



LEAP

Local Adult Education Policy

2020-1-SK01-KA204-078381

Intellectual Output 2

Trends & Dynamics in AE Local Policy Making

Country Snapshot – ITALY

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
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Introduction

Despite the numerous policy interventions at national level aimed at increasing the attractiveness and efficacy of AE programmes, the Italian adult learning ecosystem is still stagnant and highly fragmented. As of today, the number of adult learners remains below the EU average and the training and education provision do not seem to follow a coherent strategic plan.

This is due to different factors interacting and influencing each other's. Firstly and foremost, findings suggest that this is really an issue of cultural unawareness and how AE initiatives and programmes are promoted at local level: from an organisational and management perspective, some doubts and concerns arise on how solid and effective marketing strategies are – both at designing and implementation phase.

In second instance, results indicates that the phenomenon depends on the deployment phase, rather than the design one. In Italy, AE and adult learning-related priorities are tackled by municipal centres (CPIAs) in faculty of large flexibility in developing and deploying AE programmes. In principle, they are receptive of national recommendations that are EU-informed, as such it is possible to assume that CPIAs operative framework is compliant of EU priorities as well. But in practice this is a much less automatic effect.

How AE policies are defined at local level in Your Country? THE DESIGN PROCESS

On a national-scale level, AE-related priorities remain under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. Back in December 2012, as a response to foster awareness and adoption of the Law no. 263/2012, the Ministry promoted the establishment of a so defined Tavolo Interistituzionale sull'Apprendimento Permanente [Cross-institutional Working Table on Life Long Learning] which is responsible to detail “proposals for the definition of minimum standards and strategic lines of intervention in relation to services for lifelong learning and the organization of territorial networks”

The initiative of the Cross-Institutional Working Table stems from the EU Council Resolution 2011/c 372/01 (renewed EU agenda for AE) and feeds the Piano di Attività per l'Innovazione dell'Istruzione degli Adulti (P.A.I.DE.I.A.) [Activities Plan for AE Innovation] which gathers together the most important national policy stakeholders for AE and LLL:

- Trade Unions
- Representatives of Provincial Centers for Adult Education (CPIA)
- University network for lifelong learning (RUIAP)
- Groups of interest and third sector' representatives
- National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI)

Together, they collaborate to:

- foster and support CPIA participation in the designing, building and operation of the territorial networks for lifelong learning
- support – in accordance with the alignment and integration of the “Agenda 2030” and the “New European Skills Agenda” – the activation of “Skills Guarantee Paths” targeted at the adult working age population and sustain them in acquiring:
 - basic skills (mathematical, alphabetic, linguistic and digital)
 - transversal skills (teamwork, creative thinking, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, ability to solve problems, financial literacy)
- strengthen and consolidate research activities for adult education
- encourage the full roll-out of adult education programmes, with a particular focus on distance learning and targeting of disadvantaged categories
- nurture the activation of “Integrated Educational Paths” aimed at achieving, also through apprenticeship, a professional qualification and/or diploma with a view to continue training in the tertiary level (university and non-university)

As of today, in Italy the main piece of legislation providing guidelines for the definition at local level of AE programmes is represented by the D.M. (i.e. ministerial decree) no. 263/2012¹. The “EU background” of this reform can be traced back from two different recommendations from the EU Parliament and Council:

1. Key competences for LLL (2006/962/CE)
2. European Framework of qualifications for LLL (2008/C 111/01)

¹ Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana n.47 of 25-02-2013. Available at: <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:presidente.repubblica:decreto:2012-10-29;263>

No further details are provided in regards on how these two recommendations feed the normative and/or what specific actions have been undertaken to integrate the national law with the aforementioned EU guidelines.

What is interesting to notice, as detailed by the same regulation, is the fact that AE offers may differ from a local context to the other based on regional programming and specific needs-assessments emerging from the considered territory.

The Decree gives great flexibility to local AE providers in designing, planning and implementing the most suitable training offer as long as it proves to be relevant, coherent and consistent to tackles specific skills-gaps of the cohort they address.

Article no.5 of the aforementioned is in fact very vocal of a tailoring-principle guiding the definition of and overall architecture of the education path for each specific cohort. This customisation stems from a pre-assessment of both formal and non-formal competences and know-how detained by learners.

In consideration of the great number of stakeholders involved, and recalling the article no.5 of the aforementioned law, the Italian AE ecosystem comes out as highly fragment – in terms of training provision and expected learning outcomes – among many different formal and non-formal adult education providers. As a matter of fact, the Italian perception of “Adult Education” at policy and practice level is very broad – usually referred as a synonymous of Life Long Learning² – and, at times, overlapping with Vocational Education and Training.

LLL and AE embrace a wide range of activities targeting adult population (in or not in employment) so as to nurture their vocational knowledge and sustain them in adapting to labour markets and society as a whole. More specifically, LLL and AE include programmes and initiatives falling under the following actions:

1. Permanent Education – which means all education activities carried out with the aim to empower targets with basic skills/competences (i.e. digital literacy, active citizenship, etc.)
2. Permanent Training – which means all training activities carried out with the aim to empower targets with skills/competences qualifying their professional profiles for socio-economic (re)integration in the labour market
3. Continuous Training – which means all training activities carried out in working environments with the aim to upskill workforce and sustain their career progression

The establishment of this wide network of local AE and LLL providers, operating in both formal and non-formal settings and beneficiaries of such high degrees of autonomy, is a direct outcome expected by the 2012 reform. Based on the analysis of the regulatory text, the following major key takeaways can be considered:

- Streamlining of bureaucracy and eliminating access barriers to education and training opportunity for all

² Law no. 92/2012, art. 4, comma 51 defines the lifelong learning as follows: “every activity undertaken by people formally, non-formally and informally, during their lifetime to improve knowledge, capabilities and competencies in a personal, civic, social or occupational perspective”.

- Tailoring individual training agreements, so as to better succeed in increasing the quality of the training offer, better match targets' expectations, better tackle their specific needs and/or skill-gaps
- Networking among national-established providers, AE and LLL operators are highly incentivised to build long-standing, organics and trust-based relationships with other socio-economic actors that by scope and mission, might be of relevance to widen access to education and training, strengthen the pedagogical accuracy of the offer, and more in general, make the national support system more effective and efficient
- Embedding digital technologies. This is to sustain and increases access opportunities to education and training from remote and empower the digital proficiency of both trainers/coaches and learners

The official regulatory text comes also with a very detailed guideline manual³ elaborated by the Ministry and aimed at sustaining local AE providers in the transition to the new regulatory framework. The manual details competences areas and expected leaning outcomes, in terms of knowledge and abilities, for each education “axis” (as formally defined by the legislator).

³ Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, Dipartimento per l'istruzione. ISTRUZIONE DEGLI ADULTI (D.P.R 263/2012). Linee guida per il passaggio al nuovo ordinamento (Art.11, comma 10, D.P.R 263/2012). Available at: https://usr.istruzione.umbria.gov.it/news/news2014/territorio/organico/cpia/05_LG_Allegati.pdf

How AE policies are implemented at local level? THE DEPLOYMENT PHASE

As highlighted from the previous chapter, the national network of policy and public stakeholders responsible for the efficacy, innovation and overall performance of the national AE and LLL ecosystem is very wide. However, beside the Ministry, it is still possible to identify few pivotal stakeholders that more than other participate, from different perspectives, in the deployment phase:

National Level:

- INVALSI - National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training system.

Its main roles consist in preparing evaluation tests for all levels schools, taking part in international surveys, carrying out periodic national surveys on national standards. Furthermore, the Institute coordinates the National Assessment System in the field of education and training.

- INDIRE – National Institute of Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research

It develops new didactic models, experiments new technologies in training courses, promotes the redefinition of learning and teaching spaces and times. The Institute has a consolidated experience in training teachers, administrative, technical and auxiliary staff and school managers and has been involved in many e-learning projects at European level. As part of the National Evaluation System in the field of education and training, the Institute develops actions to improve learning methods in order to raise learning levels and the proper functioning of the schooling system

- INAPP – National agency for the implementation of the European Agenda for AE in Italy.

From 2017, INAPP monitoring activities to draw a comprehensive understanding of the current situation of the adult education in Italy. Such activities are aimed at investigating the functioning of training pacts (strengths and weaknesses) and the size, extent and quality of territorial networks that CPIA should build in the territory. The monitoring is carried out through interviews and focus groups in nine different Italian regions, in order to support institutions in designing and operating training programmes as well as in building the territorial networks.

Local level:

- CPIA (formerly known as CTP, “Centro Territoriale Permanente”)

Provincial Centers for Adult Education occupies the “frontline” of AE and LLL provision. Based on Law no. 296/2006 art. 1 paragraph 636, regions and local public authorities are responsible for the alignment and consistency of local/regional AE programmes to EU objectives and framework, but the way in which these programmes are actually designed, developed and deployed fall under the faculty and responsibility of CPIAs. The autonomy principle is also strongly reaffirmed by the D.M. of 2007 on the autonomy of CPIAs for AE and with specific reference to art. no. 5 *Didactic and organizational autonomy* and art. no. 6 *Training offer*.

Since 2012, the national network of CPIAs gained considerable power and influence in translating general ministerial guidelines in AE policies to concrete education and training programmes/ plans targeting final users. Their key responsibilities consist in guiding adult learners in:

1. Define their own learning path and identify by themselves the learning outcomes most suitable for their specific situation
2. Obtain certifications qualifying the acquired competences

3. Engage external guidance and support services/networks to nurture even further their opportunities for capacity building and upskilling

More specifically, the autonomy of CPIAs start after demonstrating compliance with minimum standards as prescribed by D.Lgs. no. 13/2013⁴. It is important to consider that these general rules apply to bureaucratic formalities rather than to quali/quantitative features of the training provision. Beyond that, CPIAs are in the faculty to assess, based on their own internal models, the most suitable methodology to accompany learners through their learning experience.

If their initiative is aligned to EU frameworks or not, it is not easy to evaluate. In Italy there are in total 128 CPIAs distributed all over the national territory, and they detain a strategic role in consolidating and promoting a stable and reliable educational offer that is validated with other CPIAs, labour market, industry representatives and numerous other local authorities.

The discussion on the nature of these networks implies also few other considerations. Based on the results of a survey⁵ published by INAPP. The intensity of these relations is a bit more “weaker” than expected: in the vast majority of cases, the architecture of these networks counts no more than 5 agents, municipalities and third sector operators represent the favourite interlocutors of CPIAs. Institutionalised relations are much less common than ad-hoc cooperation programmes implemented to carry out specific initiatives.

Overall, the reality of these networks is effective and efficient, but at the same time respondents lamented also several difficulties. Building networks of such kind seem to be time-consuming and energy demanding, few factors more than other prevent the emergence of larger networks, and consistently, more impactful initiatives (Table 1):

Table 1: Challenges and difficulties to build and maintain local network
1. Cultural distances and misunderstanding of common goals/benefits
2. Lack of genuine mutual interest
3. Lack of participation and commitment
4. Low territorial visibility of local CPIAs
5. Reputational concerns
6. Higher complexity in managing people, resources and processes
7. Lack of “bridging” figures (i.e. expert network manager)
8. Higher complexity in monitor and evaluation
9. Higher complexity in cost auditing
Source: INAPP, 2017

For what concerns the education provision in terms of learning programmes and expected learning outcomes, the addressed macro-areas pertain to:

⁴ General rules and essential levels of performance for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and the minimum service standards of the national skills certification system

⁵ INAPP, Indagine sulla consistenza e l’efficienza delle Reti territoriali attivate dai CPIA, 2017. Available at: [https://inapp.org/sites/default/files/newsletter/Indagine%20Reti%20Territoriali%20dai%20CPIA%20\(Italiano\).pdf](https://inapp.org/sites/default/files/newsletter/Indagine%20Reti%20Territoriali%20dai%20CPIA%20(Italiano).pdf)

1. Acquisition of basic skills for compulsory education (i.e. A2 Italian, in the case of a cohort of migrants)
2. Acquisition of technical, professional and/or artistic knowledge

Within this very broad perimeter, CPIAs are in the condition to arrange the programmes as the better conceive, and usually, and on the basis of: specific teaching competences of the training staff, needs tackled at local level, skill-gaps of learners and recognition of their competences and abilities in need of empowerment.

But the literature resource does not provide for a common methodology on which CPIAs should apply or rely on to investigate and evaluate training and education needs of their targets, assess the demand and react accordingly. This is in fact the area in which they can express their autonomy, after demonstrating compliance with few formal requirements. The same autonomy remains also for the evaluation post-mortem of the training programme, which is typically conducted through monitoring and evaluation tools developed internally by the CPIAs' training staff or, in some cases, by relying on the PIACC self-assessment tool, developed by OCSE and formally embraced by the European Union – if any post-mortem evaluation happens in the first place, being not formally indicated by law.

As such, the question if CPIAs tackle Digital Skills, Climate Change (Sustainability issues), Civic Education (Citizenship education) and Health education (in relation to COVID) it is not easy to answer based on literature review only. Same goes for the consistency and alignment of these training programmes to EU-relevant challenges and priorities: the fact that CPIAs (and the overall AE support system represented also by local authorities) operates in compliance with national guidelines that in turn are EU-informed themselves, and considering also INAPP monitoring activities for the integration of EU agendas within the national ecosystems, might lead to believe that, in fact, CPIAs and representatives local authorities take into account the aforementioned – more or less directly.

Talking about available case studies and best practices, we wish to report about the city of Turin – the largest out of the 5 Italian urban areas recognised by UNESCO as part of the Network of learning cities and open candidate to the EU Capital of Culture 2033. In 2019, the Turin CPIA released the three-year training offer plan 2019 - 2022⁶ as a follow up to many pioneering initiatives implemented at local level in the domain of LLL for social cohesion, sustainability, economic development and cultural prosperity. Local authorities are currently embracing the learning city concept through the plans outlined in *Metropolis Torino 2025*, a strategic long-term initiative aimed at promoting the sustainable, green and digital development of metropolitan areas.

Turin as proactively fostered innovative practices in LLL by participating to the following initiatives:

- Active Participation in Torino Città Educativa, a project on making Turin an Educational City

Following the adherence to the AICE (National Associations Educational Cities), the [Torino Città Educativa](#) Project expresses the roadmap of the city becoming an educational system. Great focus is on the dimension of growth and training of citizens, in particular of disadvantaged groups, in order to favour the interaction of a plurality of local stakeholders detaining their own shares of opportunities and responsibilities for education, training, socio-economic development and welfare

⁶ CPIA2 Torino, Piano Triennale dell'Offerta Formativa 2019 – 2022. Available at: <http://www.cpia2-torino.it/attachments/article/38/PTOF%20Triennio%202019-2022.pdf>

By promoting cultural awareness on a large range of social issues (environmental sustainability, digital literacy, etc.) the concept of Educational City elaborates new horizons for urban areas as agents of change and innovation at the benefits of its citizens

- I.T.E.R.– Cultural centers for children, youth and families to visit in their free time

The [I.T.E.R](#) initiative stems from the need to make available a learning environment in which children and their families can experience the concept of education for active citizenship. I.T.E.R. allows children (and parents) in gaining greater self-awareness as members of societies and agents of change

- Obiettivo Orientamento Piemonte (former C.O.S.P)

[Obiettivo Orientamento Piemonte](#) is a free orientation and career guidance system dedicated to youth and their families so as to help them in reflecting, assessing and evaluating their most suitable education and training path

The local CPIA responded also with great proficiency to this new and innovative training frameworks. Beside the traditional classrooms' programmes, notable to mention are the following initiatives:

- “Mondi Lontani Mondi Vicini” [Distant Worlds Near Worlds]

Intercultural cinematographic review so as to nurture awareness on migrants' background, inclusiveness and understanding of diversity

- SALUTE project

Multilateral workshops with counselling centers and experts for AIDS prevention and sexual education

- CPIA2 Turin and Progest Cooperative

LLL programmes for disabled adults

- CPIA2 and Comunità Associazione Choròs

Theatrical itineraries for adults literacy, communication and public speaking skills

- Human Rights

Weekly meetings on human rights and citizenship in partnership with Amnesty International

- EDUFIM

Training and education on financial and economic literacy

Conclusion and Takeaways

The great heterogeneity of the cohort that might potentially benefit from AE programmes and actually addressed by the National system, represents certainly an indicator of great responsiveness to the many needs emerging from society, but at the same time, it adds new layers of complexity to the current assessment. From a learner-centred perspective, the education provision cannot ignore age, gender and socio-cultural background of targets:

1. Minor migrants
2. Second generation migrants
 - a) in school age
 - b) in adulthood
3. Women
4. Unskilled Adults
5. Refugees
6. People with disabilities

Beside specific training programmes aimed at empowering languages skills of migrants, CPIAs and local authorities tend to rely on a “one-solution-fits-all” approach. Converging the focus on each of the above requires an intense effort of planning and a clear strategic long-term vision, something that unfortunately national CPIAs seem to lack of.

2018 data from a national report⁷ published by INDIRE question if such large operational autonomy is in fact the most efficient and effective solution:

- nearly 20% of national CPIAs never proceeded to state their objectives in terms of education and internal organisation
- only 27% of CPIAs works and “self-reflect” on their identity and define their objectives accordingly
- only 17% of CPIAs is equipped with a formal and structured strategic plan that link mission, vision and objectives to their identity

Finally, data are linked to a “self-awareness” issue and a lack of strategic planning culture at management level that might lead to a phenomenon of *organisational anarchy*. The missing focus on a strategic, long-term, and “intimate” vision seems to have negative impacts also on other important management functions, namely: Marketing and Public Relations.

According to findings⁸ from the EU Commission, the national AE ecosystem struggles in promoting and “marketing” the benefits and opportunities of AE and LLL. Calculations⁹ from the National Institute of Statistics indicates that, although the number of people accessing di LLL increased significantly from the beginning of the last decade: this represents clearly a positive note as indicative of the fact that, throughout the years, there have been much less barriers to training, but at the same ones should also consider that the number of the Italian AE ecosystem are way below the EU average.

⁷ INDIRE, VIAGGIO NELL'ISTRUZIONE DEGLI ADULTI IN ITALIA Alla scoperta di esigenze, problemi e soluzioni, 2018. Available at: <https://www.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Viaggio-istruzione-adulti-in-Italia.pdf>

⁸ EU Commission, Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills. Full Country Report – Italy, 2017. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=21241&langId=en>

⁹ ISTAT, La Partecipazione degli Adulti alle Attività Formative nel 2017, 2018. Available at: https://www.istat.it/it/files//2018/12/Report_Partecipazione_adulti.pdf

Bibliography

Please refer to literature review