



**VAL.U.E. C.H.A.IN. Competitiveness
VALidating & Upskilling Employees
Competences Hence Accruing INdustry
competitiveness
EaSI Progress – VS/2020/0158**



PROJECT AIM AND OBJECTIVES

If the specific objective of this Call is to support the deployment of a tailored, flexible and quality learning offer for low-skilled / low-qualified adults, VAL.U.E. C.H.A.IN. Competitiveness project foresees:

- the upskilling and reskilling of workers – in particular those over 50 years of age but more generally of adult workers with a weak digital skill/qualification level – who are facing digital transformation paths in their organizational contexts;
- the design and delivery of personalized training paths aimed at increasing their knowledge and the acquisition of basic and transversal digital skills;
- the delivery of training pathways built upon the results of skills assessment processes and on the identification of individual objectives: skills assessment procedures and tools are themselves innovative outputs of the project;
- the development of processes and devices of validation and recognition of the acquired skills, in close cooperation with the Regions and Social Partners and in full compliance with the current legislation: this allows to assign a value of use and exchange to the certifications and to match the internal and external labour market needs. In addition, both the assessment processes and the content of the training supply will be based on DG Comp 2.1 standards to ensure established and shared references in the validation and recognition of skills;
- full consideration of the outcome of the institutional and scientific debate on the subject in the EU, through the continuous exchange and synergy with existing networks, such as those of the National Co-ordinators of the European Adult Learning Agenda, the Experts who are part of the WG ET2020 A.L., the other projects funded by the current Call and the two previous ones, the Ambassadors of the EPALE Platform and major international organizations such as EAEA and EBSN;
- the raising of greater awareness and knowledge about the long-term benefits for the system of companies and their main stakeholders (representative associations, trade unions, inter-professional funds, public administrations) when investing on upskilling and reskilling adult workers and in particular those aged over 50.



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PROJECT RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

Italy ranks 25th in Europe in DESI (Digital Economy and Society Index) 2017 and the country belongs to the low performing clusters. In Human Capital in particular, Italy is performing below the average of EU countries: despite the Country is making little progress in terms of Human Capital, the percentage of Internet users has grown from 63% to 67%. In addition, in terms of regular Internet users Italy is well below the European share (79%).

Moreover, in the Country 56% of the individuals aged 16-74 still lacks basic digital skills compared to an EU average of 44%. The lack of these digital skills is caused by two groups of factors: the low level of education of the Italian population and the important share of elderly population.

The demographic transition in Italy is accentuating the ageing of the population. Italy is the second oldest country in the world, with 168.7 elderly people per 100 young. According to Istat's projections, in 2050 in the European Union people over 65 are expected to increase by 70% and people over 80 will rise by 170%; in particular in Italy in 2051 one Italian out of three will be over 64 years old.

The working age population (15-64) declines and is projected to decline by 3.5 million. The share of employed persons with a secondary education (EQF level 2) is more than 36%, and the share of over 50 is even higher.

Furthermore, the average age of those in the labour force tends to gradually increase, with important labour market implications.

More attention needs to be paid to workers over 50, and in general to older workers, considering the combined effect of the steady ageing of the population with the rising retirement age which holds workers longer in the labour market.

Trends in employment rates for over-50 workers is also increasing during the years of the economic crisis, although this is mainly due to an increase in the retirement age.

An increasingly ageing workforce may have a number of effects on labour markets. The main concern is the severe difficulties that this age group encounters in re-entering into the labour market and above all in maintaining their jobs in the phases of crisis or during corporate restructuring.



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In addition, older workers' participation in formal education and on-the-job training is lower than that of younger workers, because employers are more reluctant to bear costs of training for workers who are expected to remain for a shorter period of time with their firms.

In Italy, for over 50 workers there are high long-term unemployment rates. Additionally, the average job-search process takes a long time, lasts on average more than two years and is higher than the general average of unemployed people.

The outflow of workers from the labour market concerns mostly employees over 50 even in crisis situations with significant consequences on public finances in particular due to the procedures which are necessary to activate public income support measures and early retirement schemes.

However, also thanks to the initiatives developed in 2012 on the occasion of the "European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations", the country has introduced a set of regulations to support the reintegration of older workers into the labour market and the prolongation of their working life.

Different types of intervention have been developed both at national and international level.

As for the national level, Law No 92/2012 foresees the reduction in employers' contributions when hiring workers categorised as vulnerable or disadvantaged (women living in disadvantaged areas, long-term unemployed, workers over 50).

Also at regional level, many strategies have been adopted. Economic facilitation and customized training measures have been introduced for the over 50 age group.

The hiring incentives do not affect neither the reintegration of employees nor maintaining employment, because of both the limited duration (of the incentive), and the simultaneous existence of other instruments aimed at different categories of workers, which are in competition one with the other.

Research on learning among older adults shows that they are able to gain new skills but training for this age class might be ineffective if does not meet their specific needs.

Studies and analysis conducted show that incentives of all kinds, to be effective, should be concentrated on few specific targets and should always be accompanied by adequate outplacement services and redeployment services.



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Improving skills of older workers is therefore necessary in order to strengthen the occupational stability of low-qualified and low-skilled people and to avoid the risk of obsolescence of the professionalism of "non-digital natives".

The project VAL.U.E. C.H.A.IN. Competitiveness will mainly focus on supporting the over-50 workers against the risk of expulsion from the labour market or from training initiatives, yet it will not exclude the broader target group of digitally illiterate adult workers (possibly including also enterprise managers and in particular SMEs managers, who might be more frequently affected by a digital divide and therefore more exposed to such a risk of exclusion). The upskilling pathways will be aimed at filling gaps in digital basic skills to multiply the opportunities for learning and retraining.

CHALLENGES AND PROJECT RELEVANCE

Some major challenges still need be coped with. For each of these, the project VAL.U.E. C.H.A.IN. Competitiveness demonstrates its full relevance as explained below:

1. Increase the scale of the action

Even if it is obvious that such a challenge concerns Europe as a whole, what is clear is that it is necessary to avoid the temptation to start from scratch and to implement small-scale pilot projects. A critical mass in investments and a good coverage of sectors and territories is crucial to progress towards the clearly indicated aims of the Upskilling Recommendation. Stock-taking exercises can guide useful developments and lessons learned must be shared. For this reason, the VAL.U.E. C.H.A.IN. Competitiveness project aims to build on the E.Q.U.A.L. experience, while also enlarging the existing partnership to other Regions (territorial coverage), involving other typologies of stakeholders, such as inter-professional funds, bilateral organisations (employers and trade unions) and training providers (sectorial coverage), thus focusing on a specific target (further development, new action component).



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2. Embed more strongly basic skills into skills assessment and training offer targeting low skilled adults

To low-skilled adult workers, also for those aged over 50, skills assessment and training offer is available and, finally, on the way to become a coherent and regulated system and a concrete opportunity for such target group to progress in terms of position in the workplace and, more generally speaking, in the society as a whole. This is the conclusion contained in many national and international reports and studies (for instance, OCSE National Skills Strategy for Italy, Cedefop–Spotlight of VET 2018, National report on implementation of Upskilling Pathways Recommendation, national case study for GRALE 2019, Refernet Italy Report 2018). Nevertheless, such opportunities remain extremely limited when focusing on basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills). The Project VAL.U.E. C.H.A.IN. Competitiveness aims to fill this gap, modelling and piloting an implementation of approaches, processes and tools for each one of the three steps identified in the UP strategy.

3. Improve outreach, guidance and support measures

The relevant literature unanimously recognises that an insufficient mastery in basic skills is frequently associated not only with a lack of self-esteem and self-confidence but also with the tendency to hide and to feel as hampered for this fragility: it becomes really difficult to reach exactly those who are in the worst and most serious situations of functional illiteracy. In a workplace setting, the situation does not change a lot: low-skilled and low-qualified workers frequently do not express their upskilling/reskilling need, thus running the risk to remain excluded from available opportunities. They need empowerment, guidance and counselling, and when reached and involved coaching support. This kind of services will be made available during the project implementation for direct beneficiaries, where a modelling action, based on the experience, allows the potential transferability of the tools and guidelines ad hoc created.

4. Strengthen coordination and partnerships between providers and other stakeholders

The VAL.U.E. C.H.A.IN. Competitiveness partnership sees an inter-functional alliance between the main actors of adult learning governance when the offer is mainly aimed at the target group of workers and the setting is that of the company. In fact, the most relevant institutions are involved in the initiative – Regional Administrations, the Agency that oversees the identification and provision of active labour policy services, research centres, social partners and inter-professional



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funds, with the Ministry of Labour and Social policies acting as associated organisation – and this network is supported in every region by experienced training providers. Given the scale of the intervention, covering a number of regional territories, one of the project results will be to explore the most effective ways of cooperation between stakeholders and providers and modelling the forms that such collaboration takes when implementing policies and intervention programs.

5. Ensure long-term systemic approach accompanied by appropriate funding resources mechanism

Lessons learned can be reasonably replicated in other territories, keeping the overall architecture unchanged (partnership composition, action sequence, programmed training curriculum), using resources whose sources could be:

- contribution of inter-professional funds for similar interventions, especially in support of strictu sensu training pathways deployment;
- ad hoc financing by companies, provided for in collective bargaining agreements, based on the model of what has already been implemented in the metal-mechanic sector;
- contributions from the National and Regional Operational Plans (ESF);
- institutional funding (Central Government and Regions) for support in the phases of competencies recognition and certification.



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WORK PACKAGES

1. SKILLS IDENTIFICATION, VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION PROCEDURES AND TOOLS
2. LEARNING OUTCOMES DEFINITION FOR BASIC SKILLS
3. INVOLVEMENT AND SELECTION OF ENTERPRISES AND WORKERS (BENEFICIAIRES)
4. DEFINITION OF MODEL AND FORMAT FOR SKILLS TRANSPARENCY CERTIFICATE
5. DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONALIZED UPSKILLING/RESKILLING PATHWAYS FOR WORKERS
6. PROCESSES OF RECOGNITION/CERTIFICATION OF ACQUIRED SKILLS BY TRAINED WORKERS
7. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE
8. DISSEMINATION OF PROJECT OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND RESULTS
9. UPSKILLING/RESKILLING INTEGRATED PATHWAYS FOR WORKERS ON DIGITAL BASIC SKILLS: A BENCHMARK EXERCISE WITH FRANCE DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES



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WP E OUTPUTS

SKILLS IDENTIFICATION, VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION PROCEDURES AND TOOLS

D1.1 Guidelines for IVC operational model implementation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES DEFINITION FOR BASIC SKILLS

D2.1 Digital Skills Assessment Reference Tool

D2.2 Definition of module and training unit contents

D2.3 Identifying relevant teaching methodologies

INVOLVEMENT AND SELECTION OF ENTERPRISES AND WORKERS (BENEFICIAIRES)

D3.1 Database of potential beneficiaries of upskilling/reskilling pathways

D3.2 Selection of at least 50 (up to 75) SMEs (10-15 per Region)

DEFINITION OF MODEL AND FORMAT FOR SKILLS TRANSPARENCY CERTIFICATE



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D4.1 Format for Skills Transparency Certificate

DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONALIZED UPSKILLING/RESKILLING PATHWAYS FOR WORKERS

D5.1 Individual training path defined for each involved worker (Individual Agreements with beneficiaries)

D5.2 At least 300 workers trained on basic skills (LIST)

D5.3 At least 50 SMES involved (LIST)

D5.4 Didactical material supporting didactical Modules and Units (on paper/electronic support)

D5.5 Recognition/validation of prior learning certificates issued

PROCESSES OF RECOGNITION/CERTIFICATION OF ACQUIRED SKILLS BY TRAINED WORKERS

D6.1 At least 300 skills transparency certificates delivered

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

D7.1 Quality Plan

D7.2 Risk assessment Chart

D7.3 Monitoring/evaluation Plan



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D7.4 Progress Report

D7.5 Final Report

D7.6 6 steering committee meetings

D7.7 6 technical Scientific Committee meetings

DISSEMINATION OF PROJECT OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

D 8.1. Dissemination Plan (M2)

D 8.2 Project website/platform (M4)

D.8.3 6 Project Newsletters (online Magazine) (M2-M7-M12-M16-M20-M24)

D.8.4 5 Regional Dissemination Seminars (M2-M7-M12-M16-M20-)

D 8.5 Final Conference(M24)

UPSKILLING/RESKILLING INTEGRATED PATHWAYS FOR WORKERS ON DIGITAL BASIC SKILLS: A BENCHMARK EXERCISE WITH FRANCE DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

D 9.1 - Report of in-depth analysis of the data coming from the DEFIS national survey, with particular reference to the professional development of those workers having benefited by CVET pathways on basic digital skills in the last five years (FR – EN + executive summary in IT)

D 9.2 - Survey report on the implementation of the certification arrangements “CLEA’” and “CLEA’ numérique” (FR-EN+ executive summary in IT).



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WP AND ACTIVITIES

1. SKILLS IDENTIFICATION, VALIDATION AND RECOGNITION PROCEDURES AND TOOLS

Sub-activity 1.1 – Process and share with the Regions the operational model (processes, tools, human resources involved) for identifying basic skills arising from experiences acquired in NFIL contexts;

Sub-activity 1.2 - drafting of IVC model and validation

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES DEFINITION FOR BASIC SKILLS

Sub activity 2.1 - Definition of LO (Basic digital skills)

Sub activity 2.2 related didactical Units from DIGICOMP 2.1 European Framework

Sub activity 2.3 Definition of module and training unit contents and didactical methodologies

3. INVOLVEMENT AND SELECTION OF ENTERPRISES AND WORKERS (BENEFICIAIRES)

Sub-activity 3.1 - selection of potential enterprises to involve and co-operation agreement signature

Sub-activity 3.2 – Recruitment and first selection of workers

4. DEFINITION OF MODEL AND FORMAT FOR SKILLS TRANSPARENCY CERTIFICATE



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Sub-activity 4.1 - Analysis of existing tools to recognize and certificate skills

Sub-activity 4.2 - Composition of a skills transparency certificate

5. DEPLOYMENT OF PERSONALIZED UPSKILLING/RESKILLING PATHWAYS FOR WORKERS

Sub-activity 5.1 - Skills assessment of selected workers and recognition/validation of prior learning

Sub-activity 5.2 - Definition of personalized training paths according to individual skills gap and newly standardized skills requirements AND definition (where possible) of homogeneous training class-groups

Sub-activity 5.3 - Upskilling/reskilling pathways delivery

6. PROCESSES OF RECOGNITION/CERTIFICATION OF ACQUIRED SKILLS BY TRAINED WORKERS

Sub-activity 6.1 - Assessment testing to validate the LO of trained workers

Sub-activity 6.2 - Delivery of the skills transparency certificate

7. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE



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Sub-activity 7.1 - administrative MGT, development of guidelines for project mgt and internal communication tools, internal monitoring and evaluation, risk mgt.

Sub-activity 7.2 - drafting progress and final Reports

Sub-activity 7.3 - Steering committee: role activities and meetings

Sub-activity 7.4 - Technical Scientific Committee: role activities and meetings

8. DISSEMINATION OF PROJECT OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

Sub - activity 8.1: Dissemination Plan

Sub - activity 8.2: implementation of existing institutional partners websites

Sub - activity 8.3: production of an online newsletter

Sub - activity 8.4: organization/participation in at least 5 regional dissemination seminars

Sub - activity 8.5: Final conference

9. UPSKILLING/RESKILLING INTEGRATED PATHWAYS FOR WORKERS ON DIGITAL BASIC SKILLS: A BENCHMARK EXERCISE WITH FRANCE DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

Sub-activity 9.1–In-depth analysis on DEFIS DATASET

Sub-activity 9.2 - Survey focused on the arrangements “Cléa” and “Cléa numérique”