will be a valuable outcome of the process.

A skills assessment is a process in which an individual's learning outcomes are checked against specific reference points or standards. It can also be referred to as a 'skills audit' or 'skill profiling'. In the context of upskilling pathways, skills assessment is focused on the identification and documentation of an individual's prior learning in any context (formal, non-formal and informal) and of any gaps in relation to their desired level of skills. This path can lead to further targeted education and training but can also contribute to enhanced employability and progression in employment (such as promotion, transition to another position), so there are multiple pathways of opportunity.

Identification and documentation of skills is also crucial for designing a targeted training approach based on an individual's point of departure. It may reduce the length of training and increase system efficiency, matching

the learner or employee with a suitable position or career. It can also help in overcoming so-called situational obstacles such as family responsibility, conflicting time schedule, financial costs, lack of employer support or proximity concerns.

2.2.3.2. *Tailored learning offer*

Tailored learning in upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults provides multiple paths for broad, transitional and flexible training offers adapted to individual needs, both in the formal (including non-formal) and informal systems. Tailoring addresses the heterogeneity of the low-skilled adult population by acknowledging and building on prior learning (skills assessment) and removing obstacles (institutional, as well as those linked to shared individual characteristics, experiences, knowledge), so easing adults' participation in learning. Linking learning offers to the prospect of valid qualifications and to an occupation or a field, may increase individual motivation to engage. When adults are aware of the purpose of their studies, and of the utility (professional and personal) of a diploma, chances of engagement and success are higher. Linking learning offers to valid qualifications implies identifying and addressing the basic skills and knowledge gaps which need to be addressed for the purpose of a qualification; these will be addressed individually as part of the overall learning journey.

Among the good practices analysed in this study, tailoring to the needs of the individual learner is one of the features of the Austrian *Initiative for adult education (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung),* the *Unique labour endowment (Dote Unica Lavoro)* and of the French *Personal training account (Compte personnel de formation, CPF). The personal training account* stresses the importance of flexibility in organising one's own learning: individuals can develop skills that can be validated and be used for obtaining a full qualification.

Work-based learning (WBL) has the potential to be particularly attractive for adults, especially for low-skilled adults. This group may have had negative experiences in traditional school settings, so WBL offers them an alternative setting to apply immediately what they have learned, and understand the relevance and impact of their learning on and off the job. The problem-solving focus and attention to tasks rather than subjects, applied in WBL, are both central elements in andragogy. In addition, in apprenticeships adults are remunerated while learning and learn predominantly in a company setting, which implies that they are integrated into a working environment and are able

to identify more with being workers than learners; this may be an important incentive for low-skilled adults who may be particularly vulnerable in the labour market. The tailoring aspect refers to providers' capacity to make use of the different forms of WBL to respond better to the needs of an individual and/or a homogeneous group of individuals. When workplace learning is involved, tailoring also refers to addressing the needs and expectations of companies (which is particularly relevant for apprenticeships).

Training under the *Skills Plus* (Norway) is highly flexible and tailored to the needs of both the individual learner and of the employer. Flexibility in content and focus, as well as in the delivery/mode of learning, contributes to strengthening participant motivation to continue learning as well as employer engagement. Training tailored to the needs of both the companies and the learners is also an asset of Dutch *Language at work (Taal op de werkvloer),* as well as of the *Union Learning Fund (ULF).* By supporting ULRs at the workplace to work closely with employers and training providers, ULF ensure that the training provided is relevant to the needs of both learners and employers, who are then more likely to promote and engage in workplace learning.

Strong employer engagement and buy-in through the use of a marketing strategy is one of the elements of the Dutch *Language at work (Taal op de werkvloer).* The initiative is based on the business case for language training and associated workforce upskilling. Language training is aimed at solving problems the companies face (such as employees not understanding safety instructions). The use of 'argument cards' proved very effective as the benefits of basic skills training is not always evident to employers (or employees). *Skillnet* (Ireland) is a successful example of an enterprise-led approach to upskilling, resulting in strong enterprise ownership and engagement in the process. Encouraging enterprise to lead the process helps ensure that programmes delivered through Skillnet Ireland are highly relevant to the needs of industry. This approach also enables cohesive enterprise networking and the flexibility to respond to ever-changing skills demands through both formal and informal learning. As discussed in Section 2.2.2, creation of enterprise networks facilitates workforce upskilling in small and micro enterprises which may not have their own resources and capacity to provide upskilling opportunities to their workforce.

Apart from being relevant to the needs of individuals and/or companies, in an upskilling pathways perspective, tailored training needs to be of quality and delivered by well-trained and fully enabled professionals (with the

right tools/ means/resources). In the *Initiative for adult education (Initiative Erwachsenenbildung, Austria),* in order to receive funding and participate in the initiative, providers must be accredited and satisfy several robust criteria for programme quality: curricula, target groups, outreach strategies, previous dropout rates, partnerships, guidance and assessment strategies and other quality criteria. Trainers and counsellors need to meet initiative quality standards, such as special training for basic skills teaching professionals.

2.2.3.3. *Validation and recognition of prior learning*
An important step in the upskilling pathway journey, which can also be seen as a point of access or as a type of upskilling method, is certification of the tailored learning or any prior learning through validation and recognition. The *Upskilling pathway* recommendation specifies that upskilling pathways should offer individuals opportunities for certifying skills or key competences acquired, which can be particularly relevant in progressing towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4 according to national circumstances. In the context of upskilling pathways, validation is combined with recognition and broadens the scope to learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Qualifications acquired in other countries or regions might be also considered within the process of upskilling.

The outputs of a validation process can take many different forms, ranging from formal qualifications to certificates issued by different institutions and within different sectors (companies, NGOs, chambers of commerce). These aim to increase the visibility and value of all the learning acquired, thereby making it possible for the individual to use this documentation to continue to further education, to maintain employment or enter the labour market. Validation and recognition are an integral part of upskilling pathways.

Validation can make a significant difference in better matching skills and labour demand, promoting transferability of skills between companies and sectors and in supporting mobility across the European labour market. It can also contribute to social inclusion by providing those at risk of exclusion, particularly low-skilled adults, with a way to improve their employability and engagement in society.

The *Qualifica* programme and the Lombardia *Unique labour endowment* (Dote Unica Lavoro) are interesting examples of tailored learning and employment pathways. *Qualifica* adopts a standardised four-step approach: information and enrolment; analysis and development of a skill profile; discussion and definition of appropriate education and training path; referral

to recognition procedures or appropriate tailored education and training provision. *Unique labour endowment* is based on the principle of employment pathways: a nominal voucher *(dote),* based on different aid intensity levels calculated on a standardised profiling process, is given to beneficiaries, who are free to choose the public or accredited private employment services they consider most capable of responding to their needs. The selected employment agency provides beneficiaries with tailored guidance services according to a personalised action plan. This plan sets out a tailored path for the beneficiary, including training and other activities such as competence mapping, orientation and accompaniment, and job placement services. The inclusiveness of the initiative is guaranteed by the introduction of the aid intensity levels; these distinguish differing degrees of difficulty in being (re)integrated in the labour market and prevent employment agencies from favouring clients who have a good chance of entering/re-entering the labour market.

Labour foundations (Austria) include important elements of upskilling pathways. They respond to specific training and career needs, adopting a comprehensive approach with central elements: career guidance, assorted training measures (qualification), active job search, work experience programmes and (in the case of outplacement foundations) assistance with business start-ups. The basis of qualification measures is always an individual initial assessment and training plan, outlining individual needs and training goals, which needs to be signed by all parties (participant, foundation management and, where applicable, future employer) and be approved by PES. It is targeted to companies by size: type 1 foundations are designed for large companies, while type 2 and type 3 are used by SMEs to train new employees.

Qualifica is also an interesting example of effective integration of validation and skills assessment into existing services, such as career guidance and education and training provision. The network of *Qualifica* centres offers comprehensive one-stop-shops for guidance on participation in lifelong learning. They provide face-to-face information, guidance and mentoring to adults on education and training pathways opportunities based on a process grounded in validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The process is supported by the *Qualifica* passport, an online tool where qualifications and skills acquired are recorded. This is integrated with the credit system and aligned with the ECVET framework: it is based on units and learning outcomes which are part of qualifications and can be assessed

and validated, hence ensuring flexibility for the adult in the pathway for obtaining a qualification. It also includes a tool aimed at providing orientation and information on possible pathways, leading to completing or obtaining a new qualification in line with skills and competences acquired in work-related and other non-formal and informal settings.

2.3.   Developing coordinated and coherent upskilling pathways approaches for low-skilled adults

The analysis of practices presented in Section 2.2 suggests a number of important systemic features for the development of the analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults.

2.3.1.   Decision-making level

At decision-making level, development of upskilling pathways requires a nationally agreed vision grounded in lifelong learning and embedded with a joined-up inclusive, flexible and accessible learning pathway. It relies on political commitment at the highest level and is sustained with earmarked and/or allocated funding. It involves coordination of multiple relevant policy domains in a holistic fashion and recognises the centrality of the individual beneficiary at different levels and in different processes, beyond their participation in tailored learning opportunities. Implementing a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways that supports the shared vision requires a well-defined planning strategy for the definition and identification of target groups, capable of anticipating changing needs. It must enable the creation of the necessary arrangements through consultation and partnerships with stakeholders, particularly with social partners and other civil society organisations. The inclusive and comprehensive nature of upskilling pathways relies on effective and inclusive multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms. This involves the efficient coordination of stakeholders (spanning education, training, employment and social service sectors as well as community level and non-traditional stakeholders) at all levels, reaching diverse adult beneficiaries/learners and serving their needs. Governance in this context emphasises the strategic role of the diverse local/ community partners, especially for their role in

reaching and engaging those most hard to reach and the low-skilled; it also implies the need for capacity-building strategies. A coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways can be effective only if it is sustained by a_systematic and sustainable monitoring and evaluation system across all areas, ensuring synergies are in place and sustained, and also within those individual areas. This also implies that there should be an agreed concept of quality covering all areas (support, implementation, provisions, programmes, initiatives) that have their own dedicated monitoring and evaluation systems and mechanisms.

2.3.2. Support level
At support level, analysis of the good practices highlighted the importance that the synergies developed under the decision-making phase, are sustained with appropriate support so low-skilled adults can take full advantage of upskilling opportunities. Support needs to be targeted, of quality and continuous. Effective financial instruments can support individuals to take up, and companies to offer, these opportunities. However, they need to be carefully designed to ensure effective targeting of low-skilled adults. It is also important that an appropriate level of funding is secured and that it is based on a cost-sharing mechanism grounded in the idea that investing in upskilling is a shared responsibility. Promoting the benefits of investing in learning can contribute to engaging both companies and learners and can stimulate their sense of responsibility. It is also important to note that the wider theme of earmarked and/or allocated funding tied to broader financing and budget issues is not an essential feature of the support level but is an aspect of the decision-making level of the analytical framework under the first key framework area, the integrated approach to upskilling policy.

Financial instruments need to be complemented by targeted non-financial support. This may include information on the financing instrument, advice to companies and guidance for learners on the use of the instrument, such as raising awareness of the benefits of learning. This is particularly relevant for SMEs as they may lack the necessary (financial and non-financial) resources to promote and provide upskilling pathways opportunities to their employees.

Ensuring that a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways is inclusive and sustainable also implies the integration of appropriate strategies to reach out to, motivate, engage and support low-skilled adults to navigate the opportunities. This needs the strategic coordination of outreach and guidance services and should be accompanied by a change

in service culture to a lifelong and life-wide process able to reach out to people in their own contexts and support them towards sustainable career and life transitions. It should adopt a holistic approach and be embedded in community: it values, recognises and strengthens the capacity of the community and other non-traditional actors.

2.3.3. Implementation level

At implementation level, a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways is grounded in the idea that all learning is valued, promoted and made visible, so that low-skilled adults can progress towards their empowerment by embarking on a sustainable upskilling journey, tailored to their own specific needs.

Low-skilled adults may have had negative experiences in traditional school settings, so work-based learning has the potential to be particularly attractive for them. Flexible, adaptable and tailored pathways recognise the heterogeneity of the low-skilled adult population and build on prior (formal, non-formal and informal) learning, offer tailored learning and training opportunities, and allow for validation and recognition of skills and competences. These pathways recognise the centrality of the individual and her/his needs, and they depend on quality assurance for their sustainability. They rely on creating the right synergies and promoting stakeholder engagement and cooperation. The value and sustainability of upskilling pathways, also in relation to the learning acquired in non-formal and informal setting, can be assured only if there is buy-in from all stakeholders. Without the trust of the relevant actors, their success and usefulness are severely hindered. Quality assurance in skills assessment, learning and training provision, as well as validation and recognition processes, are necessary elements.

2.3.4. 10 key areas of the analytical framework

The important systemic features discussed above, have been articulated around 10 key areas/themes of the policy process and form the principles/areas of analysis of the analytical framework which will be presented in Chapter 3 of this report.

Decision-making:
1. Integrated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults
2. Planning strategy for identification of target groups

3. Governance (multilevel/multi-stakeholder)
4. Monitoring and evaluation

Support:
5. Financial and non-financial support
6. Outreach
7. Lifelong guidance system

Implementation:
8. Skills assessment
9. (a) Tailored learning offer leading to a qualification
   (b) Tailored learning offer with WBL
10. Validation and recognition of skills and competences

2.4.   Stakeholder consultations

Development of the analytical framework followed an iterative approach which included both desk research and stakeholder consultations. This consultative aspect demonstrates that the framework is mostly conceived as a tool for reflection and inspiration for policy-makers and other stakeholders; as such, its development relies on stakeholder engagement and feedback.

Development of the analytical framework, therefore, benefitted from two rounds of stakeholder consultations on two different draft versions.

2.4.1.   First stakeholder consultation

The first draft version of the framework developed under the first two research phases (Section 1.2.1) was tested in country focus groups, among selected national stakeholders in Ireland, France, Italy, Romania and Sweden. For each country, two focus groups were organised between December 2018 and January 2019, to provide feedback on the relevance and usefulness of the draft framework as well as the relevance of specified key areas.

Participants in this first round of stakeholder consultations included representatives from relevant ministries, trade unions, public and private sectors and services such as the public employment services, employer representative bodies, representatives from adult education and training and learning organisations, as well as other providers and civil society.

2.4.2. Second stakeholder consultation

A second round of stakeholder consultations took place during the Second policy leaning forum on upskilling pathways for adults: a vision for the future ([13]), and was aimed at discussing in detail the second draft version of the analytical framework which Cedefop research team prepared in February 2019.

The second draft version of the framework included refinements resulting from the feedback received during the first round of stakeholder consultation (country focus groups discussed above).

Participants in the learning event included representatives of the EU Member States, European and national social partners, the EESC and the European Commission, as well as representatives from civil society and adult learning organisations.

2.4.3. Stakeholder consultations outcomes and reflection points

Participants in both rounds of stakeholder consultations largely agreed that Cedefop's analytical framework is a useful source of inspiration and a tool for reflection and identification of key areas for action.

Discussions clearly indicated that all 10 framework key areas are relevant and can be adapted to specific (national/local) contexts and may support stakeholders in further implementation of the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation and towards developing innovations based on their existing practices, provisions and systems.

The main reflection points identified by participants of the two rounds of stakeholder consultation can be summarised as follows:

(a) a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways for adults requires a shift in mind-set grounded in a shared vision built around the idea of a joined-up, accessible and flexible learning pathway. According to this shared vision, upskilling and reskilling is a common social value, a public good, shared between public institutions, private sector actors, social partners, civil society and beneficiaries, for empowerment in society and in the labour market;

(b) this shift in mind-set implies strong political commitment, infused with strong stakeholder engagement, cooperation and partnerships at all levels and in all key areas of the analytical framework. Effective and

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([13]) https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/events/
second-policy-learning-forum-upskilling-pathways-vision-future

coordinated governance implies a need for capacity building for the relevant stakeholders, ensuring mutual understanding and common approaches, as well as clear roles and responsibilities and accountability; it also requires strengthening the role and capacity of community-based approaches and integrated governance systems involving both national and local level;

(c) a coordinated and coherent approach relies on the establishment of an overarching monitoring and evaluation system informed by comprehensive and integrated data collection linked to quality assurance;

(d) appropriate funding levels should be secured and appropriate financial instruments based on cost-sharing mechanisms and specific support for SMEs (partnerships, administrative support) should be designed;

(e) effective communication and promotion strategies for engagement of individuals and companies and to secure engagement and commitment of all stakeholders. This needs to be accompanied by sustained investment in capacity building both in terms of infrastructure and human capital (such as financing for teachers and trainers, providers, guidance professionals) as well as in terms of engagement and support to employers, particularly small and medium-size enterprises;

(f) change in service culture to proactive career guidance service is necessary to move decisively towards a lifelong and life-wide process support logic, able to reach out to people in their own contexts and aid their sustainable, career and life transitions;

(g) upskilling pathways should be conceived as inclusive and comprehensive;

(h) all training and other forms of learning, including learning and training in non-formal and informal settings, needs to be valued, promoted and made visible. Skills assessment, validation and recognition are a systematic feature in national skills formation systems;

(i) provisions for multiple paths require broad, transitional and flexible training offers, both in the formal and non-formal systems and according to individual needs (such as non-linear offer, combination, own pace). They should have clear links to formal qualifications as points of reference for the identification, documentation, assessment and certification of learning outcomes.

The final analytical framework for upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults incorporates feedback received within the stakeholder consultation process and is presented in Chapter 3 of this report.

CHAPTER 3.

Analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults

This chapter presents the final Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults, the result of the iterative research process described in the previous chapters.

Upskilling pathways is about pulling together resources and creating the right synergies for gearing every (low-skilled) adult towards an individual path to empowerment. It is about creating a comprehensive approach to the upskilling and reskilling of the low-skilled adult population, which is able to address, in a coordinated and coherent manner, their comprehensive needs and ensure that they have all the tools and support to embark on sustainable learning/training pathways leading to their full potential and fulfilment.

Within this context, the analytical framework presented here is developed to support policy-makers and other stakeholders in designing and implementing coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults.

Analytical frameworks are designed to structure logical thinking in a systematic manner: they are models that aim at guiding and facilitating understanding and at underpinning, supporting and guiding analysis. Analytical frameworks are of critical importance to studying the same phenomenon using the same categorisation, and to achieving common insights into aspects of a complex policy problem (such as the upskilling of adults) embedded in different national (and local) contexts without losing coherence and consistency.

Although it may appear to present a normative stance, the Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults is not intended as an exhaustive list of necessary conditions or an assessment tool. It works as a frame of reference for stimulating discussion

and reflection on design and implementation of upskilling pathways. It is intended as a source of inspiration for policy-makers and other stakeholders, to support them in identifying key areas for action.

The framework articulates a clear grounding in a lifelong learning perspective and is focused on empowering the individual learner/beneficiary.

It is articulated around important systemic features needed for a coherent and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. These features are organised around 10 key areas of the policy process. Within each key area we provide a definition, the rationale and essential features that construct the area, but which are also interconnected with the contents of other areas of the framework.

The framework works horizontally in promoting cooperation across the 10 key areas, unlocking synergies and fostering complementarities, but it also contributes to enriching knowledge and evidence within each key area.

3.1.   Analytical framework key areas

3.1.1.   Key area 1: Integrated approach to upskilling pathways for adults

3.1.1.1. *Definition*
An integrated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults has various elements at the strategic level. It includes a nationally agreed approach (strategy/framework) and an embedded nationally defined vision (such as in the form of guidelines, defining a common shared language) built around the idea of a joined-up, inclusive, tailored, accessible, adaptable and flexible upskilling pathway for low-skilled adults. According to this shared vision, upskilling and reskilling is a common social value, a public good, whose responsibility is shared among public institutions, social partners, civil society and beneficiaries, for empowerment in society and in the labour market.

Various policy domains and systems are integrated in a holistic manner to improve policy coherence and coordination horizontally and vertically, ensuring high stakeholder engagement and commitment at both national and local level. This paves the way for the development of upskilling pathways.

The strategic and integrated approach to providing upskilling pathways is grounded in a lifelong learning perspective and built around the idea of easily accessible pathways comprising skills assessment, provision of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer, and validation and recognition of skills acquired. Guidance and outreach, as well as digital technologies, can be used to facilitate continuous implementation of provisions and services.

Critical to the lifelong learning perspective is the centrality of the individual learners' starting points and needs, and their association with adult target group(s) who may especially benefit from upskilling.

3.1.1.2. *Why is it important?*
The fragmentation and complexity of relevant policy measures often results in a lack of systematic approaches to upskilling the low-skilled adult population and a lack of awareness of the socioeconomic benefits of doing so. An integrated adult upskilling pathways approach, tying together multiple policy domains and stakeholders, improves policy effectiveness, thereby increasing the chances that the highly diverse potential target groups will be reached and that the needs of vulnerable individuals will be addressed.

The combination of flexible, adapted learning with personalised support also allows for recovery of the inactive and long-term unemployed, leading to social and economic gains, as well as long-term welfare savings. An optimal mix of components or features of the approach can create the conditions for consolidating, developing, and implementing upskilling pathways in a sustainable way, despite changing target groups, skills needs, and governments, over time.

3.1.1.3. *Key features*
(a) There is a nationally agreed approach (strategy/framework) that incorporates a nationally agreed vision for upskilling pathways based on a lifelong learning perspective. This provides joined-up learning opportunities, built around the concept of an easy to access and flexible pathway comprising, at implementation level, skills assessment, tailored learning offer, and validation and recognition of skills and competences.

(b) Multiple relevant policy domains are included in a holistic fashion at all levels, especially education and training and employment, and areas that support or provide services to adult learners.

(c) The nationally agreed approach has strategic earmarked and/or allocated funding at all appropriate levels (including for capacity building) to ensure

its sustainability and efficiency over time, while also involving multiple stakeholders (public, private and civil society) who cooperate to foster a lifelong learning culture, particularly at work (key area 3: multilevel/multi-stakeholder governance).

(d) Plans for institutional coordination are defined. A strong national vision accommodates local and regional cooperation needs and specificities.

(e) The nationally agreed approach is flexible and responsive to changing skills needs.

(f) The nationally agreed approach and vision is made public and promoted using a shared and common language, adapted to the local context, for communication among decision-makers and stakeholders as well as the public at large.

(g) A comprehensive, overarching strategy for a monitoring and evaluation system ensures high policy coordination and efficiency (key area 4: monitoring and evaluation).

(h) All key areas are taken into account in the approach to consolidating and creating policies and strategies.

3.1.2. Key area 2: Planning strategy for identification of target groups

3.1.2.1. *Definition*

Implementation of a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways that supports the agreed vision involves a well-defined planning strategy for the definition and identification of target groups. Depending on the strategy adopted this can imply prioritisation of specific groups of low-skilled adults, a more overarching approach that targets a diverse set of groups in need, or a combination of both.

To define and streamline national priorities and their intended socioeconomic outcomes, the identification of target groups involves the study of comprehensive and integrated information on the different potential adult populations and their needs. Official statistics/data sets and other resources can support the identification process and increase opportunities to analyse data on adult skills and competences of potential target groups. Analysis of information on potential target population needs is complemented with effective skill anticipation mechanisms on current and future labour market needs.

The need for comprehensive information requires methods and strategies for involving key stakeholders in compiling data and information for making

informed decisions. Within the context of the coherent and coordinated approach, shared decision-making among public and private stakeholders, including potential beneficiaries, facilitates and enables the creation of upskilling pathways.

3.1.2.2. *Why is it important?*

The diversity of the low-skilled adult population underlines the need for a clearly defined identification strategy, including how priority groups will be determined. Low-skilled adults are a very heterogeneous group with different needs and characteristics in respect of labour market status (employed, unemployed, at-risk of redundancy and/or inactive), socio-demographic characteristics (age group, gender, nationality/citizenship/country of birth, residency or migration status) skills needs (basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills) or level of educational attainment.

Identification of different and specific target groups within the heterogeneous group of adults in potential need of upskilling is a crucial issue in better informing the design and implementation of effective upskilling pathways. It is important that these target groups, with their distinct needs, are identified so that dedicated policies can address equitable access to upskilling pathways. Sustainable learning pathways also need to ensure that low-skilled adults are provided with relevant skills for progression in society and in the labour market.

3.1.2.3. *Key features*

(a) To define national priorities and their intended socioeconomic outcomes, the identification of target groups involves the study of comprehensive and integrated information on the different potential adult populations supported by effective skills anticipation mechanisms based on labour market intelligence.

(b) The approach to identification is flexible, to adapt to changing target groups.

(c) Specific target groups are considered according to the barriers/situational obstacles they may face in accessing upskilling pathways.

(d) The approach to identification and the characteristics of the target groups prioritised will be defined by the available resources and country or regional context, as well as existing strategies relevant to upskilling.

(e) Numerical targets based on the scale of the low-skilled population or other important considerations can feature in the process of identification;

however, appropriate counter measures shall be considered to avoid distortions.

(f) Labour market and employer needs are taken into consideration during the identification process.

(g) There are adequate, reliable and comprehensive tools/technologies/ databases at national and other levels for compiling and accessing information on potential groups of adults who can benefit from upskilling, particularly those most in need.

(h) Adequate screening methods and documentation are put into place and supported by national guidelines and harmonised formats to ensure tailoring of services to individual needs.

(i) Data is continuously collected, shared, disseminated and utilised for identifying groups who can benefit from upskilling following data protection regulations (key area 4: monitoring and evaluation).

(j) Key public and private stakeholders and social partners, including civil society organisations and NGOs, are involved in the identification and anticipation process and nationally organised data collection methods. Appropriate institutional structures (intermediary, formal or informal, skills bodies), operational processes (regulation, management, financial and non-financial incentives) and dissemination channels (online or offline platforms) that may facilitate stakeholder interaction and policy reaction based on reliable labour market information signals are in place.

(k) A national upskilling approach, depending on country context, implies that identification and outreach are activated and further refined at regional and/or local levels (key area 6: outreach). In a long-term perspective, the design can be adapted to changing target groups over time, and as adults move through linked upskilling pathways.

3.1.3. **Key area 3: Governance (multilevel/multi-stakeholder)**

3.1.3.1. *Definition*

Effective governance mechanisms are at the core of a coordinated and coherent approach to upskilling pathways. They derive from having a shared vision in which ensuring sustainable learning pathways for all is regarded as a public value whose responsibility is shared between public institutions, social partners, civil society and also individuals themselves, as those who can benefit from an effective strategy.

Multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance in upskilling pathways can be defined holistically in terms of key and potentially relevant actors in different sectors, tools and provisions (such as legislation/policy), at national/ regional/ local and community levels (for action, decision-making, follow-up, quality assessment), practices (such as procedures, measures, schemes, learning opportunities) and processes (such as coordination mechanisms).

Effective governance will be expressed differently in each country but a strategic approach involves engagement/participation of all stakeholders, including learners/beneficiaries, with clearly defined and shared goals, responsibility and accountability. Effective communication practices with a shared language among those involved in governance aid dissemination of information, support, and feedback. Strategic leadership is essential, with the possibility of one or several coordinating bodies.

3.1.3.2. *Why is it important?*

A multilevel/multi-stakeholder coordinated and coherent governance approach to implementing upskilling pathways involves efficient coordination of stakeholders (spanning education, training and employment and social service sectors) in order to reach diverse adult beneficiaries/learners and to serve their potentially comprehensive needs.

This form of governance can widen access to different pathways and empower even those further from the labour market or who are most vulnerable to participate fully in a lifelong learning society. The meaningful involvement of multiple actors at different levels and system domains can demonstrate that all stakeholders are valued and their contributions, recognised. Including diverse community partners also implies the need for capacity-building strategies.

3.1.3.3. *Key features*

(a) Effective coordination can arise from establishing an umbrella framework/ strategy, while adapting to existing roles, exploiting existing strengths in the system and integrated complementary efforts. Clear links are made to other areas at strategy/decision-making level (key area 1: integrated approach to upskilling pathways; 4: monitoring and evaluation; and 2: planning strategy for identification of target groups).

(b) Governance structures should reflect the institutional setting of the country. In some cases it may be appropriate to establish certain governance mechanisms for policy-making and specific governance mechanisms for implementation; this will vary according to national and local contexts.

(c) Roles and responsibilities of key actors (individuals, groups/entities, networks, public and private) at different levels are defined and distributed across decision-making, implementation, supervision, advisory, follow-up and monitoring; strategic leadership is established and one or more coordinating bodies.

(d) Key stakeholders (including beneficiary representatives) are specifically involved proactively in the upskilling implementation and processes, including programming, innovation, measures, assessments, feedback; (key area 2: planning strategy for target group identification).

(e) Effective communication practices with a shared language among those involved in governance aid dissemination of information, support, and feedback. Strategic leadership is essential, with the possibility of one or several coordinating bodies.

(f) Strengthened stakeholder and institutional capacity, and accountability (such as in terms of decision-making, spending, technical capacity) facilitating mutual understanding and common approaches to maximise policy coherence and foster effective partnerships.

(g) Stakeholders, traditional and non-traditional, are made aware of the importance of upskilling pathways for adults.

(h) Governance in the context of upskilling pathways emphasises the strategic role of the local/community level and efforts should be made to ensure that the agreed strategy can be transferred at the local/community level.

(i) Key tools/resources (such as agreements, guidelines, frameworks, evaluation tools, databases, web portals to widen access, prior learning assessments) are developed collaboratively and officially (laws/regulations) approved, where possible.

(j) All key areas are developed, overseen, coordinated and governed accordingly within the scope of key area 3: governance (multilevel/multi-stakeholder).

3.1.4. **Key area 4: Monitoring and evaluation**

3.1.4.1. *Definition*

Monitoring and evaluation is a systematic measuring of progress in establishing and implementing an upskilling pathways strategy. Thanks to monitoring and evaluation, potential problems can be identified in a timely manner and corrective action taken, when necessary, to improve policy implementation and its effectiveness.

In this context, monitoring and evaluation operates on two main levels. It intersects with all individual areas (such as support, implementation, provisions, programmes, initiatives) that should have dedicated monitoring and evaluation. It is also overarching, related to planning and designing strategies for identification of target groups, and is a key component of an integrated upskilling pathways approach. Without monitoring and evaluation there can be no consistent and continuous feedback to improve systems and make them accountable to stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Assessing effectiveness involves the collection, analysis and evaluation of data on the usage and effectiveness of upskilling policies, systems and interventions. Such data collection includes information on inputs (resources invested), process/activities (what the programme does), outputs (what is directly produced/delivered and who takes part), results (what concrete changes can be identified at the level of individuals or institutions), and impacts (to what extent the programme produced the expected outcomes).

Monitoring should go hand-in-hand with the establishment of an evaluation system which may serve a broader purpose, including planning, accountability, implementation, and institutional strengthening.

3.1.4.2. *Why is it important?*

Systematic and sustainable monitoring and evaluation is required to bring together and inform a coordinated and coherent upskilling pathways policy approach that ties together multiple policy domains and stakeholders to guarantee effectiveness.

Monitoring and evaluation contribute to the improvement of many aspects of policy and strategies for upskilling pathways: shaping of strategic goals; planning of services; development of programmes; identification of gaps in service delivery; consistency between services offered; training needs of professional practitioners; and optimal use of resources and of investment in delivery. It further addresses accountability issues, supports identification

and mainstreaming of best practices and allows for the timely identification of potential problems during implementation.

3.1.4.3. *Key features*

(a) Establishing an overarching monitoring and evaluation system requires taking into account the main characteristics of the integrated upskilling policy designed and implemented in a country. For example, the data to be analysed for evaluation purposes needs to be interpreted according to the context in question (labour market dynamics in different regions).

(b) An overarching monitoring and evaluation approach needs to be informed by a comprehensive and integrated data collection system to guarantee the effectiveness of upskilling pathways interventions and policies; alignment of data collection systems and indicators used within countries and systems is indispensable. A fully comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system should also collect the users' perspectives, including information on their characteristics and their needs, and it should inform and anticipate future trends and needs.

(c) Evaluations are not only continuous but also *ex-post* to provide data and information on both social and economic impacts. Time is allowed for evaluations to ensure that they can capture intermediary and ultimate results, not only short-term outputs.

(d) Indicators for the evaluation and monitoring system inform the design stage of upskilling policies.

(e) Indicators assess both direct and indirect effects of upskilling policies across the education, training, employment and social fields in terms of cost-benefits to individuals and governments.

(f) Evaluation of good practices providing evidence on their success identifies key factors for transferability and mainstreaming. Knowledge about what works (and under which conditions) can then be properly disseminated and shared via publicly available user-friendly databases. A clear approach is needed to identify and collect good practices.

(g) The overarching monitoring and evaluation system is underpinned and linked with quality assurance systems; it also requires consideration of the system and the stakeholders involved. Involving the appropriate stakeholders can facilitate effective data collection and can help address some of the challenges, such as low response rates and data sensitivity. A good communication strategy can inform and engage those involved in the implementation of the upskilling policies about the principles and

process of the evaluation. Raising awareness among data collectors of the importance of having accurate data, but also communicating the monitoring and evaluation results back to the different levels, (national, regional and local) may engender stakeholder engagement and ownership.

(h) Effective and sustainable monitoring and evaluation systems are underpinned by resources mobilisation, both human and financial. This may include investment in capacity building and providing the right training and support to professionals in monitoring and evaluation, as well as to policy-makers, including support on how to interpret data. Professionalising monitoring and evaluation and using independent, external bodies to gather data and evaluate may also be considered in appropriate contexts/cases.

3.1.5. Key area 5: Financial and non-financial support

3.1.5.1. *Definition*

In the context of upskilling pathways, financial support measures aim at increasing participation of low-skilled adults in education and training by reducing the cost of education and training either directly for individuals or for companies providing training to their low-skilled employees. Countries implement various financing instruments such as levy-grant mechanisms, tax incentives, grants/vouchers/learning accounts, loans and paid training leave to increase participation in, and provision of, education and training.

Financing instruments may be accompanied by non-financial support such as information, advice and guidance, raising awareness of benefits of learning, tailored training delivery, and/or promoting partnerships to enhance companies' capacities (see also key area 7: lifelong guidance system).

3.1.5.2. *Why is it important?*

As Eurostat Adult education survey (AES) data shows, one of the most important obstacles to adult participation in education and training is financial. High financial cost has also been identified as a significant obstacle hindering company provision of continuing vocational training (CVTS data). Well-targeted financing support may help to reduce the financial barrier and attract low-skilled adults to participate in education and training as well as encourage employers to invest more in training of their (low-skilled) employees.

AES also indicates that the key barrier to adult participation in education and training is lack of time because of family responsibilities and conflicting training and work schedules. Well-designed paid training leave may help to overcome both time and financial constraints and encourage low-skilled adults to undertake education and training.

Financing instruments may work or fail depending on the broader economic, social and educational context. However, they might not be successful in the absence of a more comprehensive approach addressing different obstacles (on top of the financial barrier) to participation in/provision of CVT/adult learning. Financial instruments need to be complemented by non-financial support.

3.1.5.3. *Key features*

(a) Appropriate level of funding is secured. The costs related to upskilling pathways are adequately shared between public authorities, employers, individuals and other relevant stakeholders (such as social partners, NGOs). Governments/public authorities demonstrate a high level of commitment and play an important role in supporting those who face difficulties in paying for education and training.

(b) Those benefitting from EU funds make best use of these resources while avoiding over-reliance on them. Appropriate financing mechanisms mobilising national resources are in place to ensure sustainability of funding.

(c) Existing financial and non-financial support measures for individuals and companies are reviewed and their effectiveness in reaching low-skilled adults and efficiency is assessed.

(d) Based on the above, what is assessed is whether or not there is a need for introducing new financial and non-financial support measures and/or modifying the existing ones.

(e) Suitable financing instruments are used:
   (i) to target individuals: grants, vouchers/learning accounts; subsidised, income-contingent loans; paid training leave of adequate duration (long enough to allow to acquire a higher qualification);
   (ii) to target companies: levy-grant mechanism, tax incentives, grants, payback clauses.

(f) Financing instruments are carefully designed to ensure effective targeting of low-skilled adults:

(i) preferential treatment towards low-skilled adults and employers providing training to their low-skilled employees is in-built in financing mechanisms, e.g. granting these groups higher levels of subsidy or priority for funding;

(ii) the amount of subsidy is adequate/attractive and considers direct and indirect costs of education and training;

(iii) adequate financial support is provided up front to those that face significant liquidity constraints (important especially for low-income individuals);

(iv) eligibility criteria (in terms of groups and type of education and training) are carefully determined to target diverse groups of low-skilled adults;

(v) complementarity of financing instruments is ensured;

(vi) possible drawbacks of financing instruments (such as heavy administrative burden, dead-weight losses) are taken into account when designing and implementing financing instruments.

(g) Financing instruments are combined with suitable non-financial support, e.g. information about the existence of the financing instrument, advice to companies and support for learners on the use of the instrument, raising awareness of benefits of learning (such as by public relations campaigns and marketing measures), tailored training delivery, consultancy services for companies, quality assurance; (see also key area 7: lifelong guidance system).

(h) Companies' direct involvement in the design of financing instruments and accompanying non-financial support is ensured to identify what would motivate them to provide training to their low-skilled employees. Employer engagement could be facilitated through raising their awareness of the benefits of investing in employee skills.

(i) SMEs are given particular attention and assistance as they are less likely to benefit from the financing support. There is a support system for SMEs which includes information and guidance in relation to funding opportunities, consulting services in relation to defining SME training needs, administrative support in applying for funding, promoting partnerships/networks/pooling resources to increase SME training capacity, and innovative learning approaches to adapt to specific needs and constraints of SMEs (such as using coaches at the workplace to teach new tasks, self-regulated learning or distance learning).

(j) Coordination between funding sources/bodies allocating the funding for various learning purposes is ensured to allow for more efficient use of

the funds. Coordination between the actors involved in strategic planning and implementation of financial support measures is safeguarded to avoid long time gaps between committing the funds and granting the financial support to the final beneficiary.

(k) Monitoring and evaluation arrangements are in place (key area 4: monitoring and evaluation). In-depth, systematic monitoring and evaluation studies (not only short questionnaires and satisfaction surveys), underpinned by the right indicators and thorough analysis of good practices may support understanding of the most effective and efficient allocation/use of financial resources. In cases of support measure underperformance, corrective actions are taken. Successful, effective practices are identified and funding is ensured for encouraging their expansion. Good practice and innovation resulting from short-term projects is sustained through mainstream funding mechanisms.

3.1.6. **Key area 6: Outreach**

3.1.6.1. *Definition*
Outreach consists of measures developed to offer services to individuals who have no knowledge about them or have reduced access to standard provision. In upskilling this encompasses tracking, contacting and engaging individuals out of the reach/scope of standard services in education, training, employment and welfare measures, supporting learning and labour market (re)integration.

The measures central to upskilling adults involve flexible guidance services and adjusted learning activities, relying on specially trained staff. Awareness-raising campaigns, community embeddedness, dedicated distance tools, intensive guidance and adapted learning methodologies are common features for increasing access to provisions through outreach.

3.1.6.2. *Why is it important?*
Young people beyond a certain age threshold (usually 25) tend to fall outside the scope of education and youth policies. If inactive for a long period, they will also not be covered by public employment services measures. Unemployed adults after a certain period exhaust their social support and can be deemed 'problematic' or unsolvable cases. Fear of refoulement or forced repatriation prevents many refugees and third-country migrants voluntarily searching for public support. Frequently these individuals stop being monitored and

are not covered by existing activation policies and standard passive welfare support. Due to lack of information and demotivation, many do not voluntarily search for recognition, validation and learning solutions. To address these and other vulnerable cases, public authorities need to track, reengage and support these individuals with effective outreach services.

3.1.6.3. *Key features*

(a) Trained and dedicated staff, specialised in outreach activities, who can address the complex needs of vulnerable and frequently marginalised groups.

(b) Key decision-makers raise awareness of the role of outreach and their importance for individuals and society.

(c) Guidance and outreach services are well coordinated and a stable feature of skills development and adult learning policies, ideally framed by national agreements across political forces (national strategies, budgets).

(d) Central administration financing, technical support and monitoring is well coordinated with local/regional operational management and implementation. Municipalities, local employment offices or regional one-stop shops may manage processes and coordinate the efforts of local stakeholders.

(e) Outreach activities are monitored and evaluated, identifying success factors and adaptation strategies, to allow for national level generalisation.

(f) Outreach is based on user centrality and geared to development of individual autonomy and readiness to engage in learning and work.

(g) Services observe ethical standards, with personal information ultimately owned and controlled by users.

(h) Sharing of beneficiaries' registrations across services such as schools, social security, PES and NGOs exists to identify, track and contact individuals in need of support. This requires ethical handling of personal data issues, updating registries and case management.

(i) Public calls and online information are generally used to signpost available services but they are not sufficient and require complementary measures.

(j) Developing street work is fundamental, reaching into peer groups, communities and families. This requires trained staff and is better developed in cooperation with local authorities and NGOs.

(k) Supported by peer work and community/social economy initiatives.

(l) Use of role models in motivating young people to reengage in learning through awareness-raising and mentoring.

(m) Field visits to raise awareness of workers in illegal situations or who are unaware of available opportunities are developed with the help of civic associations and social partners.

(n) If activation services are exclusively provided by the PES, the obligation to register should either be waived, or outreach should incorporate awareness-raising regarding the need to register.

(o) Individualised career support is available, including career guidance and counselling. This includes assessments (skills, attitudes, aspirations), motivational work, tutoring/mentoring and clarification of preferences and career planning.

(p) Holistic processes, with diagnosis and support of physical and mental health, given the vulnerable state of many individuals. Teams should be interdisciplinary and, whenever necessary, provide support with financial, housing and integration issues.

(q) Effectiveness is enhanced if coordinated with validation/recognition systems, as well as flexible learning options. Individual portfolios can document and support the progress of beneficiaries.

(r) Training is normally dynamic, conducted in an accessible language, adjusted to the learner's characteristics and availability. Readiness to work and learn should be developed before engaging individuals in standard training or employability measures.

(s) Including the target group voice, their knowledge and understanding in the development of alternative approaches, which increases the effectiveness and quality of learning offers, as well as their credibility to potential beneficiaries.

3.1.7. Key area 7: Lifelong guidance system

3.1.7.1. *Definition*

Lifelong guidance is officially defined by a European Council resolution of 2008 (Council of the European Union, 2008) as a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and situation to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings. It includes activities relating to information-giving, counselling, competence assessment, support in work and learning environments, as well as the teaching of decision-making and career management skills. It can be provided in schools, by training providers, at job centres, workplaces/

enterprises, community centres or in other settings. Guidance services can provide referrals to other services and specialists.

3.1.7.2. *Why is it important?*

The European guidelines for policies and systems development for lifelong guidance (ELGPN, 2015) highlight that lifelong guidance develops individuals' capacities to make career-related decisions, identify career opportunities, manage transitions in work and learning and generally increase self-awareness relative to personal needs, potential and aspirations. It impacts on individual human capital formation, engagement in learning, networking capacity, job searching effectiveness, and adaptability to work environments. It also contributes to a range of public policy goals and outcomes in:

(a) education and training: engagement, retention, performance and transitions;

(b) labour market: participation, employability, job retention, average income, labour market adjustments, mobility, lower welfare costs and workforce skills development;

(c) social inclusion: socioeconomic integration, reduction in long-term unemployment, poverty, social exclusion and promoting equity (gender, ethnicity, special educational needs, and social background).

(d) economic development: workforce participation, productivity, lower skills mismatches;

(e) guideline 13 concretely addresses its importance in adult learning and upskilling, underlining how guidance:

   (i) is central to lifelong learning, stimulating demand for adult learning, providing information and counselling, enabling outreach strategies, raising awareness and motivation of adults;

   (ii) informs about validation, recognition and flexible learning opportunities, and supports application processes, also advocating client rights before relevant stakeholders;

   (iii) provides specialist support for many adults to find their way in new learning environments and in a rapidly evolving world of work;

   (iv) addresses the non-homogeneity of adult learners, who may have had negative experiences with education. It helps diverse vulnerable groups of adults engage and overcome barriers in learning, clarify their targets and achieve them;

(v) helps adults deal with more complex roles and responsibilities related to family, work and economic situation to find balanced options and support mechanisms for upskilling and learning;

(vi) directly influences active citizenship and personal development.

3.1.7.3. *Key features*

(a) Career guidance services move decisively towards a lifelong and life-wide process support. There is greater integration across support services addressing different life stages and contexts (school counselling, employment services, social services, municipal services).

(b) Career guidance support is professionalised in all relevant areas (education, training, employment), follows clear standards of service and has an outcome-oriented approach based on improving individual/social welfare, labour market outcomes and learning results.

(c) Foundation and continuing training of staff exists in line with high standards of service, providing access to professional qualifications; continuing training ensures compliance with growing work requirements including intercultural training, legislation, labour market intelligence and digital skills.

(d) There is local and regional cooperation (and coordination); municipalities can play a central role coordinating local efforts and local cooperation should be based on partner strengths in specialised areas; local cooperation also provides labour market intelligence and information on emerging vacancies, mobility, changes in occupational profiles and conditions for work. Guidance is consolidated as an individual right and choice within the scope of economic and social rights; this is affirmed in education, training, social and employment policies and the development of digital citizenship.

(e) Career guidance is an integral part of national upskilling strategies, adult learning programmes, publicly funded education and training, as well as labour market policies.

(f) Key decision-makers raise their awareness of the role of career guidance and outreach and their importance, for individuals and policy; ideally, guidance is framed by national agreements across political forces, consolidated in national strategies with stable budgetary items; guidance activities are organised around the principle of user centrality and adult learners are provided the opportunity for personalised, individual guidance.

Services aim at long-term individual autonomy in career management, by encouraging the development of career management skills.

(g) Individual information produced by the services, including assessments, portfolios, referrals and other relevant outputs, are owned by the individual users.

(h) Integrated information and guidance services involving multi-channel delivery (web, telephone, face-to-face) are available for adult learners and are adapted to beneficiaries' needs; individuals are provided with an adequate blend of digital, phone and face-to-face services, as well as peer support.

(i) There is sensitivity and adaptation of methods and tools to the needs of diverse adult groups and individuals (such as NEETs, long-term unemployed (LTU), refugees, those with learning disabilities and difficulties).

(j) Career guidance is available prior, during and after learning engagement, to support choice, learning and transition to employment/further learning.

(k) Impartial information and support in accessing flexible learning solutions are available, including work-based learning and open educational resources.

(l) Information and support in obtaining validation and recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning is available.

(m) Employed adults are supported through steady improvement in staff management and human resource practices. Employment and growth strategies provide incentives and technical support to micro and small and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs) through funds, grants, local employment offices and consultancy.

(n) There is cooperation between guidance services, enterprises and employer associations (e.g. production of local labour market information and intelligence, tasters, shadowing, work-based, learning, internships).

(o) Service is provided in a holistic and networked way, coordinated with outreach strategies, local administration, social partners, social services, health services, civil organisations, facilitating access and success of vulnerable adults in learning; individual needs are addressed by services in their specific area of expertise, in a coordinated way.

(p) Assessment and promotion of key skills is supported in guidance services.

(q) Entrepreneurial skills and attitudes are supported.

3.1.8. **Key area 8: Skills assessment**

3.1.8.1. *Definition*

A skills assessment (also 'skills audit' or 'skill profiling') is a process in which an individual's learning outcomes are checked against specific reference points or standards. In some instances, it is closely linked to guidance services (key area 7: lifelong guidance system), while in others it is part of the validation and recognition of competences leading to certification (key area 10: validation and recognition of skills and competences).

In the context of upskilling pathways, skills assessment is focused on the identification and documentation of an individual's learning in any context (formal, non-formal and informal) and of any gaps in relation to their desired level of skills. Skills assessment will result in a statement of the individual's learning outcomes, which will be the basis for planning the next steps in training (key area 9: tailored learning offer(s) leading to a formal qualification and/or with work-based learning) or for the validation and recognition of skills (key area 10: validation and recognition of skills).

3.1.8.2. *Why is it important?*

All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improved knowledge, know-how, skills, competences and/or qualifications, is crucial to easing progression opportunities, transition to employment, job retention and mobility, staying up to date with knowledge and technical developments, career advancement and further study. Skills assessment will contribute to these goals by making visible the learning acquired that has not been previously documented.

The skills assessment process will:

(a) help individuals reflect on and become conscious of their actual capabilities;

(b) provide users with a means of making visible and marketing their skills and competences;

(c) help develop careers and increase employability, especially for the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups;

(d) map needs for further training, considering the importance of matching individual competences with labour market needs.

Inactive and long-term unemployed individuals might have been involved in domestic work or voluntary activities that provided a source of learning.

Immigrants might have undocumented sets of skills valuable for host-country labour markets. Particularly with low-skilled adults, identification of previously acquired skills and competences will facilitate their engagement and motivation for further learning. For some, the discovery and increased awareness of their own capabilities will be a valuable outcome.

Identification and documentation of skills is also crucial for designing a targeted training approach based on an individual's point of departure. It may reduce the length of training and increase system efficiency, helping in overcoming the so-called situational obstacles such as family responsibility, conflicting time schedule, financial costs, lack of employer support or proximity concerns.

3.1.8.3. *Key features*

(a) The definition and purpose of skills assessment and its relationship with the overall validation and recognition process (key area 10: validation and recognition of skills and competences) are made clear conceptually but also as applied to relevant (national, regional) legal foundations/frameworks and in relation to the different services and providers (as in use of assessment by training institutions versus in guidance services).

(b) Skills assessment is a systematic feature of the system enabling upskilling. It is carried out in combination with guidance and counselling, supporting the individual in the discovery of their existing competences. The integration of validation and skills assessment creates a continuum the individual can easily navigate. Skills assessment is an input to the tailored learning offer and to validation.

(c) All formal, non-formal and informal learning are considered. The methods used and the proof of learning required need to be aligned with the type of learning assessed/identified. Tools need to be adapted to the individual's characteristics and needs while remaining coherent with the overall process of upskilling. A combination of ICT-based tools, group and individual sessions is used.

(d) Individual plans for next steps in training/learning and support are based on the skills assessment. Individual portfolios can be initiated in the early stages providing the basis for cumulative documentation of referrals, assessments, personal plans and certificates.

(e) The documentation formats and outputs of the process support transferability and portability of the identified skills by clearly stating learning outcomes. Transparent methods and standards (whether

national, occupational, sectoral or defined at European level) must be clearly communicated to, and agreed with, the relevant stakeholders. Assessment and certification, where relevant, are in line with European and national qualification frameworks and systems.

(f) The output must be understood and trusted by key third-parties (training providers, employers, civil society organisation) so that it is useful for individuals for accessing further learning, a validation process or for employment. This necessitates skills assessment quality assurance systems, through reliable and valid assessment methods as well as well-trained practitioners who can engage beneficiaries who are low-skilled.

(g) SMEs are recognised as important actors who benefit from, and contribute to, skills assessment.

3.1.9. Key area 9A: Tailored learning offer leading to a formal qualification

3.1.9.1. *Definition*

A tailored learning offer leading to a formal qualification refers primarily to the learning paths available to adults, at an institutional/framework level, for acquiring the formal qualifications (valid diplomas) available in IVET or adult education and/or accumulating credits leading to them. The offer may consist of more than one path, all of which rely on assessment, validation and/or recognition of prior learning ([14]). At an individual level, a tailored learning offer addresses an individual's – or group's – basic learning needs (including language, numeracy, digital skills) and builds the foundation for pursuing a full formal qualification. Tailored learning offers depend on the capacity of the implementing institutions to make the paths provided for available at the institutional/framework level, and to adapt to the individuals' learning profile and needs.

([14]) Examples of such paths may include:
  - full or shortened programmes (school-based or apprenticeships) for adults, in the non-formal and formal VET system;
  - individually certified modules leading to a full diploma;
  - access to a final assessment based on minimum years of professional experience in the relevant profession, with possible short/integrative training modules;
  - recognition of prior knowledge based on a portfolio, with possible short/integrative training modules.

3.1.9.2. *Why is it important?*

Adults are a highly heterogeneous group ([15]); tailoring addresses this heterogeneity by acknowledging and building on prior learning and removing obstacles (institutional, as well as those linked to shared individual characteristics, experiences, knowledge), easing participation in learning. Linking learning offers to the prospect of qualifications with exchange value on the labour market and in education and training may motivate individuals to engage. When adults are aware of the purpose of their studies and of the utility (professional and personal) of a diploma, chances of engagement and success are higher. Further, linking learning offers to valid qualifications implies identifying and addressing the basic skills and knowledge gaps which need to be addressed for the purpose of a qualification; these will be addressed individually as part of the overall learning journey. This tailored approach may be more appealing to an individual than attending separate literacy or numeracy courses that do not provide credits toward a qualification. Acquisition of initial qualifications can motivate the transition to higher education and higher vocational education and training.

3.1.9.3. *Key features*

(a) There is more than one path in IVET/CVET for an adult to acquire a formal qualification; all paths are able to make use of skills assessment, validation and/or recognition of prior knowledge.

(b) There is a clear link between the offers, paths and qualifications, enabling support services to provide clear and consistent information which allows an individual to make informed choices based on his/her needs, ambitions and goals, among other factors.

(c) Although there is an emphasis on diversification of paths and individualisation, based on single learner's needs, a tailored offer does not affect the learning objectives of a given qualification; these remain the same and guarantee comparability and quality of the learning results irrespective of the path taken.

(d) Education and training providers and other types of operator have the capacity (pedagogic, financial and human resources) to work with adults, for example through relevant networks and in cooperation with support

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([15]) Different life, learning and working experiences, various age groups, different family status and obligations and socioeconomic characteristics and needs.

services. Providers can be encouraged to work with employers through local level collaboration to encourage adults to participate in training.

(e) Employers are able and willing to support their employees with no or low qualifications, or with outdated qualifications, to engage in education and training by offering training leave, apprenticeship opportunities or otherwise facilitating continuing training, possibly with financial support of by sectoral or professional organisations.

(f) While addressing individuals' (or homogeneous groups') specific learning needs, the learning journey also includes: preparatory/foundation courses/ programmes to address basic skill gaps in pursuing a qualification, as needed; and an offer which takes into account prior knowledge and skills relevant for the specific qualification.

(g) Broader transversal skills/key competences related to professional training are integrated into formal pathways, such as by embedding them into the teaching of professional skills and linking occupation to acquisition of qualifications.

(h) Adults of different learning profiles benefit from a range of pedagogies and methods (such as phone learning), flexible course formats (non-linear offer, combination, own pace) and forms of final assessment available (fear of failure, often linked to the high expectations associated with learning and high investment, may be mitigated with this approach).

(i) Adults' specific constraints (such as family obligations, financial, time, work, distance) and/or needs (such as disability) are addressed individually or as a homogeneous group, through financial and non-financial support.

(j) The opportunity to acquire a certificate or qualification through training should not be an obligation; in the same way, traditional examinations should not be compulsory due to fear of failure among adults with negative previous experiences or any special educational needs. Alternative and flexible forms of assessment should be available.

3.1.10. **Key area 9B: Tailored learning offer with work-based learning (WBL) ([16])**

3.1.10.1. *Definition*

WBL is applied/practical learning that may or may not involve learning at a company. The first type may include project-based learning, learning

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([16]) Key area 9B needs to be read together with 9A.

in simulated work environments and workshops. The second (also called workplace learning) may include internships, traineeships and apprenticeships. Of all forms of WBL, apprenticeships need to be supported by a legal framework and be open to adult participation. All other forms of WBL may be implemented as part of individual providers' pedagogical approaches. Tailoring refers to providers' capacity to make use of the different forms of WBL to respond better to the needs of an individual and/or a homogeneous group of individuals. When workplace learning is involved, tailoring also refers to addressing the needs and expectations of companies (particularly relevant for apprenticeships).

3.1.10.2. *Why is it important?*

WBL offers adults the possibility to apply immediately what they have learned, understand the relevance and impact of their learning on their job and personal life, and focus on problems and tasks rather than on subjects; these are all central elements in andragogy. Adults are remunerated while learning in apprenticeships and learn predominantly in a company: they are integrated into a working environment and are able to identify more with being workers than learners.

3.1.10.3. *Key features*

(a) Providers are aware of, prepared for, and supported to use diverse forms of WBL (not only workplace learning) to tailor their learning offer to adults' needs; innovative approaches are encouraged and shared.
(b) Employers need to buy into employee training and also to assume responsibility. At the least, providers and employers should work together to convince employees to take up training. More broadly, there is need for local collaboration and networks, and ownership for those involved.
(c) There are national, regional and local partnerships involving companies –particularly SMEs – in workplace learning for their own employees or other potential beneficiaries.
(d) Adults' skills must relate to company expectations (minimum foundation level, as well as technical education and training level); basic training is combined with integration in the workplace.
(e) Companies – particularly SMEs – have the pedagogical capacity to work with adults; in-company trainers and staff are informed of adult learner needs and expectations; (key area 5: financial and non-financial support).

(f) Company staff attitudes need to be positive towards adult learners as individuals, and potentially as individuals belonging to a particular group (such as refugees).

(g) Apprenticeships are clearly distinguished from other forms of WBL, in particular workplace-based learning.

(h) Apprenticeship training is open to adults, with companies – particularly SMEs – incentivised (financially and non-financially) to offer placements to adults; (key area 5: financial and non-financial support).

(i) Apprenticeship training provision is tailored to adults' needs/profiles (taking account of aspects such as prior learning and work experiences, individual constraints); particular groups of low-skilled adults may need further initial preparation: for example, some migrants may be unprepared for certain workplace environments in terms of their awareness of expectations and company culture).

(j) Employers should have the potential, and be willing, to offer apprenticeship to their employees to help them qualify for better/higher-skilled positions.

(k) Socioeconomic partners are involved in design, strategy and provision, particularly in apprenticeship. Adult apprentices are financially motivated to enrol in and complete their apprenticeship learning (when they rely only on their apprentice remuneration): companies may offer increased remuneration for adult apprentices; adults may also receive a top-up subsidy while in apprenticeship training.

3.1.11. **Key area 10: Validation and recognition of skills and competences**

3.1.11.1. *Definition*

The European Council defines validation of non-formal and informal learning as a process of confirmation by an authorised body that an individual has acquired learning outcomes measured against a relevant standard. It consists of four phases: identification, documentation, assessment and certification (European Council, 2012). These phases are combined and balanced in different ways, reflecting the particular purpose of each validation arrangement.

In the context of upskilling pathways, validation is combined with recognition, broadening the scope to learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Qualifications acquired in other countries or regions might be also considered within the process of upskilling.

The emphasis of validation in upskilling pathways is on the last stage of the process, certification, while identification, documentation and different degrees of assessment are at the centre in key area 8: skills assessment. Key areas 8 and 10 are deeply interwoven. The *Upskilling pathway* recommendation indicates that the individual is certified as having acquired skills or key competences which are particularly relevant in progressing towards a qualification at EQF level 3 or 4, depending on national circumstances. Validation can also be considered as a point of access in upskilling pathways and a form of upskilling itself, in cases where it leads directly to employment or continuing learning.

3.1.11.2. *Why is it important?*

The outputs of a validation process can take many different forms, ranging from formal qualifications to certificates issued by different institutions (companies, NGOs, chambers of commerce). These aim to increase the visibility and value of all acquired learning, thereby making it possible for the individual to use this documentation to continue to further education, for maintaining employment or entering the labour market.

Validation can make a significant difference in better matching skills and labour demand, promoting transferability of skills between companies and sectors, and in supporting mobility across the European labour market. It can also contribute to social inclusion by providing those at risk of exclusion, particularly low-skilled adults, with a way to improve their employability and engagement in society.

Recognition of foreign qualifications and validation of skills may be particularly pertinent to migrants, many of whom hold qualifications gained in other countries, which are not yet recognised in their host country.

3.1.11.3. *Key features*

(a) The definition and purpose of the validation and recognition are made clear conceptually (particularly in relation to skills assessment, key area 8) but also as applied to relevant (national, regional) legal foundations/ frameworks and in relation to the different services and providers (such as use of assessment by training institutions versus in guidance services).

(b) Systems are in place for the validation and recognition of skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. These systems ensure that skills are being properly assessed and certified in line with national or regional guidelines and regulations.

(c) The individual is at the centre of the validation process, in respect of methods and tools, while objectives are also adapted to his/her specific needs; this is particularly effective for those who are hard to reach (links to key area 6: outreach). There is a clear connection between guidance, skills assessment, training provision and validation. Regardless of the different forms of validation and skills assessment, their integration creates a continuum that the individual can easily navigate.

(d) The purpose of the validation and recognition process is clearly defined and communicated to individuals and society. Multiple stakeholders with clearly defined roles are informed and involved in different aspects they are aware of and trust the outputs. Buy-in by companies, trade unions and civil society organisations is assured, so individuals can use these outputs to access employment, further education or to maintain employment. SMEs are recognised as important actors who benefit from and contribute to the validation process.

(e) Validation arrangements across different contexts - education and training, employment and civil society - are coherent and have common grounds to allow for connections among the different outputs and contexts.

(f) Standards used in formal qualifications apply to validation of non-formal and informal learning where relevant, so the outputs are of equal value. This also holds for the recognition of foreign qualifications. Assessment and certification are in line with European and national qualification frameworks and systems. Where the aim of the validation process is not to obtain a formal qualification, the standards used need to be clearly communicated and written in a way that the learning outcomes are portable and usable for further learning or work. Stakeholders accept (formally and informally) the agreed standards, whether they are national or other standards (occupational, sectoral defined or even at European level).

(g) The tools used are reliable, valid and transparent and adapted to individual needs and circumstances; various methods for assessment and certification are used, in line with existing services (and supports), to integrate skills assessment and validation.

(h) Career guidance support is available before, during and after the validation procedure (key area 7: lifelong guidance system).

(i) A clear framework for quality assurance is in place, to provide credibility and trust to the outputs of the process, while also ensuring validity and reliability of assessment methods.

(j) Practitioners are adequately trained and qualified for their specific validation role as assessors, counsellors or managers. Creation of training and reference frameworks can provide professional standards.

(k) A system is in place for monitoring and evaluation of validation and recognition practices (key area 4: monitoring and evaluation).

CHAPTER 4.

Conclusions

Accompanying some of the challenges that European countries currently face, there are also opportunities for learning, progress and innovation, as well as the integration of new talent and expertise into the workforce and in our societies. Europe needs to improve and maintain a high level of skills, knowledge and competences to remain competitive and innovative. Individual knowledge, skills and competences – along with their recognition, validation and activation – are both essential to access and progress in the labour market and to fulfilling one's potential and playing an active role in society. Individual empowerment through a platform providing upskilling opportunities, such as adult learning or even the recognition of prior learning, can lead to greater participation in society, increasing the chances that Europe will be more adaptable to each new challenge we face, expected and unexpected. This is even more urgent now, as our societies and economies are confronted with the unprecedented consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

Building on the knowledge presented in Volume 1 of this series, *Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways* (Cedefop, 2020), as well as the previous related Cedefop study on the economic and social cost associated with low skills (Cedefop, 2017), this second publication responds to the call for a renewed policy approach to upskilling low-skilled adults. This renewed approach, as realised in the analytical framework, is both comprehensive and strategic, coordinated and coherent, allowing countries to pull together various resources, creating synergies from different arrangements, measures and policies already in place across European countries. Given the experience of national stakeholders in addressing the needs of their own target groups for upskilling, as well as evidence presented in Volume 1 (Cedefop, 2020), systems need to acknowledge the heterogeneity of the low-skilled population and the diverse needs and characteristics of adults with potential for upskilling. More than this, systems designed to increase access and support for low-skilled adults need to be transparent and responsive to adult needs, through engagement, feedback and different forms of participation.

In ensuring access for all low-skilled adults, upskilling pathways is about creating and sustaining optimal conditions, structures and comprehensive provisions, pulling together resources and creating the right synergies between key policy areas. Individuals should, as a consequence, be able to access, construct and steer their own individual pathways to empowerment, based on their own complex needs and taking full advantage of the tools, opportunities and resources provided through upskilling pathways.

The overall aim of Cedefop work in this area is to support the development of coordinated and coherent approaches – especially ones that are comprehensive –- to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. Given this general aim, the objective of this report is to describe the conceptual and collaborative development of the analytical framework for upskilling pathways for adults as a tool for national policy-makers, social partners and other relevant stakeholders in designing and implementing sustainable, coordinated and coherent policy approaches.

Participants in the stakeholder consultations, including the second PLF on upskilling pathways and national stakeholder focus groups in the five selected countries (Chapter 2), largely acknowledged that Cedefop's analytical framework is a useful source of inspiration and a tool to facilitate reflection on and identification of key areas for action.

The framework's value-added aspects involve the collaborative development process, its core foundation and its multidisciplinary contents. Accordingly, the development of the framework:

(a) is based on an iterative process integrating both qualitative research and two rounds of stakeholder consultations;

(b) is grounded in a lifelong learning perspective and focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary;

(c) is in line with the principles and frame of reference provided by the *Upskilling pathways* recommendation;

(d) involved the continuous coordination of Cedefop's Department for learning and employability knowledge and expertise in the in adult learning, early leaving from education and training, financing adult learning, lifelong guidance and outreach, validation and recognition of prior learning, and work-based learning;

(e) derived from an analysis of systemic features found in a selection of good and interesting practices collected for the project, for a unique approach to upskilling pathways for adults with low skills.

The framework reflects multiple areas of policy related to upskilling, which form an integrated whole:

(a) it is articulated around important systemic features needed for a coherent and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults;

(b) it has 10 key areas of the policy process organised according to three levels: decision-making, focused on creating the right synergies, paving the way for coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways; support, which involves ensuring that pathways are inclusive and accessible; and implementation, offering tailored, adaptable and flexible upskilling pathways;

(c) it is articulated horizontally, in promoting coordination and cooperation across the 10 key areas, particularly within the decision-making level: it unlocks synergies and fosters complementarities, but it also contributes to the enrichment of knowledge and evidence within each key area.

This reference publication is presented in connection with Cedefop's continuing policy support and knowledge development in upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. To date, knowledge and experience in adult learning and continuing vocational training, and particularly on adult empowerment, has been gained in several ways: investigating adult populations with potential for upskilling and reskilling; documenting examples of existing country provisions and arrangements for upskilling pathways; and through conducting research and generating policy-relevant knowledge on fields critical to creating comprehensive, coherent, coordinated upskilling pathways, in the areas of decision-making, support and implementation, realised in the analytical framework. In order to focus the current report on the development and presentation of the final analytical framework, not all these results and the knowledge generated have been presented here; however, this work forms the basis for future work and outputs, and positions Cedefop as a knowledge broker in the area of upskilling pathways.

The next step will be to apply the final analytical framework presented in this report in a selection of countries that agree to participate in thematic country reviews specifically focused on upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults.

There will also be further follow-up on upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults, involving the analytical framework, during the forthcoming third peer learning forum on upskilling pathways: a vision for the future, in November

2020. Stakeholders will have an opportunity to share the latest developments in upskilling pathways, including their knowledge, experiences and innovative practices, challenges and inspirations toward the identification and implementation of key areas for action.

Acronyms/Abbreviations

AES	adult education survey
CPF	personal training account *(Compte personnel de formation)*
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CVTS	continuing vocational training survey
DUL	unique labour endowment *(Dote Unica Lavoro)*
ECVET	European credit system for vocational education and training
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European social fund
EU	European Union
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LTU	long-term unemployed
MS	Member State
MSMEs	micro and small and medium-size enterprises
NEET	not in education, employment or training
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NOI	New opportunities initiative *(Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades)*
PES	public employment services
RPL	recognition of prior learning
SANQ	qualification needs anticipation system *(Sistema de Antecipação de Necessidades de Qualificação)*
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
VET	vocational education and training
ULF	Union Learning Fund
(WeGebAU)	on-the-job training programme *(Weiterbildung Geringqualifizierter und beschäftigter älterer Arbeitnehmer in Unternehmen)*
WBL	work-based learning

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ANNEX 1.

Good and promising practice fiches

A1.1. *SkillsPlus* Norway

National programme providing basic skills training with a workplace training component. It is part of the Norwegian Skills policy strategy 2017- 21 as part of the working area on low-skilled adults with weak labour market attachments (Norwegian Ministry of Education, 2017).

Since 2014 the programme has included verbal communication in combination with other skills; and since 2016 it has included Norwegian for non-native speakers.

Objective
Developing basic competences for working life: providing working-age adults, the opportunity to acquire basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy, and digital skills.

Target groups
(a) Low-skilled employed adults (low-qualified adults with at most ISCED 2 qualification and those with low levels of literacy, numeracy and/or digital skills). Since 2015 one of the subjects of teaching is improving Norwegian skills for foreigners/immigrants.
(b) Adults recruited through NGOs (since 2015).

Level of implementation
National

Stage of implementation
Continuous since 2006

Funding
National

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework

(a) Integrated approach to training/learning design, planning and implementation/delivery.

(b) Strong political commitment and earmarked and/or allocated funding ensuring sustainability.

(c) Multilevel and multi-stakeholder effective governance: strong partnership and cooperation among stakeholders (State/employers/training providers/social partners, learners); the implementation of the programme is based on a tripartite structure, strong stakeholder engagement and accountability.

(d) Flexibility and tailoring: courses are tailored to the needs of the individual learner and of the employer. Flexibility in content and focus, as well as in the delivery/mode of learning, contribute to strengthening participant motivation for further learning and employer engagement.

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A1.2. *Skillnet* – Ireland

Typology

National Agency dedicated to the promotion and facilitation of workforce learning in Ireland. *Skillnet* Ireland supports the establishment of regional and sectoral networks of companies (*Skillnet* networks) that identify training needs and organise training for companies in the network as well as free training for job seekers.

Objective

Promote and aid workforce learning in Ireland.

Skillnet strategy for 2016-19 is driven by three strategic goals that take into consideration funding, the skill needs of enterprises and the broad economic context. These strategic goals are:

(a) Supplying future skills: specific skills, new skills, meeting enterprise talent needs.

(b) Model of training excellence: effectiveness, impact, relevance.

(c) Increasing employer participation: sustaining competitiveness, workforce development, lifelong learning.

Target groups

(a) Employees of companies belonging to one of the sectoral/regional Skillnet networks.

(b) Registered unemployed in receipt of a welfare payment from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) or meeting alternative criteria laid out by *Skillnet.*

Level of implementation

National level

Stage of implementation

Continuous since 1999

Funding

National funding from the National Training Fund (NTF) through the Department of Education and Skills (DES) but *Skillnet* Ireland operates under a joint investment model, part-funded by matching contributions from participating businesses in *Skillnet* networks.

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework

(a) Fosters an enterprise-led approach to workforce development resulting in strong enterprise ownership and engagement in the process.

(b) Encouraging enterprise to lead the process helps ensure that programmes delivered through *Skillnet* Ireland are highly relevant to the needs of industry. This approach also enables cohesive enterprise networking and the flexibility to respond to ever-changing skills demands through both formal and informal learning.

(c) Creation of enterprise networks facilitates workforce upskilling in small and micro enterprises, which may not have the resources and capacity to provide upskilling opportunities to their workforce.

(d) Shared funding mechanisms: while *Skillnet* Ireland as a national agency is funded with national funds, it operates under a joint investment model, part-funded by matching contributions from participating businesses in Skillnet networks.

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A1.3. Language at work *(Taal op de werkvloer)* – The Netherlands

Typology

National initiative whereby employers enter an agreement to improve the language skills of their employees and receive a subsidy to provide language courses at or outside the workplace.

Objective

To encourage businesses to invest in the language skills of their employees.

Target groups

Employees with low and medium language skills in companies that want to address the issue of low language skills at the workplace.

Level of implementation

National agreed at a regional level

Stage of implementation

Continuous since 2016

Funding

Co-funding arrangements in which employers bear part of the training costs and, at the same time, can apply for a subsidy paid by national funding

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework

(a) Strong employer engagement and buy-in through the use of a marketing strategy: the initiative is based on the business case for language training and associated workforce upskilling. Language training is aimed at solving problems the companies face (such as employees not understanding safety instructions). The use of 'argument cards' proved to be very effective as the benefits of basic skills training is not always evident to employers (or employees).

(b) Shared funding responsibility: co-funding mechanisms.

(c) Tailored to the needs of the companies.

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A1.4. Initiative for adult education (Initiative *Erwachsenenbildung*) – Austria

Typology
National initiative aimed at increasing the number of individuals with completed lower secondary education as well as increasing general skill levels in the population.

Objective
Enable adults who lack basic skills or never graduated from a lower secondary school (ISCED 1) to continue and complete their education.
The initiative comprises two programmes:
(a) basic skills training;
(b) training to complete lower secondary education (ISCED 1).

Target groups
(a) Individuals over 15 years with basic educational needs regardless of language, nationality and qualifications held.
(b) Individuals aged over 15 without a lower secondary education qualification (ISCED 1).

Level of implementation
National level

Stage of implementation
Continuous since 2012

Funding

National and provincial funds, and since 2015 co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF)

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework

(a) Effective governance: implementation of shared structured governance through a multilevel partnership between the Federal level and the provinces and an accredited education and training institution.

(b) Three-year funding period which increases planning certainty among key stakeholders, including learning providers, and contributes to greater professionalisation of adult learning delivery within the context of the initiative for adult education.

(c) Strategic funding: funds are only granted when there is a need and a target group for the accredited offer.

(d) Monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of the programme and has helped provide a robust evidence base of 'what works', generating useful learning for all stakeholders. The feedback loop between implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the initiative ensures that issues are identified and addressed in a structured and timely fashion; at the same time, resulting changes lead to programme improvements. Institutions taking part in the initiative commit to continuous monitoring and evaluation and a monitoring board supervises the process and the results.

(e) Strong quality assurance framework: providers that want to take part in the initiative and receive the funding must be accredited and satisfy three robust criteria: fulfil the general requirements for an educational establishment, provide an appropriate concept of their programme, and prove the qualification of their trainers and counsellors in accordance with the guidelines of the initiative standards (such as special training for basic skills teaching professionals).

(f) Tailored provision according to the specific needs of adults.

(g) Strong lifelong guidance features, mentoring, coaching and career guidance.

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A1.5. *Union Learning Fund* (ULF), Unionlearn and Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) – United Kingdom

Typology

The *Union Learning Fund* is a national fund aimed at funding unions for delivery of the learning opportunities for their members and to develop the capacity of union learning representatives (ULRs).

ULRs are elected members of an independent trade union (recognised by their employer) and work to support fellow employees to identify their training needs and arrange tailored learning opportunities within their company. They also support workplace learning centres to embed learning in the workplace.

ULF is managed and administered by Unionlearn, the learning and skills organisation of the Trade Union Congress.

Objective

Develop the capacity of trade unions and union learning representatives (ULRs) to work with employers, employees and learning providers to encourage greater take-up of learning in the workplace.

Target groups

Employees with low levels of skills, mostly older low-skilled workers

Level of implementation

National level

Stage of implementation

Continuous since 1998

Funding

National funding

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework

(a) Governance: strong social partner engagement is vital for ULF to support workers. ULF projects have strengthened union engagement with

employers through the establishment of workplace learning centres and the signing of learning agreements.

(b) Tailored needs: by supporting ULRs at the workplace to work closely with employers and training providers, ULF tends to ensure that the training provided is relevant to the needs of both the learners and employers, who are thus more likely to promote and engage in workplace learning.

(c) Outreach: ULRs engage learners that are otherwise hard for providers to reach.

(d) Guidance: ULRs offer support and guidance to learners throughout their learning pathway: more than simply engaging learners, they offer information, advice, guidance, carry out initial assessments of skills, link learners with providers, assist learners through Union Learning centres, arrange flexible provision for shift workers, and plan next learning steps.

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A1.6. Personal training account *(Compte personnel de formation)* – France

Typology

National programme aimed at empowering all working people, from the time they enter the labour market until the date on which they exercise all their pension rights, to acquire training rights that can be mobilised throughout their working lives. It has a universal orientation and is aimed at all working people.

Until 2018, individuals accumulated 24 hours per year (capped at 150 hours) while since 1 January 2019, they accumulate EUR 500 per year (capped at EUR 5 000). The low-qualified (ISCED 0-2) benefited from 48 hours per year with a ceiling of 400 hours until 2018, and EUR 800 per year with a ceiling up to EUR 8 000 from 1 January 2019.

Objective

To support individuals to continue learning throughout their working lives, enabling them to identify their own training needs and providing them with control over their learning/training. The aim is to maintain employability and secure their professional career paths.

Target groups
All labour market active individuals. Low-qualified individuals have a right to a higher ceiling.

Level of implementation
National level

Stage of implementation
Continuous since 2015 with revisions in 2019.

Funding
Financed through a compulsory training levy, Self-employed contribute 0.2% of turnover through a training fund. PES and regions can complement funding for training for unemployed.

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework
(a) Individualised approach: individual at the centre of the learning process, they take the responsibility, ownership and control of their own learning.
(b) Employed individuals keep their salary while being trained during working time.
(c) It is attached to the person and not to the employment contract or status: the person can acquire rights, without time limit. The euro credits recorded on the account remain fully vested for the person in the event of a change in status, professional situation or loss of employment, regardless of the reason for termination of the employment contract.
(d) The modularisation of VET qualifications allows individuals to develop a specific skillset rather than obtaining a full qualification (which may be not necessary in their specific situation).

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A1.7. On the job training *(Weiterbildung Geringqualifizierter und beschäftigter älterer Arbeitnehmer in Unternehmen* - WeGebAU) – Germany

Typology
National programme offering a combined wage and training subsidy scheme for improving basic qualifications among low-skilled workers in SMEs, and older workers.

Objective
Improve the employability of low-skilled and older workers and prevent unemployment by encouraging further training.

Target groups
(a) Older employees (since 2007, 'older' ones must be at least 45). From 1 April 2012, qualified employees under 45 years can be funded but only if the course costs are at least half paid by the employer, and only when the training begins before 31 December 2019.

(b) Low-skilled employees in small and medium-sized firms: without a vocational qualification; with a vocational qualification, but who have not performed the job for which they had acquired this qualification for at

least four years; employed in low-skilled jobs and can no longer perform the learned job.

Level of implementation
National level

Stage of implementation
Continuous since 2006

Funding
National funding and ESF funding

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework
(a) Financial incentives for both employee and employer: wage subsidies incentivise employer engagement while the voucher system guarantees reimbursement of training costs for the employees. Both employer and employee can initiate the measure by applying for the training subsidy. Communication and dissemination of the programme to a wide range of enterprises to ensure broad engagement and take up.
(b) Strategic use of funding: to avoid that the funding is used for training that would have been carried out even without the financial support, WeGebAU does not support employer- or task-specific training. For low-skilled workers, subsidies are only available for accredited courses leading to a certificate. For SMEs, this requirement may be lifted. Courses must last at least four weeks and the employer is obliged to ensure leave of absence. This practically rules out the risk that firms would use WeGebAU for firm-specific practical training needs, as these typically require much shorter courses. This initiative uses a voucher system to provide flexible and tailored education and training. When an employee fulfils the eligibility requirements, he/she receives a voucher that guarantees reimbursement of training costs and can choose a programme offered by an educational institution. Funded courses must focus on improving general human capital and must apply to the wider labour market, as opposed to being firm-specific. The training must lead to a recognised vocational qualification up to the level of 'skilled workers' or a partial qualification, provided the contents are part of recognised dual vocational training.
(c) PES is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the initiative. An extensive role is played by local employment agencies who are responsible

for advertising and promoting the programme: these agencies know the
need of the local labour market well.

(d) Flexibility: the use of vouchers gives flexibility to employers to choose a
programme, provided that it is offered by a certified education institution.

(e) Incentives for employers: the use of wage subsidies to incentivise
employer participation.

(f) Communication: communication and dissemination of the programme to
a wide range of enterprises.

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A1.8. Unique labour endowment *(Dote Unica Lavoro)* – Italy, Lombardia

Typology

Regional programme providing free personalised learning and employment
pathways. It provides an integrated approach to learning and employment
pathways, grounded in lifelong learning, guidance and personalised approach.

Objective
Support the employment/re-employment and upskilling/reskilling of individuals in the Lombardia region.

Target groups
(a) Adults aged between 30 and 65 who reside in the region and are either unemployed or enrolled in a first/second level university master, or employed in the armed forces ([17]).
(b) Workers up to 65 years old employed in a company in the region affected by reduced working time or temporary suspension of work under a wage compensation scheme, such as wage guarantee fund, solidarity contract, solidarity agreement, ([18]) if they are not already benefiting from other active policy measures.

Level of implementation
Regional

Stage of implementation
Continuous since 2013

Funding
Regional and ESF

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework
(a) Integrated approach to learning and employment pathways.
(b) Multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance based on shared responsibility and public private partnerships: individuals can access the *Dote Unica Lavoro* through a network of accredited employment agencies which can be both private and public.
(c) Individualised and tailored approach: individual at the centre of the process and owns the process; individuals can freely choose a defined suite of services that best meet their needs from public and private accredited agencies. Endowments and different intensity services are

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([17]) Young people up to 29 years old do not access the DUL as they can benefit from an endowment activated under the *Youth guarantee*.
https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en
([18]) https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/it/observatories/emcc/erm/support-instrument/short-time-allowances-ordinary-wages-guarantee-fund-cigo-and-extraordinary-wages-guarantee-fund-cigs

planned according to a standardised profiling process. Individuals define with the employment agency a personalised action plan including tailored employment and training needs opportunities.

(d) System of incentives and disincentives for providers: the introduction of the aid intensity levels, distinguishing among people having varying degree of difficulty to be inserted in the labour market, prevents agencies taking in charge only people with a good chance to enter/re-enter the labour market.

(e) Results oriented: accredited employment agencies are reimbursed for successfully placing people at work; and each agency has a budget that increases or decreases depending on their proven efficacy at placing people at work.

(f) Employment agencies (public and private) are involved in the design and implementation of the programme: this ensures the alignment with the labour market context.

(g) Monitoring: the programme provides internal constant monitoring of performance which leads to updates, modifications and optimisations in response to the needs detected by recipients and accredited employment agencies.

(h) Communication and dissemination: communication plans and a widespread distribution of employment agencies at local level to ensure all targets, also in rural and isolated areas, can be reached and adequately supported.

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A1.9. New opportunities initiative, NOI *(Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades)* – Portugal

Typology
National initiative providing upskilling pathways with a strong component of validation and recognition of prior learning.

Objective
Improving the qualification levels of the population

Target groups
(a) Working adults, either in employment or not, needing to acquire a qualification through recognition of competences.
(b) Young people aged 15-18 who had only completed lower secondary education and/or who had dropped out of the education system before completing 12 years of schooling.

Level of implementation
National

Stage of implementation
Discontinued: it operated between 2005 and 2012

Funding
National and ESF

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework

(a) Multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance: cooperation, partnerships and clear role of all stakeholders. Strong leadership and effective institutional change management, including the creation of new structures such as new opportunities centres which played a very important role as a gateway for learners to receive accurate information and individual guidance on how to validate prior learning or acquire new skills.

(b) Pathway (including guidance and developing a personalised pathway and action plan which was agreed with the individual), implementation of the agreed action plan.

(c) Individual at the centre and tailored to the individual's needs: the action plan was tailored to the specific profile and need of the individual and could involve recognition, validation and certification of the relevant skills training, including basic skills training.

(d) Monitoring and evaluation: establishing a monitoring and external evaluation framework has been central to measuring the impact and effects of the programme.

(e) Political commitment and funding: initial strong political commitment translated into substantial budgetary and other structural support for *Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades.* Change in government, during a severe economic and financial crisis resulted in the programme being discontinued despite its achievements. Apart from government changes and the particularly severe economic crisis, this initiative's heavy reliance on ESF also proved an obstacle to its continuity.

(f) Communication and dissemination: well-targeted and widely publicised media campaigns helped build positive and strong demand for the programme among its two target groups and also for employers. *Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades* showed that recognition of prior learning can be a powerful tool in re-engaging low-skilled adults in learning and helping them upgrade their skills and qualifications.

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A1.10. *Qualifica* programme – Portugal

Typology

National programme aimed at improving the qualification levels of adults by offering them tailored learning pathways, based on a process of validation of prior learning. The *Qualifica* programme moved from the redesign of the New opportunities initiative (see New opportunities initiative fiche) and from the resizing of its national network (NOI centres).

Objective
Improving the qualifications level of the population

Target groups
(a) Less qualified adults
(b) Unemployed people
(c) NEET (not in education, employment or training)

Level of implementation
National

Stage of implementation
Ongoing since 2016

Funding
National and ESF

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework
(a) Pathway approach: *Qualifica* centres offer a standardised four-step process: information and enrolment, analysis and development of a skill profile, discussion and definition of appropriate education and training path, and referral to recognition procedures or appropriate tailored education and training provision.
(b) Network of *Qualifica* centres: comprehensive one-stop-shops for guidance on lifelong learning. They provide information, guidance and mentoring to adults 18+ for recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning, and education and training pathways. Recognition of competences is embedded in their overall guidance offer.
(c) *Qualifica* passport: online tool where qualifications and skills acquired are recorded. It is integrated with the Credit system and aligned with ECVET framework (based on units and learning outcomes which are part of qualifications and can be assessed and validated, ensuring flexibility for the adult in the pathway to obtaining a qualification). It includes a tool aimed at providing orientation and information on possible pathways leading to completing or obtaining a new qualification, in line with skills and competences acquired in work related and other non-formal and informal settings.
(d) Political commitment and leadership.

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A1.11. Mid-life career review – UK

Typology
National programme aimed at improving lifelong guidance and career management services to older adults (45-64) to understand their upskilling needs, interests and aspirations.

Objective
To enable older adults (45-64) to make informed decisions on their future by tacking stock of their individual options in work and in life.

Target groups
Adults (employed and unemployed) aged 45-64.

Level of implementation
National level. It was piloted in England in 2013-2015 by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and in cooperation with the National Careers Service, Unionlearn and a number of other agencies (17 delivery

partners), under funding from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills.

Stage of implementation
Piloted in 2013 to 2015, mainstream since 2015

Funding
National

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework
(a) Innovative tailored approach to lifelong guidance and career management services rooted in a person-centred approach which considers not only their employment and learning needs but also the person's whole life and life circumstances, including family, health, caring responsibilities, financial circumstances, interests, aspirations and motivations.
(b) Learning as a human right: encourage all public agencies to recognise the role of learning for older people in enabling them to retain a sense of identity, purpose and meaning in life, remain active citizens, independent for as long as possible, contributing members of the community and see themselves as successful learners; and to identify the contribution of learning to these outcomes in their policy documents and in their programmes.
(c) Build local partnerships: better local coordination can improve the quality, quantity and range of opportunity. Local partnerships should aim to maximise participation, reflect the diversity of individual needs and aspirations, promote learning to older people, overcome negative stereotypes of ageing, age-proof services and encourage intergenerational relationships.
(d) Use public funding strategically: improve coordination of public policies and agencies, agree responsibility for local partnerships between agencies. Strengthen local organising capacity, encourage intergenerational learning, improve access to premises for learning, monitor and evaluate what is happening.

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A1.12. Labour foundations *Arbeitsstiftungen* – Austria

Typology

National initiative set up by social partners at company or regional level
aimed at promotion of upskilling, reskilling and reintegration in the labour
market when a large company in economic difficulty has to lay off employees
(outplacement foundations, type 1) or when particular staffing bottlenecks
occur in relation to specific skills (in-placement foundations, type 2). There are
also target group foundations (type 3), which are implemented for upskilling
in specific target groups such as persons aged 45+, women, and refugees.

Objective

To support job seekers to upskill, reskill and reintegrate into the labour
market.

Target groups

Registered unemployed whose jobs have become redundant due to
restructuring or economic difficulties, with special attention being paid to
older job seekers and young job seekers.

Level of implementation

National and regional

Stage of implementation

Continuous since 1987

Funding
National (PES and the provincial government) and the company/ies involved.

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework
(a) Strong governance and cooperation among all stakeholders: strong cooperation and partnerships at all levels. Strong social partner engagement, social partners are responsible for establishing foundations. Later, different adult learning providers or VET institutions are involved in specific individual training within the labour foundation.
(b) Shared funding and responsibilities: the financing structure of a labour foundation is always the result of a negotiation process among the company management, the social partners, PES and other financing authorities (such as the provincial government).
(c) Tailored needs: they respond to specific training and career needs. A comprehensive approach includes, among its central elements: career guidance, various training measures (qualification), active job searches, work experience programmes and (in the case of outplacement foundations) assistance with business start-ups. The concrete basis for qualification measures is always an individual initial assessment and training plan, outlining individual needs and training goals, which needs to be signed by all parties (participant, foundation management, and, where applicable, future employer) and be approved by PES.
(d) Targeted to companies by size: type 1 foundations are designed for large companies, type 2 and type 3 are used by SMEs to train new employees.
(e) Financial and non-financial incentives: during participation in the labour foundation, workers receive unemployment benefits. Additional allowances for course-related costs (e.g. travel expenses or childcare) can be granted.
(f) Cost-benefit analysis: Foundations are cost-intensive, but effective.

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A1.13. *Vives Emplea:* team empowerment for labour integration – Spain

Typology

National project consisting of the in the creation of a working team of unemployed people at risk of exclusion working together to improve their social skills and skills for employment.

Objective

Improving people's employability through their participation in teamwork pathways for social and labour integration, helping them to access the job market or return to education.

Target groups

Unemployed people registered as job seekers, aged between 18 and 60: they must have knowledge of the Spanish language, a basic literacy level and a basic knowledge of new technologies.

Level of implementation

National

Stage of implementation
Continuous since 2013

Funding
National and ESF

Interesting features for developing the analytical framework
(a) Individualised approach and individual at the centre: individuals own the process. The programme includes teamwork sessions with a coaching approach, individual coaching sessions, labour intermediation programme and a corporate volunteer programme. Participants have the leading role in project performance and are supported by a coach-coordinator in charge of developing the individualised sessions and guiding the team to achieve its own objectives.
(b) Innovative methodology to reach out to different individuals and foster empowerment: based on teamwork, creating synergies and leading to transformation of participants, self-knowledge and reinforcement of their personal, social and labour skills. An approach that can provide solutions not only to the personal needs of the participants but also to the realities and needs of the immediate environment, strengthening relationships with the world of work and discovering new ways to employability.
(c) Strong cooperation and partnerships: creation of a multiple alliances system with public and private actors, private companies, private foundations and other social entities consolidated in the third sector. Companies are engaged through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and/or taking part in activities such as forums, workshops or job interviews.
(d) Financial incentives: programme participation is free for participants.
(e) Communication and dissemination: Municipalities and other private foundations and NGOs cooperate to reach out to potential beneficiaries and disseminate potential benefits.

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ANNEX 2.

Definitions, understandings and limitations of best/good practice analysis

The use of good/best practices originated in the private sector and from there it was rapidly exported to the public sector. This led to the development of catalogues, guidelines, awards and dissemination programmes in practically every sector of intervention, in Europe and across the world, often promoted by central authorities and addressed to local administrations. Policy-makers often seek efficient solutions that can be applied within short timeframes. This inclination to learn from others has produced many examples of good/best practices which are increasingly being used to guide public policy in different fields following the so-called 'policy diffusion phenomenon' (Gilardi, 2015). This says that policies, programmes and many practices are widely diffused and experienced from one context to another as policy-makers are keen to be influenced by the success or failure of policies elsewhere.

However, there is still little clarity on what constitutes a best/good practice. 'Best' practices can suggest a judgement but, as a minimum, they carry the implicit understanding that there is an assessment framework (such as a set of criteria and indicators) against which a given practice can be considered among the best. For some it is defined as results-oriented decision-making based on empirical evidence (Cannon and Kilburn, 2003); for others the term best practice relates to successful initiatives or model projects that make an outstanding, sustainable, and innovative contribution to the issue at hand. For example, according to Bendixsen and De Guchteneire (2003), a good practice concerns 'the accumulation and application of knowledge about what works and what does not work in different situations and contexts' and has at least one of the following properties: it is innovative (it develops solutions new and creative to common problems); 'makes the difference', that is, is able to show a tangible result to a given problem; it is sustainable, since it contributes to the eradication of the problem over time; and it is replicable, that is, it acts as an 'inspiration framework' to generate policies

and initiatives. Other definitions relate to 'processes and activities that have been shown in practice to be the most effective, efficient, democratic or whatever other goal intended by the processes and activities' (de Vries, 2010, p. 315). Bretschneider et al. (2005, p. 309) argue that a best practice 'implies that it is best when compared to any alternative course of action and that it is a practice designed to achieve some deliberative end'.

The term best practice may also suggest that that there is a 'best' way of delivering policies and obtaining results. Hence there is a growing tendency to replace the term 'best practice' with 'good practice' or some similar term ('learning practices', 'lessons learned' and 'promising practices', 'smart practices', or 'innovative practices'). The use of alternative terms to best practice acknowledges that policy effectiveness relies on several contextual factors. The intention is to indicate positive examples of some practice or approach that produces results deemed as valuable (EIGE, 2013).

Hall and Jennings (2008) propose a gradation of good practices (including in this term both policies and programmes and simpler actions/projects) based on the availability of scientific or quasi-scientific evaluations of the results obtained. They distinguish between best practices (those that have proven effective and efficient), evidence-based practices (which focus on outcomes assessed on the basis of systematic empirical evidence), and 'promising' practices (those that are still difficult to evaluate and yet worthy of attention).

Empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways

Volume 2: Cedefop analytical framework for developing coordinated and coherent approaches to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults

This report is the second volume of Cedefop research on empowering adults through upskilling and reskilling pathways. It presents the Cedefop analytical framework for developing upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults and illustrates its conceptual development.

The analytical framework is aimed at supporting policy-makers and stakeholders in designing and implementing sustainable, coordinated and coherent approaches to flexible and inclusive upskilling pathways.

The framework is articulated around important systemic features needed for a coherent and coordinated approach to upskilling pathways for low-skilled adults. It is grounded in a lifelong learning perspective and focused on the empowerment of the individual learner/beneficiary.

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