



# Country Profile: ITALY

## REGIONAL Comparative Analysis of Regional Policies for Adult Learning

**SVIMEZ - IDP**

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## REGIONAL Country Profile: Italy

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## Executive Summary

This Country Profile summarises the primary and secondary research findings of the two Italian partners of the REGIONAL project, SVIMEZ and IDP European Consultants. The partners carried out desk research to identify the most relevant national and regional policy papers, strategies and documents to identify drivers and inhibitors of the three-dimensional aspects of policy formulation, implementation and funding for adult learning in selected regions of Italy.

Partners focused their research onto a total of five regions: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Lombardia, Piemonte, Toscana considered to be representative of the social and economic diversity of Italy and Europe: these regions capture the various socio-economic dimensions of territorial Europe, i.e. urban/rural; degree of sophistication of the economy; social structure; level of unemployment and GDP; educational attainments; etc.



Partners collected responses from a total of 16 representatives – both technical staff and elected policy-makers – of policy making for adult learning at regional level through interviews using the template questionnaire and primary research guidelines.

The main outcomes are from the research the following:

1. Unclear distinction between Vocational Education & Training and Adult Learning: there seems to be a generalised perception that VET and AL are the same segment in the lifelong learning and that interviewees and policy papers refer indifferently to VET and AL;
2. Bias towards economic dimension of adult learning: most of the AL policies and programmes identified were directed towards economic empowerment more than social development of adults; this may be due to AL being considered one of the many policy responses to the crisis to up-skill adults;
3. Disconnect between policy statements and reality: the desk research did not confirm respondents' statements that adult learning is a stand-alone policy item in the development agenda of their regions. No adult-learning specific position papers, strategies, policy documents were identified during the secondary research phase. At the same time, all the strategy papers for economic development make direct reference to VET – and in some instances adult learning;
4. Reliance – if not dependence – upon EU structural funds: most of the respondents (all but one region) highlighted the use of European Social Funds to finance most of their adult learning programmes and activities;

Most of the respondents confirmed that in all regions there are structured frameworks for stakeholder consultation at policy formulation stage: nonetheless some policy makers recognised the possibility of such consultations to become cumbersome and time consuming, limiting the ability of policies to more promptly and proactively respond to pressing needs and expectations of the territories.

At policy implementation, some respondents highlighted that a fragmented and overcrowded setting of a multitude of actors involved may generate gaps and redundancies.

The main source of financing of adult learning is identified in the EU structural funds: this confirms the crucial role of EU cohesion policy instruments, while at the same time delineates a certain over-dependency. No significant experiences of Public Private Partnerships can be reported.

When asked about specific tools and means that could enhance the formulation and implementation of adult learning policies, the respondents indicated the following three priorities:

A) Improved access and quality of data: there is a need to improve data collection, relevance and availability;

B) Knowledge sharing: there is clear eagerness in understanding what “others have done” or “are doing” to understand which lessons and practices can be applied in their respective realities;

C) Monitoring and evaluation: there is a perceived lack of “monitoring and evaluation” culture when it comes to policy formulation.

## Introduction: REGIONAL Project and Italy

The REGIONAL project carries out a comparative analysis of adult learning policy initiatives to map and benchmark how adult learning policies are formulated, implemented and funded in 21 regions from six countries. The project stems from the regional disparities in participation to adult learning that have been detected across the EU at regional level: in “Mind the Gap: Education Inequality in EU Regions” 2012, the EU Commission stresses that “policy solutions must be tailored rather than generic”. In “AL: It Is Never Too Late to Learn” EC highlight how “barriers to AL participation may be policy-related”. Against this background, REGIONAL brings together practitioners, scientific partners from academia and research centers and public authorities to identify specific drivers and bottlenecks in the formulation and implementation of AL policies and programmes.

The analysis will compare adult learning policies in regions across European countries (Germany, Ireland, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia and Hungary) selected as a sample representative of Europe for what concerns GDP, unemployment and employment rates, the economic structure. On the basis of this comparative analysis, the consortium will develop a policy-making toolkit to support evidence-based policies for adult learning. The benchmark of regional adult learning approaches is based on the identification of key factors advancing or limiting adult learning in regional and local contexts.

This Country Report captures the results of the primary and secondary research carried out by the two Italian partners of the REGIONAL project, SVIMEZ and IDP European Consultants, in Italy through desk research and primary research: desk research was carried out to identify policy papers and literature pertaining to adult learning policies, and it was then complemented by interviews to regional policy makers and stakeholders of the adult learning domain.

It is worth mentioning that the period analysed, 2011-2014, was characterized by a deep crisis that asymmetrically affected European countries and their regions (NUTS 1). Indeed, since the beginning of the crisis, 14 of the 22 EU Member States with more than one NUTS 1 region experienced an increase in the dispersion of the regional GDP per inhabitant. This exacerbated the economic and social regional disparities within Member States and across Europe.

The Italian partners of the REGIONAL project involved 5 regions for the primary and secondary research for a total of 16 interviews: Abruzzo (1), Basilicata (5), Lombardy (1), Piedmont (5), Tuscany (4). These regions were selected for their representativeness of the diversity of economic and social structures as well as for their geographical representation, covering the main geographical areas of Italy: North (Piedmont, Lombardy), Centre (Toscana), South (Abruzzo, Basilicata). These regions present different economic structures and can be considered as representative of the country.

Lombardy and Piedmont are regions with a strong industrial vocation and the size of the companies is larger than the Italian average. These companies result integrated with innovative companies of the services sectors. Moreover, these regions presented an export attitude higher than the Italian average until the crisis in 2008, the unemployment rate was very low and the turnover in the private sector was remarkable.

Tuscany presents an economic structure partially different. Manufacturing is relevant for the regional economy and is characterized by small companies connected in clusters. The sectors of specialization (textile, food, mechanics) are representative of the so called “Made in Italy” characterized by high value added production, innovation intense and strong export potential. The services sector is dominated by tourism.

Finally, Basilicata and Abruzzo are two regions still struggling to complete the transition towards a modern market economy. Together with modern companies, there are also traditional companies mainly oriented to the national / local market. The services sector is dominated by the trade and the brokerage sub-sectors with limited contributions from dynamic productive activities and tourism. In both regions, the unemployment rate is significantly higher than the Italian average, GDP per inhabitant is lower than the European one, with unemployment significantly impacting adults.

The questionnaires have been administered to selected executives of the regional administration, regional government officials, training centers’ employees. The REGIONAL project was particularly relevant for Italy due to the fact that education is delegated largely to regions. In regions like Lombardy and Piedmont, the adult learning is often seen as a policy means to support workers’ mobility in the labour market. In the other regions, the adult learning has also the aim to favour the social cohesion and a deeper integration of disadvantaged groups of society. This in itself presents a dichotomy in approach towards policy goals of adult learning for economic development and social empowerment. Adult learning is also a powerful tool to promote social integration and employment for immigrants, mostly of non-EU origin (about 40%). Notwithstanding the positive trend, the rate of participation in adult learning in Italy is one of the lowest in Europe (6%).

	Italy	Abruzzo	Basilicata	Lombardia	Piemonte	Toscana
Population 2013	59.685.227	1.312.507	576.194	9.794.525	4.374.052	3.692.828
Area km <sup>2</sup>	301.336,01	10.762,71	9.994,61	23.862,80	25.402,46	22.993,51
GDP per capita PPP (EU=100)	102,0	87,0	71,0	132,0	110,0	110,0
Region Type 2007-2013		Phasing out	Convergence /Phasing out	Competitiveness	Competitiveness	Competitiveness
Region Type 2014-2020		Transition	Transition	More developed	More developed	More developed
Employment rate (15-64) 2013	55,6	54,8	46,1	64,9	62,4	63,8
Employment rate (20-64)	59,8	58,8	49,9	69,3	66,5	68,0
Unemployment rate	12,2	11,4	15,2	8,1	10,6	8,7
Participation in LLP*	6,2	6,5	5,7	6,6	6,0	6,8
Participants in LMP measures 2012	1.173.325					

\* Participation rate in education and training, 25-64 years - 2013.  
Source:Eurostat.

## Policy Formulation

In Italy, the regions are responsible for planning and implementing labour policies. The Central Government provides general policy guidelines and targets, overall supervision and coordination.

Almost all of the respondents in the selected regions highlighted the importance of non-formal and informal learning for adults, the need to identify options for recognition of skills and competences acquired in non-formal environments. Nonetheless, those perceptions captured during the interviews are not reflected in the policy documents and statement identified at secondary research stage. In Basilicata, in particular, some stakeholders raised the concern about this lack of recognition of non-formal and informal learning opportunities, which are spread in the economic system.

An active consultation process is behind the policy formulation in all the regions investigated. Nonetheless, a difference in the phase of involvement of third party stakeholders in the consultation process arises: in some cases (Lombardy) the third parties are involved from an early stage of policy priorities identification; in some other cases, the third parties are involved in the consultative process once the policy is already framed and formulated but still open for inputs (Abruzzo, Basilicata). The consultation process is mainly driven by regional Laws and Regulations that mandate the participation of stakeholders in the definition of policies.

All respondents reported to have intra-service consultations with other services/sectors/department of the regional authorities and government, but in all cases a special linkage can be observed with overall economic policy.

In Basilicata, Piedmont and Tuscany, the definition process of adult learning policies is subject to a long procedure of consultation with a network of local stakeholders, trade unions, associations of entrepreneurs (general and sectoral), universities, local authorities of lower layers of governance. In the case of adult learning financed through European Funds, i.e. the European Social Funds, the consultation process is carried out *ex-ante*, especially in Piedmont and Tuscany. In Basilicata, in particular, the regional officials stressed that the consultation process complies with predetermined rules and procedure; yet, such compliance has an impact on the length and efficacy of the consultation as a whole: at times the process of consultation prevails on the purpose of need and priority identification. As such, a more purposeful planning and *ex-ante* coordination was identified as key to improve the efficiency of such meeting among stakeholders and regional officials. The policy formulation of adult learning policies in all target regions is supported by data and statistics, with varying degree of corroboration: some regions rely on data and information provided by the national institute of statistics ISTAT or by regional research centers (i.e. Piedmont: IRES, Istituto di Ricerche Economico Sociali del Piemonte; Tuscany: IRPET, Istituto Regionale per la Programmazione Economica della Toscana). Such approach seems appropriate to ensure evidence based policy making, at least in some of the regions: from the primary research efforts, it appears that some regions are better equipped (with more structured consultation processes) and better empowered (with more reliable data sources) than others. Such a fragmentation in approaches may lead to an uneven

result in policy making to identify crucial issues and mismatches between labour market needs and adult learning approaches. Only after this phase, the coherence between the document of adult learning policies and the guidelines proposed by PIAAC (OCSE) and AES (Eurostat) are verified.

All the respondents in all the regions made explicit reference to national, European and international policy frameworks, strategies and tools: the non-elected and technical interviewees seemed to be better informed of the various tools available, such as Europe 2020, PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) and AES (The Adult Education Survey).

For most part of the policy, the objective of adult learning seems to be biased towards economic growth, i.e. build, reinforce and upgrade skills of adults. Piedmont has activated a policy line financed by the European Integration Fund (EIF) to provide adult learning resources to foreign workers: in this instance the provision of adult learning has social, cultural and economic connotations, for instance basic knowledge of Italian language and culture, mathematics and related topics. As mentioned before, the adult learning policies' main objective is to increase adults' competences in order to favour their entry/re-entry in the world of work. But, many regional officials are aware, especially in Piedmont and Tuscany, that such policies especially focus on people who are active in the labour market and/or recently laid-off.

An overall trend has been noticed throughout the primary research: most of the respondents confirmed that Adult Learning has been considered as a means for economic empowerment and employment promotion; such "policy bias" may have undermined the social dimension of adult learning as an educational means that encompasses also personal and social elements. The recent economic crisis and the growing unemployment rates that affected all the regions irrespective of their economic structure may have led the regional authorities to opt for this "policy shift" in the domain of adult learning.

The capability to identify the learning needs of low qualified adults with discontinuous labour pathway appears to be rather modest. This point is crucial because of the dynamics of an ageing European society that will increase the size of adults and also generate a more diverse cohort of adults with different learning needs and preferences. Some regional officials provided evidence of a good practice in Bolzano (Trentino Alto Adige region): in this case the regional authorities cross-check citizens' fiscal data with their working status to more promptly identify target groups with special economic needs and develop customised learning opportunities. These strategies are more effective – and more easily implementable - in small not densely populated geographical areas.

For what concerns the evaluation system, Piedmont and Tuscany are oriented to involve a network of regional research institutes (IRES, IRPET) to implement external evaluation. In Basilicata, the external evaluation is prevailing. The experience to resort to external evaluation, especially in Tuscany, is an idea positively accepted. Unfortunately in Basilicata, there is evidence of a limited feed-back of the evaluation process. In Piedmont, the constant monitoring





process has allowed to implement an adult learning process (POLIS project), that has been increasingly receiving positive feedback from adults engaged.

## Policy Implementation

The primary research efforts allowed to capture a somehow fragmented picture when it comes to actions and programmes stemming from AL policies. The questionnaires asked respondents to identify among various policy actions grants (covering tuition, fees, books, materials, and support services), scholarships for adult educational program, funding for institutions to assist adult learning, fund partnerships between educational institutions to promote adult learning or between industries and educational institutions (such as universities and college) to promote adult learning, awareness and engagement campaign with other institutions to encourage adults to undertake learning and, last but not least, conferences and seminars to reach adults.

Most of the respondents confirmed that in all regions the most important action was organising conferences, seminars and other awareness activities to reach adults, mostly in Basilicata, Piedmont and Tuscany regions, followed by funding for institutions to assist adult learning, most of all in partnership with educational institutions, and launching campaigns with other institutions to encourage adults to update their knowledge and skills. According to half of policy makers interviewed, other important actions developed were grants. An interesting finding from the primary research was that only three policy makers believe scholarships for adult educational program is a useful action to implement in AL policy.

In particular, as example of conference to reach adults, in Piedmont region was promoted [www.iolavoro.org](http://www.iolavoro.org) and a job meeting, that reached about 30,000 people in a week. As example of funding for institutions to assist adult learning, most of all in partnership with educational institutions, a region implemented voucher (courses requested directly from workers by a regional catalogue) and actions to different kind of people: post graduated, low profiles and skills workers, unemployed, foreigners, disabled people, prisoners.

When asked about shortcomings in the implementation of policies for adult learning, respondents identify a series of specific bottlenecks that range from unclear regulatory framework, overlapping institutional roles and responsibilities, challenging coordination mechanisms and low responsiveness to local needs.

For instance, a respondent from Piedmont region identified the need for more and better harmonized coordination among all actors involved into the adult learning system (institutions, AL agency, trade Unions, business sector and civil society at large): at present, the adult learning ecosystem remains highly fragmented and the current mechanisms of consultation and dialogue may not suffice in ensuring coherence, especially at implementation stage. According to another respondent from Piedmont region, adult learning is not updated and is not always in line with the specificities (needs, preferences, etc) of this peculiar target group, especially when facing social and economic pressures stemming from the current economic crisis. In general, adults need to be more proactively engaged in lifelong learning that is able also to support adults' upskilling with transversal competencies such as information technology and foreign languages, themes that are now experiencing growing demand from adults in Piedmont. By the same token, adult learning as a system seems slow to adapt to those evolving needs of adults

and may appear self-serving (i.e. traditional mechanism and supply) rather than dynamically adjusting to the modern economy.

In Basilicata, respondents pointed out to a generalised “distance” between policy statements and programmatic reality on the ground: education and learning are the main drivers of economic growth, competitiveness and social inclusion; the crucial role of adult learning is well-acknowledged in every national and European programme. However, the perspective from the ground is rather different with limited implementation in the region. According to one respondent, most of the programmes and actions of the 2007-2014 period were far from territorial and regional contexts, raising doubts about their effectiveness in addressing the specific needs of the local population and businesses. Reportedly, a specific challenge in the case of Regione Basilicata appeared to be the mapping of educational and labor market needs evolution and to promptly respond to those.

Respondents from Tuscany region reported an unclear regulatory framework at times generating confusion on the specific roles and responsibilities when it comes to adult learning programme and actions. Lack of communication among network operating on adult learning courses has been a factor affecting policy implementation: paradoxically, it has been reported that there is a better understanding of European networks rather than local ones. Such lack of coordination is even more evident at lower levels of governance from the region, i.e. the Province: at provincial level there is a lack of coordination among services operating on adult learning, generating the potential risk of leaving a part of adults – especially from vulnerable groups - underserved.

Reportedly another shortcoming stemming from the primary research refers to financial resources, not only about the magnitude of budgets allocated to adult learning but also the pace and timing of disbursement. The interviews revealed also a generalized disconnect between national policies and regional learning actions; unfortunately there seems to be a lack of an integrated approach, at times limiting the ability to respond to specific needs from the market.

About the connection between adults’ needs with national or regional guidelines about AL, according to a policy maker, participants of courses often are not aware about how much AL is important for their social and economic development. The issue in this case appears to be more connected to a generalised low awareness of adult learning opportunities available to society at large.

## AL Funding

Financing adult learning is being identified as a critical element affecting policy formulation and implementation: all respondents agree that funding is a clear impediment to the realization and implementation of adult learning policies, not only for the magnitude of resources but also for the financial management and disbursement timeline.

All respondents also highlighted the crucial role played by the European Social Fund, being identified by most respondents as the main source of funding for adult learning. With a few exceptions, ESF is the main – if not sole – source of funding. This reinforces the role of the European cohesion policy and pivotal role of the Structural Funds. In all the regions investigated, the EU funds are the key financial resource: with the exception of Lombardy where reportedly the financing of adult learning hinges upon a mix of financial resources of European (47%), national (43%) and regional (10%) origin. For the remainder regions, EU remains the main source of financing in the range of typically 70 to 90% of adult learning policies being implemented through European funds. While this reinforces the role of EU cohesion funding, at the same time reflects a sort of dependency on a single stream of financing for the crucial public good of adult learning. The primary research revealed that regions seldom mobilize private sources of financing for adult learning: there may be also an issue about definition of Public Private Partnership in the area of adult learning. None of the regions seem to use the instrument of Public Private Partnership: in some cases, PPPs are considered cumbersome to structure. In the case of Piedmont, a PPP was structured mobilising private financial resources for adult learning through the Inter-Professional Funds (Fondi Interprofessionali, private funds established by professional categories that are funded through payroll levies to finance learning and training activities for adults). In this case, the public agency acted as coordinator of the project involving trade unions, business companies, AL agencies and other subjects. This PPP was mainly concerned with placement labour market inclusion, experimental announcement, and AL provision to marginalised people and workers on redundancy payment.

Apart from this case, none of the respondents provided examples of PPPs. The low adoption and use of PPP instruments may be due to a different set of reasons, ranging from low interest of the private sector to engage in the provision of AL services; low capacity of the public sector to structure and manage PPP deals; cumbersome procedures of PPP mechanisms; and so on. One of the respondents was vocal in identifying the lack of PPP deals in Piedmont due to the low capacity of the public sector to interface and interact with the business sector and seek their more proactive involvement in adult learning provision, also with financial commitment.

The questionnaires were not able to capture the consideration to funding implications and requirements of adult learning programmes in the policy planning and formulation phase, specifically whether budgetary pressures and/or availabilities are considered when shaping the policies and selecting the programmes for adult learning activities in the regions investigated.

## Key findings

Respondents confirmed that in Italy most part of adults do not engage in lifelong learning. Unfortunately, notwithstanding increasing rates of engagement, adult learning participation in Italy remains modest, only 6% (Eurostat 2011), positioning Italy at the bottom of the EU countries. A key contributing factor is a considerably low awareness among adults of the learning opportunities available as well as a low understanding of the value of additional learning for social and economic development.

The interviews allowed to identify key critical issues. The policy formulation process is complex and cumbersome; many respondents shared the difficulty to identify specific learning needs of adults in their respective territories; such challenge is exacerbated in the case of adults in a critical path to or out of employment (underemployed, unemployed, social safety net beneficiaries). This was highlighted as a particular challenge, especially in times of crisis with an ever-changing labor market and unpredictable labor market dynamics. Respondents also converged on the issue that most AL policies focus on formal learning, whereas non-formal and informal learning represent a crucial dynamic of adult learning, especially in selected economic segments, i.e. those represented by micro and craft-type enterprises. Finally, in almost all of the regions, it emerges that the policy formulation process is based on long consultations: while this allows to capture the economic system learning needs, it may burden the process and make it difficult to ensure full alignment and coordination with European policies and strategies.

When it comes to funding of adult learning, there is a generalised consensus on the crucial use of European Structural Funds: such a high reliance on the EU Social Fund confirms the pivotal role of the EU cohesion policy. By the same token, the lack of regional and national funds devoted to adult learning may indicate a low commitment from national and regional budgets.

Fragmentation at the policy formulation and implementation levels have been also highlighted as key concerns and constraints for effective adult learning policy initiatives: while consultation processes are envisioned and provided for in a more or less structured fashion, some disconnect between policy and reality still remains. Such fragmentation is more evident when the respondents are the technical non-elected staff: in those instances, increased and better coordination mechanisms among the various participants to the equation of adult learning is felt as a priority. Increased coordination and dialogue among various stakeholders is perceived to be instrumental to prevent overlap and duplications in service delivery as well as a way to overcome multiple layers of interaction before reaching the target group of beneficiaries.

Another key concern identified during the primary research is the evaluation process: some regions rely on an external professional evaluation to monitor their adult learning (in the framework of overall education and training monitoring efforts); other regions perceived the lack of an effective qualitative monitoring and evaluation mechanism as a key shortcomings for the formulation of future policies. In this instance, the better medium-long term results are

registered in those regions that use an external evaluation, managed by research centers analysing a continuous flow of reliable information and data (i.e. Piedmont, Tuscany).

## Conclusions

The primary research carried out in Italy in the framework of the REGIONAL project captured an interesting picture of the adult learning policy eco-system that mirrors the differences reported by “Mind the Gap: Education Inequality in EU Regions”. The sample of regions investigated comprised regions with different economic and social structures so as to be representative of the diversity of Italy and, at large, Europe. All the regions showcase a well structured consultation process for the formulation of policies; most reported some overlaps in the implementation; all except one rely heavily on EU structural funds to finance their adult learning. Yet, some regions appear to have a more informed and hence robust mechanism for policy formulation, supported by data and analysis; some regions seem to have a more coordinated implementation framework based on structured dialogue among the various counterparts and participants to the adult learning equation; one region seemed more prepared than the others to mobilise funds alternative to the EU cohesion funds, while the remainder of the sample heavily relies on EU sources of funding.

Three key elements emerged from this primary research exercise. First, there seems to be a generalised confusion between adult learning (AL) and vocational training (VET) that engages adults. In addition to being due to a general lack of clear definitions, such confusion may be also due to the tendency of aggregating the two measures (AL and VET) as a response to the economic crisis: irrespective of whether a human capital development activity is undertaken under AL or VET, the target group is the adults in the population and the activities are meant to reinforce their employability. Second, most of the adult learning in Italy is biased towards economic empowerment of participants with limited social connotations of adult learning: this may well be a function of the economic crisis and the pressure to ensure response of the educational system at large – including adult learning – to the need to accompany adults in their entry and re-entry in the labor market. Third, there seems to be a disconnect between policy statements and reality: while all the respondents clearly stated the importance of adult learning and its relevance for the social and economic development of their regions, the secondary research did not confirm fully the importance of adult learning as a stand alone policy items. The desk research revealed the importance of training and vocational education more than that of adult learning; moreover, no single policy document solely devoted to adult learning was identified during the desk research.

The following key conclusions can be drawn from the primary research efforts:

1. the consultative process for policy formulation may be cumbersome and time consuming, limiting the ability to more promptly respond to the specific needs of the local socio-economic needs. Some respondents highlighted how the consultative process is useful to

identify needs, but at the same time may slow down the process for swift deployment of adult learning activities, hence limiting their relevance and impact;

2. evidence based policies seem to be better shaped and implemented in those regions that rely on data and analysis from specialised research centers seem to have a better understanding of the socio-economic challenges of their territories and hence better equipped to formulate and implement more focused adult learning actions;

3. overlaps of functions and fragmentation may hinder implementation of effective adult learning: many respondents identified unclear settings for the implementation of adult learning policies, with overlapping functions in the delivery of services generating duplications. In general, some respondents highlighted how the various policies for social and economic development are sometimes disconnected (i.e. education, learning, social, labor market, etc);

4. monitoring and evaluation are a building block for effective adult learning policies: many respondents identified the need to establish clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms based on measurable indicators. The lack of evaluation mechanisms hinder the formulation of more responsive policies and actions in adult learning;

5. more reliable data are needed to formulate sound policies: many respondents identified in the lack of reliable data and analysis a major impediment to the formulation of informed policies in the domain of adult learning. More than one respondent expressed the need to compile – and share – the various data available on the different dimensions of adult learning.

The primary research efforts allowed the consortium to complement the secondary research and capture nuances and first-hand impressions from respondents that confirm on the one hand the relevance and importance of adult learning as a means to support socio-economic development and on the other hand the need to advance policy formulation and implementation to better meet local needs and demands. When asked what kind of tools could be useful to better support adult learning policies, most of the respondents identified the following:

A) Improved access and quality of data: there is a need to improve data collection; it is not only an issue of quantity, but also of quality of data and their comparability;

“Data availability is very limited... data quality and comparability should be improved; we need better monitoring and analysis of adult learning outcomes”

“Data on local and European agents to create an open data and make these data more available”

*Source: interviews*

B) Knowledge sharing: while some respondents admitted to “looking beyond the fence”, most of the respondents (especially not from the elected policy-makers pool) expressed

interest in knowing about other regions' experiences, especially case studies from other countries;

“There are a lot of positive experience that are not **known**. There is a **need of best practices and summary** of local ones to let them know.”

“It could be useful to know and let know **best practises on adult learning**”

*Source: interviews*

C) Monitoring and evaluation: there is a perceived lack of “monitoring and evaluation” culture when it comes to policy formulation; some of the respondents can have negative connotations

“In our region, our politicians believe it is **necessary to have an AL policy even if they aren't able to evaluate it. Unfortunately our politicians do not have free culture of evaluation**; they think evaluating means promote or finance some project, they don't think evaluating can help to innovate.”

*Source: interviews*

Some respondents wished to see a more proactive approach towards the formulation of innovative policies and programmes for adult learning: there is a generalised understanding that classical solutions may not necessarily be poised to address the renewed social and economic challenges imposed by the recent crisis. As one respondent put it “*you can't continue to finance old and useless courses, projects and guidelines because of you're afraid of challenge and updating*”.



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Basilicata region - official website of local activities in Lifelong learning

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