

Italy

Emilia-Romagna

Regional Report on Lifelong
Learning Policy 2023

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Collaborative Monitoring of Regional Lifelong Learning Policies (COMORELP) 2020-2023
Emilia-Romagna (Italy) – Regional Report on Lifelong Learning Policy 2023

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The report was produced as part of the project Collaborative Monitoring of Regional Lifelong Learning Policies – COMORELP 2020-1-PL01-KA204-082010.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme.



Co-funded by
the European Union

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Introduction

Emilia-Romagna is a highly developed Italian region, well-known for the strength of its industrial and social tissue, and its performance in the education and training field is also reputed to be of a high standard, not only for the national average of Italy, but also in a European perspective.

However, the concept of Lifelong Learning as such is seldom utilised in Regional Policy and is understood only by a minority of people. The literal translation sounds like a condemn (Assonance with lifelong jail, “ergastolo”) and the Italian official translation “apprendimento nel corso di tutta la vita” sounds a bit better but still very artificial and abstract, not corresponding to concrete experience by the majority of citizen.

The terms Educazione permanente and Formazione continua (the former referring to non-professional and the latter to professional learning for adults) have to be used also in the conversations with specialists. The concept of lifelong learning as an overarching concept also covering initial education is only understood by specialists having some exposure to international policies and organisations such as UNESCO and the EU institutions.

This means that, in terms of policies, the relatively weak point of the Region is a certain “segregation” of each lifelong learning sector in its own boundaries, corresponding to different governance structures and systems of stakeholders.

Each sector is working relatively well, but the level of policy coordination is not as high as it could be, and this may cause gaps in offering integrated solutions/services to some groups who need flexibility and individual support to put together a personal learning path.

Emilia-Romagna Region

The Emilia-Romagna Region, an autonomous region within the unity of the Republic, according to the rules of the Constitution, the European Union, and its Statute, pursues self-government and promotes the development of the regional community, contributing to the renewal of society and the State.



Figure 1. Regions of Italy and the Emilia-Romagna region

The Emilia-Romagna Region includes the local communities, institutions, and territories of the provinces of Bologna, Ferrara, Forlì-Cesena, Modena, Parma, Piacenza, Ravenna, Reggio nell'Emilia, Rimini. The regional capital is the metropolitan city of Bologna.

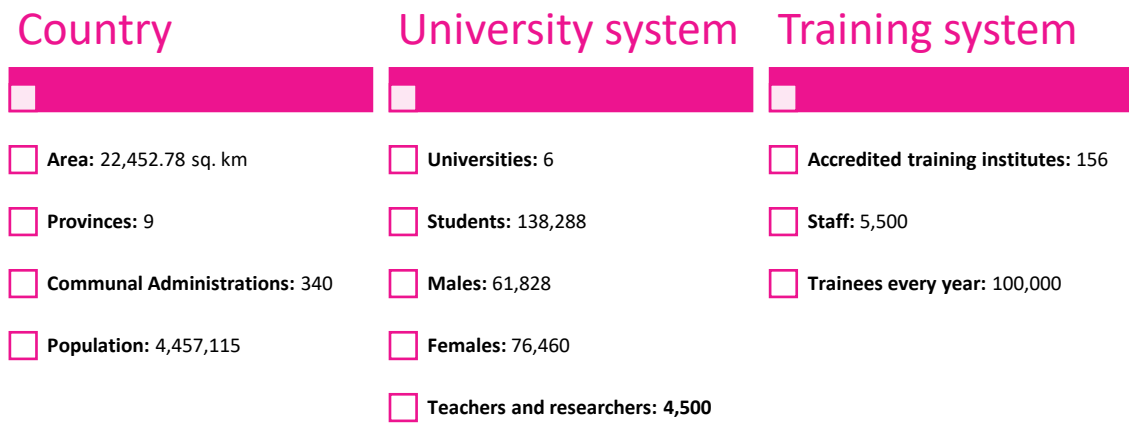


Figure 2. A profile of Italy

Emilia-Romagna, with a total of approximately 4.5 million residents (2019 figure), represents 7.4% of the entire Italian population. A value growing at a more intense rate than the national average thanks to a significant capacity to attract both foreign and Italian populations from other regions. Compared to the national total, Emilia-Romagna is worth 8.3% of the total workforce, 8.7% of those employed, 9.3% of the total number of people employed in enterprises, 9.2% of GDP and imports and 14.0% of exports.

Emilia-Romagna LLL Structure

LLL Educational and Training Infrastructure

In Emilia-Romagna have been **created an educational and training infrastructure** called **ER Education and Research Emilia-Romagna**. The infrastructure plays a key role in the promotion of skilled jobs and sustainable growth. Inclusive because accessible to everyone, the various branches of the infrastructure have the same overall objectives, based on complementary specialisations, the integration of educational institutions, collaboration with enterprise, and synergy between European, national, and regional resources.

It is made up of **four branches: Vocational Education and Training, the Polytechnic Network, Higher Education and Research, and Employment and Skills**. Each of these branches has specific educational objectives and is designed to guarantee the right of individuals to participate in the growth processes, to develop expectations and potential, and to strengthen their technical, critical, and relational skills required to grow, work, and compete in an increasingly internationalised world.

The objective of the educational and training infrastructure is to provide people and the region with strategic knowledge aimed at specialisation, internationalisation, social inclusion, and economic innovation. Achieving this goal involves a number of priorities: combined planning with European, national and regional resources; greater integration between schools, training institutions, universities and research organisations; and an increased role for enterprise in educational processes so as to meet requirements and generate innovative skills by trying out a twofold model of regional training, also through agreements with the various industries. In addition to these priorities cutting across the planning of all actions, an Active Labour Network is being constructed. **Together with the Regional Employment Agency**, it becomes the mainstay of active policies able to meet the needs of individuals and businesses.

A key contribution to opportunities provided by ER Education and Research Emilia-Romagna comes from the **European Social Fund (ESF)**, one of the European Union Structural and Investment Funds. The Operational Programme is developed in the framework of the ESF thematic objectives, which the region has defined according to the priorities in the local context.

Vocational Education and Training system

The first branch of ER Education and Research Emilia-Romagna is the regional Vocational Education and Training system, which offers further study to school-leavers at the end of compulsory secondary education, enabling them to embark on a three-year programme to obtain a vocational qualification.

Italian national legislation establishes that the school system – consisting of vocational institutes, technical institutes, and high schools – may only award higher education diplomas at the end of a five-year programme. To offer differentiated educational programmes in line with the requirements, specific features and nature of the local economic and production system, **Emilia-Romagna passed Regional Law no. 5/2011, creating the Vocational Education and Training system. Its strongly work-based three-year courses are designed and implemented jointly by training providers, accredited by the Region, and by vocational institutes.**

After the first introductory year enabling students to consolidate basic skills through individual personalised pathways, they can decide whether to further their studies at a vocational institute or an accredited training institute, and thus choose the most suitable route to a vocational qualification. The qualifications provide access to the world of employment, but the choice of a three-year pathway does not exclude the possibility of pursuing further studies and continuing in education.

The three-year courses in Emilia-Romagna offer the possibility to choose **from 23 vocational qualifications.**

The Region designs the Polytechnic Network programmes starting from the priorities identified in the Regional Smart Specialisation Strategy. This strategy aims to guarantee networks of skills meeting the requirements of the leading and emerging sectors of the regional economy.

The Polytechnic Network

The Polytechnic Network offers various opportunities – including the courses of the foundations managing the Higher Technical Institutes and those of Higher Technical Education and Training the HTI Foundations – there are seven in our region – are technical colleges that offer highly specialised, two-year, post-school diploma programmes to educate and train expert technicians.

The Higher Technical Institutes offer a tertiary, non-university education with classroom learning and long training periods in businesses in Italy and abroad, leading to an advanced technical diploma. **Higher Technical Education and Training courses**

produce specialised technicians capable of managing the organisational and production processes in businesses also associated with technological innovation and market internationalisation. The programmes lasting 800 hours are designed to meet the labour market demand for technical, professional, scientific, technological, legal, economic, organisational, communicational and r. In addition to those courses, the Region devises educational programmes to meet the specific needs of the various areas (cities, rural areas, and areas affected by the 2012 earthquake) and to respond to the requirements of the industrial sectors, entrepreneurial systems, or individual businesses with a high potential for growth and job creation relational skills, especially for the purposes of small and medium-size enterprises.

Higher education and research

In innovating manufacturing, priority must be given to **higher education and research**. To strengthen the relevant part of the regional educational and training infrastructure, also through greater integration with the regional policies for innovation and industrial research, the Region has approved a three-year plan: “Advanced skills for research, technology transfer and entrepreneurship”.

This document brings together the resources of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESF, ERDF and EAFRD) in terms of priorities, objectives, procedures, and implementation schedules. The plan is one of the first instruments in the new generation of policies for integrated development that the Region committed to launching by signing the Labour Pact.

The complementarity and synergy of the European Funds – ESF, ERDF and EAFRD – are meant to guarantee a regional entrepreneurial growth trend within a highly integrated and dynamic regional innovation ecosystem, based on the interaction between the research world and the production world.

This is intended to attract investments, entrepreneurial initiatives, and creative talents capable of jointly promoting innovation in technological spin-offs, start-ups, and mature industries. In implementing the plan with the support of the European Social Fund, the Region aims to promote and finance various actions.

They include bursaries and other financial aids to help people entering higher education; grants for research projects in line with the Horizon 2020 strategic objective to support the conversion of new scientific knowledge into products and innovative services to meet social challenges; research grants and doctorate scholarships consistent with entrepreneurial traditions in the region and the paths indicated by Smart Specialisation Strategy; actions to accompany processes creating new innovative

or consolidative enterprises, and the growth and internationalisation of newly created businesses.

Access Path to LLL

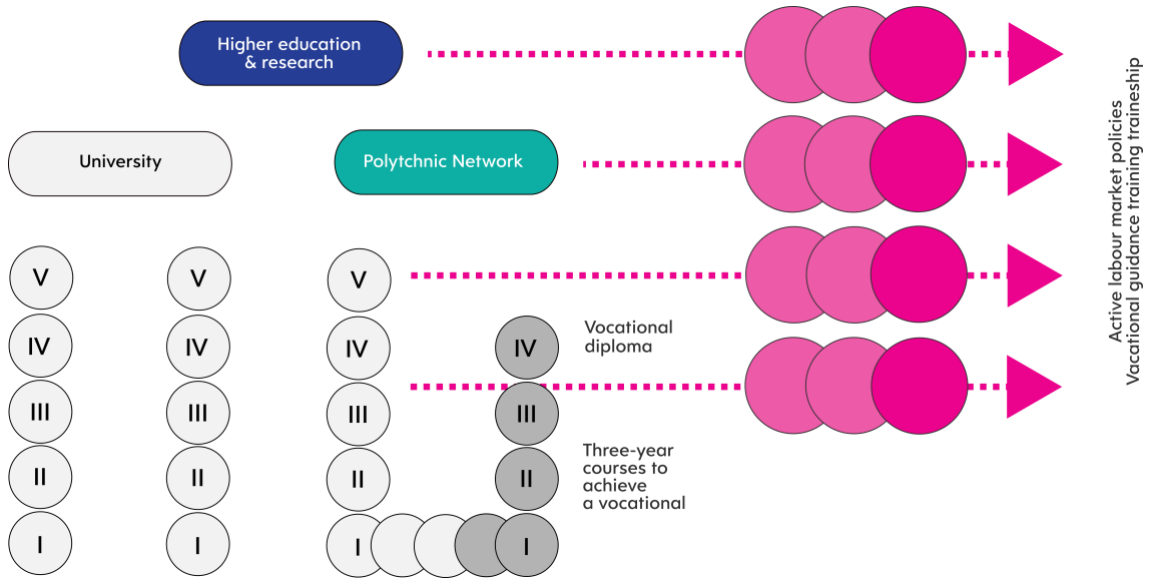


Figure 3. Access Path to LLL

Main Actors

Objectives	Training Offer	Actors
Increase the number of young people with qualifications and provide an educational pathway for entry to the world of work.	Three-year courses with qualification.	Vocational institutes. Accredited training providers.
Develop the scientific, technological, technical, and vocational skills required for jobs in the driving sectors of the economy.	Courses in Higher Technical Institutes. Courses in Higher Technical Education and Training. Courses in technical training and specialisation.	HTI Foundations ITS. Accredited training providers. Schools Businesses.
Train highly qualified professionals to drive innovation in the economic and production system.	Specialist higher education. Research grants. PhD scholarships. Courses for business start-ups.	Universities. ART-ER (Attractivity, Research, Territory – Emilia-Romagna Region). Research bodies.

Objectives	Training Offer	Actors
		Accredited training providers. Businesses.
Promote employment and enable people and businesses to adapt to changes; encourage social inclusion through work.	Career guidance and assisting job entry. Training for entry or re-entry to work. Traineeships. Apprenticeships. Training to remain permanently on the labour market.	Accredited training providers. Active Labour Network. Businesses.

Table 1. LLL Main Actors in the Emilia-Romagna Region

Perception of LLL

In common with other regions, **Emilia-Romagna is currently facing some decisive challenges** and not only at a regional level. **The first is demographic** with an ageing population, a low birth rate and immigration as its three main components.

The second challenge is the climate emergency which makes environmental transition a major issue that can no longer be postponed. **The third challenge is digital transformation.** Digital technology is changing the world around us and the way we interpret it profoundly. The term revolution is used precisely because of the impact and extraordinary transformation this generates in social and economic relations and even in democratic participation. **The fourth challenge concerns mounting inequalities** (higher female unemployment, a marked gender pay gap and worrying youth unemployment, accompanied by high job insecurity and low incomes, and an increase in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion are some of the emerging factors. In addition to social and economic inequalities, **there are also gender and generational inequalities**, the result of a number of social, cultural and economic factors, starting with the increasingly tangible inequality in Emilia-Romagna's labour market.

By signing the **Pact for Work and Climate**, the Regional Government has outlined and shared with the institutional, economic, and social partnership a project for the relaunch and development of Emilia Romagna aimed at generating new development and new quality jobs, accompanying Emilia Romagna in the ecological and digital transition, reducing the economic, social environmental and territorial fractures, and achieving full gender equality. The Pact has four strategic objectives:

- Emilia-Romagna, a region of knowledge and know-how
- Emilia Romagna, a region of environmental transition
- Emilia-Romagna, a region of rights and duties
- Emilia-Romagna, a region of work, enterprise, and opportunity.

This Pact and subsequent agreements are tools with which to define the strategic objectives towards which all available resources will be directed and work together on the urgent and structural measures needed to get our economy and society moving again.

Within the objective Emilia-Romagna, a region of knowledge and know-how, it is stated: Investing in education, training, research, and culture to foster rather than acquiesce in change, generate quality jobs, and combat job insecurity and inequality, innovate in manufacturing and services and speed up environmental and digital transition.

LLL SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threads
Dynamic and multi-sector economy. Well integrated in global value chains. Low unemployment. Innovation eco-system in place. Industry and Education in good terms. Social cohesion, participation in decision making. Many good practices.	Fragmentation of initiatives. Average small size of companies. Lifelong learning not explicitly in the policy agenda (but sector by sector good education and inclusion initiatives). Limited attention to adult learning.	PNRR investment. Crisis stimulates innovation, new life perspectives. More integration among concurrent/ semi-competitive initiatives in the field of LLL-International benchmarking. Growing attention to importance of soft skills for life and jobs.	Energy crisis hits regional industry and solidarity. Silos-syndrome vs system view of policy and policies.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis of the Emilia-Romagna Region

Lines of Action for LLL

- To upgrade the language skills of the entire community, starting with the youngest children, by extending English-language literacy experiences in nurseries and infants' schools and strengthening the teaching of English in vocational and lifelong training.
- To consolidate the network of careers guidance services and combat gender stereotypes in training and career choices, promoting and improving vocational and technical training courses, including through the dissemination in schools of structural and permanent measures to facilitate access by girls and boys to technical-scientific subjects.
- To promote new synergies between districts and an increasingly open, inclusive, and innovative educational system.
- To combat educational poverty and early school leaving, promoting educational success.
- To support families financially to ensure the right to schooling for all and improve services, with specific attention to students with disabilities.
- To promote Paths for Transversal Skills for Guidance (PTCO, formerly school- job alternation), which provide real added value to educational programmes.
- To safeguard schools in peripheral and mountainous areas.
- To strengthen cooperation between vocational schools, vocational training bodies and the region's manufacturing infrastructure, to increase the ability of the integrated education and vocational training system to provide pathways to qualification geared to foster entry into the labour market, enhance and network excellence and combat school drop-out.
- To strengthen and qualify the training system, including through a joint review of accreditation and simplified management rules.
- To build an integrated professional and technical training chain - favouring the transition from (Professional Training) to IFTS (higher Technical Education and Training) and ITS (Higher Technical Education) and from these to university - enabling young people to continue their education and providing districts with the technical, scientific and humanities skills essential to recovery and innovation, contributing to increasing the number of young people with professional qualifications or diplomas, tertiary education qualifications and university degrees.
- To promote the internationalisation of education for students who, despite their merits, are lacking the necessary financial resources.
- To provide university scholarships and adequate services to all those entitled to them based on merit and income, working closely with institutions, universities and higher education institutes for art, music, and dance.
- To implement initiatives to attract students and encourage them to stay on after

completing their training courses and foster the return of talented individuals, including by attracting prestigious international research and university institutions to the region and designing a new network of services, including international schools.

- To promote the use of the various types of apprenticeship contracts as a privileged channel for access to the world of work, with a particular focus on those enabling young people to obtain qualifications and upgrading the training component of professional apprenticeships.
- To initiate new synergies between regional planning and interprofessional funds to strengthen and promote the training of entrepreneurs, managers, employees, and professionals, supporting the development of innovation, digital transformation, internationalisation, and sustainable development processes at all levels.
- To strengthen and increase lifelong learning opportunities to make individual pathways to education and skills accessible to all and strengthen lifelong employability.
- To further enhance integrated and synergistic participation in national and international research funding opportunities to attract new projects, infrastructure, resources, and talent.
- To strengthen the regional research and innovation ecosystem, investing particularly in healthcare, digital transition, and the environment.
- To make the Emilia-Romagna region a major centre for cultural and creative industries by investing in advanced specialised training, consolidating the theatre network, strengthening the cinema, music and publishing sectors and supporting widespread cultural production.

Results of Regional Assessment

Designing Policy

I. LLL in a Regional Development Strategy

Question	Answer
1. Is lifelong learning an important focus of the regional development plan or of the regional strategy?	Yes, partially

Table 3. Question 1

In general terms it can be said that Emilia-Romagna is a region that gives importance and manages education and training rather well, making them important pillars of the regional development strategy. The issue of talent attraction and retention, not only at the academic level, is explicitly part of the regional Smart Specialisation Strategy.

The “partially” in the reply is due to the fact that the concept of lifelong learning is not frequently used and understood, and that each sector (school, initial VET, university, continuing training and adult education) is rather separate from the others, with a few significant exceptions such as the ITS (Istituti Tecnici Superiori) foundations in which school, VET, higher Education, Industry and Local Administration cooperate to provide EQF level 5 training programmes, adapted to the need of the labour market. This relative segregation of learning systems leaves some hard-to-reach individuals and target groups (who would have intersectional support needs) out of the access to lifelong learning opportunities, despite several initiatives to make the system as inclusive as possible.

Since September 2020 a “New Competences Fund” has been put in place, everything that is related to the needs of the economic sector is monitored, the Excelsior system run by the regional Chamber of Commerce provides information on employment trends. the national Agency for active labour market policy, working in close collaboration with the regional government and with employers, has a special programme to accompany the transitions of young people and adults from education to work and from unemployment to work through an individualised approach including

the development of transversal competences. It cannot be said, however, that this approach reaches all those who may need it.

Adult unemployed (over 35 years of age) are less covered than young people, and, in more general terms, there may be a long-time lag between the moment when the learning need is perceived and the time when the funds are made available to organise the related training. The Region is working on the possibility to speed up the administrative procedures and reduce the time-to-delivery.

One of the unresolved issues in lifelong learning policy is that of the different provisions existing for continuing training (Formazione continua) as connected to company's needs, that is well covered and funded by existing mechanisms, and adult education (Educazione permanente) mostly reflecting individual learning needs and ambitions, that is not really well covered. This difference also entails that while technical skills needs are well identified, transversal skills needs are frequently neglected, with the obvious exception of digital skills.

The level of collaboration between the administration and the enterprise system is good at the regional and provincial level, one of the challenges identified is to avoid overlapping funding opportunities for the same purposes, and rather reach a higher level of coordination among different parts of the administration to cover all existing learning needs. A more integrated approach to the needs of adult people, overcoming the separation between company-led technical needs and individual-specific transversal competence needs, would be welcome.

Regional policies are well co-ordinated with EU Policies, particularly those of Innovation and Research, Emilia-Romagna being part of two Knowledge and Innovation Networks and partner with several EU Regions in important Associations and informal networks.

Conclusions

The provisions of the strategic documents of the region demonstrate the importance attributed to human resources and high-level education and training in the Smart Specialisation Strategy of Emilia-Romagna. There is a need to develop a higher level of integration between the different sectors of education and training to avoid overlaps and fill existing gaps in reaching the whole adult population and all their learning needs, including those not specifically related to a specific job.

II. Promoting and Implementing Democratic Governance within the Regional LLL System

Question	Answer
2. Are stakeholders, learners and educators involved in the governance system of LLL (or specific education sectors)	Yes

Table 4. Question 2

Emilia-Romagna has a consolidated system of stakeholders involvement: social partners play a key role in the definition and implementation of continuing training policies also through the existing funding provision (fondi interprofessionali, funds that are created by a percentage retention on the global amount of salaries, and are then put at the disposal of all companies for continuing training), while State and Local Authorities are normally involved in the coordination of the provision of initial education/training as well as career guidance and support services. NGOs, Higher Education Institutions, and training providers are also frequently consulted and involved in the validation of training policies. Room for improvement exists, particularly at the sub-regional level and in terms of frequency of monitoring, but all actors interviewed agreed that the situation is substantially good in this dimension.

Conclusions

A consolidated concertation system exists in Emilia-Romagna to define and monitor (Education and) Training Policies, it applies to Continuing Training more than initial education and training, that is essentially regulated by the Public Authorities at national and regional level; and it is less operational as far as non-company related Adult Education is concerned.

III. Inter-Institutional Coordination and Integration of LLL Policies

Question	Answer
3. Does a lifelong learning policy exist at regional level? covering all education sectors (see below)?	Yes, partially
4. Does a lifelong learning policy cover all education sectors (see below)?	Yes, partially
a) formal	Yes
b) informal	Yes, partially

Question	Answer
c) all age groups	Yes, partially
5. Is there cooperation and coordination between central and regional levels?	Yes, partially
a) financial	No
b) administrative	Yes, partially
c) other	Yes, partially

Table 5. Questions 3-5

As already mentioned in Dimension 1, Emilia-Romagna does not use the concept and term Lifelong Learning in its official policies for Education and Training but has a rather good coverage of initial and continuing training, including a strategy to coordinate with State authorities in initial education, with Universities for Higher Education, Innovation, and research, with industry for continuing training. The weakest area is adult education, covering those needs and competences that are corresponding to individuals, but not frequently identified by companies, typically transversal competences and learning to learn in particular.

Cooperation is structured and happening, but gaps and overlapping exists and are known as improvement areas. Some target groups are not sufficiently addressed by existing policies and service provision, notably adults who are not employed by medium-to-large companies.

Conclusions

An overall lifelong learning policy at regional level would need a different level of awareness of the concept by all stakeholders and a system approach to address individual needs across administrative boundaries.

IV. Identifying Learner Needs and Monitoring Participation

Question	Answer
6. Does the region monitor the participation rates in LLL; Does the region monitor emerging learning needs?	Yes, partially
7. How frequently does monitoring occur?	Yearly
8. Are there tools and incentives to identify and communicate learning needs?	Yes, partially

Question	Answer
9. Are organizations provided with tools and incentives to identify learning needs?	Yes, partially

Table 6. Questions 6-9

The identification of learning needs is not conducted by the Regional Government, but is, to a large extent, decentralised to different entities depending on the sector of education and training: Chambers of Commerce, Employers' Associations, Higher Education Institutions and VET Providers are all responsible of a set of activities that allow to detect immediate and prospective learning needs. The "transition" groups (in transition between training and employment, autonomous work and employment, maternity and new employment, from one job to another work perspective) are those whose needs are more difficult to grasp through this multi-actor system. In this perspective the institution of a "right for a package of training hours" attributed to each citizen, irrespective to the employment status, as it exists in France, would be an interesting option. It would be coherent with the need to cover all target groups in the lifelong learning strategy. The role of employment agencies and career guidance services is also important to detect the needs of the transition groups and individuals and to generate individual motivation to learn.

Conclusions

A multiplicity of organisations is active in the identification and collection of "structured" learning needs, with a substantial success on the main target groups that are clearly identified as workers (employees) and students, while some problems exist in identifying the need of the "transition groups", for which a closer collaboration among institutional actors would be required. Furthermore, the level of coherence, in time and methods, could be improved to guarantee quicker and more complete training opportunities.

V. International Comparisons, Cooperation and Learning

Question	Answer
10. Is the Region a member of an overarching association or network specifically focused on LLL or more specific education sectors (e.g., VET, adult learning, etc)	Yes
11. Are exchange learning opportunities in place?	Yes

Table 7. Questions 10-11

Emilia-Romagna has been active for three decades in collaboration with other European regions in the field of Vocational Training, Innovation, Regional Development. Not only the Regional Government, but Higher Education, VET providers, Schools and Associations are very active in European innovation and mobility programmes. Peer learning among regions has also taken place at the inter-regional level, and Emilia-Romagna plays important roles in European Associations of Regions. It has a consolidated relation with a group of European Regions with which it shares its representation office in Brussels.

Conclusions

Emilia-Romagna has been active in many inter-regional partnerships for three decades and is fully supportive of peer learning among regions. The level of exchange was probably higher in previous decades, but the interest to collaborate in the field of lifelong learning is high.

VI. Managing and Sustaining Partnerships

Question	Answer
12. Has the regional authority promoted, supported, and achieved sustainable partnerships for lifelong learning?	Yes, partially
13. If there are multi-stakeholder partnerships:	Not applicable
a) do they exist?	Yes
b) are they supported by regional authority?	Yes
c) are they promoted?	Yes
14. Are there multi-stakeholder partnerships?	Yes

Table 8. Questions 12-14

Several partnerships to develop specific development objectives (digital economy, facing climate change, industry 4.0, sector development, etc.) exist and are supported by the Region, and they normally include education and training as part of the development strategy. The ITS Foundations, which have a sectoral focus and involve all education/training sectors, industry, and different levels of the public administration - from the Ministry of Education to local authorities-, are probably the best-known example of consolidated partnership for education and training. Other examples exist at sectoral and local level -such as the Human and Technology Training Centre of Reggio Emilia- and they are normally supported in their activities rather than for their existence. What is maybe missing is a Regional Partnership for Lifelong Learning having

a broader perspective to coordinate the many existing and well-working initiatives to avoid duplication and cover present gaps.

Conclusions

Emilia-Romagna is a region of multiple partnerships producing, one by one, good results in their specific domains. However, as already remarked in previous points, the level of coordination and integration of services could be improved.

Implementation

VII. Information and Guidance

Question	Answer
15. Is the information easily accessible to all, i.e., if stakeholders' specific needs are taken into account?	Yes, partially

Table 9. Question 15

A significant and well-appreciated range of information and guidance services is available in Emilia-Romagna for many categories of users, from students to unemployed workers; the Region has a high tradition in the EuroGuidance network, starting already thirty years ago. However, as already indicated above, the quality of design and implementation is not completely rewarded by a fully satisfactory outreach: some parts of the “transition groups” do not access the available services, that are developing new and more integrated ways to support job seekers and other people needing encouragement to learn. A new initiative has been introduced by ANPAL (National Agency for Active Employment Policies) at national level, and also in the region since July 2022, called GOL (Garanzia Occupabilità Lavoratori), including a very individualised combination of guidance, mentoring and support to learning for young people and adults in need of multiple support. It is part of the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience and might become a new intervention model crossing traditional boundaries between different parts of the Administration.

Conclusions

Significant progress is being made from the provision of standardised and separated information and guidance services, normally of good quality but not integrated, to a more systemic approach to address specific needs of youth and adults seeking learning and employment opportunities.

VIII. Developing Learning Motivation and Skills or Creating a Yes Culture of LLL

Question	Answer
16. Are there awareness and promotion campaigns in place to support lifelong learning?	No
17. Does the promotion of learning to learn cover all stages of life (see below)?	Yes, partially
a) children?	No
b) youths?	Yes
c) adults?	No
d) seniors?	No

Table 10. Questions 16-17

In Italy efforts are made to avoid dropping out of teenagers from school, but no real campaign for lifelong learning for the adult population is presently run by the Regional Authority. A few years ago, a TV campaign for learning in adult age was launched by the national Government, but it was not re-launched. Reaching out to hard-to-reach groups is supposed to be done by education and training bodies themselves, which are supposed to know better their potential learners. A deficit in this domain is recognised by the interviewed people.

Conclusions

A higher level of priority might be given to the promotion of Lifelong Learning to the public, but since the concept is not very familiar even to education and training provider, the initiative should be well articulated and put in place in collaboration with them, with adequate forms of support to reach out and access for disadvantaged target groups.

IX. Professionalisation of Educators and LLL Staff

Question	Answer
18. Does the regional authority support continue professional development of:	Yes, partially
a) management staff at school?	No
b) teachers?	Yes, partially
c) educators in informal education?	No

Table 11. Question 18

The Regional Authority is normally not directly responsible for the training of schoolteachers (this is a competence shared by the Ministry of Education through its agency INDIRE and by the individual schools that define a yearly development plan); however, some special projects (Career guidance, transversal competences for digital and green transition, etc.) exist that offer training opportunities for teachers at secondary schools and VET providers.

Conclusions

Some significant initiatives of the Region and sub-regional administration (like the Bologna Metropolitan Area) exist but the field of continuing teachers training is not in the regional competences. A higher degree of coordination with the State agency INDIRE and with the school networks would be desirable.

X. Promoting Demand

Question	Answer
19. Are learners financially supported to access available learning opportunities?	Yes
20. Are there initiatives in place to support:	Not applicable
a) learners with Special Needs?	Yes
b) learners with migrant background?	Yes
c) long-term unemployed?	Yes
d) unemployed youth?	Yes
e) unemployed women?	Yes
f) other categories?	Yes

Table 12. Question 19-20

Learning opportunities for people not at work (youth and adults, including of course all disadvantaged groups) are funded by the Region and by European Funds. Employees may take part in training courses organised by their employers or by the relevant associations and training centres that use interprofessional fund deriving from a tax/incentive system associated to the salary mass. Individual learning needs are sometimes also covered by free learning opportunities, but this is the area in which diverse categories of providers intervene, some of which on pure market logics and some subsidised by public entities, associations, church, or other donors.

Conclusions

- While all clearly identified disadvantaged target groups may, in principle, benefit from free training opportunities, not all those who need training access these subsidised learning opportunities for a variety of reasons; more effort is needed to make the learning opportunities visible and concretely accessible by all those in need.
- In the field of continuing training for employed workers, the system of Interprofessional Funds seems to work satisfactorily in Emilia-Romagna.

XI. Online Learning and Digital Gap

Question	Answer
21. Is access to online learning opportunities part of the regional LLL policy?	Yes, partially
22. Is there a quality system for digital learning provided, implemented by regional authorities?	Yes, partially
23. Are learning outcomes of digital learning assessed and certified?	Yes, partially
24. Are there specific measures to help older or disadvantaged learners to access digital learning?	Yes, partially

Table 13. Questions 21-24

While thirty years ago Emilia-Romagna was a pioneer region in the provision and quality assurance of eLearning, in more recent years the focus of digital learning has been on the development of digital competences for learners of all ages and teachers/trainers, in cooperation with the Regional Digital Agency. Online learning opportunities for any subject are present in a scattered way through the education and training system (not only the local one, of course), while regional initiatives have a more targeted dimension: accompanying the digital (and green) transition(s) for all citizens, particularly elderly and disadvantaged categories. In this sense they focus more on digital skills, and particularly those that give access to public services of immediate necessity.

Quality Assurance and accreditation system apply to the whole of training provision, the same is true for the recognition of learning outcomes.

Conclusions

Digital learning is relatively widespread in Emilia-Romagna, but a regional strategy exists only in relation to digital skills to accompany the digital and green transitions. Attention on accessibility of learning opportunities is present in the Regional

Government, but online learning is part of the current provision of education and training, depending on the choice of education and training organisations.

XII. Supporting LLL

Question	Answer
25. Is the job-related training of adults supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes
26. Are other forms of education and training (not job related) supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes, partially

Table 14. Questions 25-26

Training courses for employees, as explained above, are normally funded through a national tax/incentive system managed by Interprofessional Funds. Public funds (EU, national, regional) intervene on specific “System action” projects that are relevant for a large plurality of enterprises, while individual employee’s needs are directly covered by the enterprise or by the individual on a negotiated basis.

Not job-related training may be funded by the enterprise (as a sort of reward/incentive) by the individual, by informal learning providers having access to public or private funds, or a combination of these.

Conclusions

While job-related training is well supported by the existing system, the individual learning needs that are not seen as directly relevant by the employer remain in a “grey” area in which all solutions are possible, but the risk is that, in the absence of financial support, these needs are neglected by individuals and find no response. This is a critical area for future policy development, particularly in consideration of the present levels of uncertainty in the labour market and of the importance of transversal competences in the development of individual employability and life projects.

XIII. Valuing Learning

Question	Answer
27. Is there a validation system for all adult learning?	Yes, partially

Table 15. Question 27

Validation of learning outcomes has a long history in Emilia-Romagna, a pioneer region in Italy, and is denominated “Bilancio di Competenze”. In several sectors, however, there is no demand for certification. An Atlas of Work and Qualifications exists as a reference, but validation and recognition are more used in formal education and training than in continuing education. The uptake of the system has been slow, at present a new impulse seems to be observable thanks to the emergence of new digital forms to certify micro-competences (e-badges, micro-credentials) and of a new market for certification. Not many professionals are competent on the validation and certification of learning outcomes, and this is another limitation factor.

Conclusions

Validation and certification of learning outcomes, that were present for decades in Emilia-Romagna training system, have not been massively demanded and have developed very slowly mainly in initial education and training. The demand seems now to grow, but not many professionals are available to offer this service with adequate competence.

Monitoring and evaluation

XIV. Capacity to Evaluate Results, Progresses and Impact of Regional LLL Policies

Question	Answer
28. Is a formal evaluation for LLL policies in place at the regional level?	Yes
29. How frequently is an evaluation activity conducted?	Yearly
30. Are evaluation reports publicly available?	Yes
31. Are all Stakeholders categories aware/involved in the evaluation?	Yes
32. Are evaluation results actually used to improve LLL Policies?	Yes
33. Is collaboration regularly evaluated?	No

Table 16. Questions 28-33

Policy evaluation takes the form of Programme Evaluation and Project Evaluation, is a well consolidated practice also linked to the use of EU Funds in the domain of VET, yearly reports are provided, and, in principle, they are public, but a specific supervisory board is the main reader. However, these reports focus on some key indicators (such as employment) that are not well placed to evaluate the results of continuing training, addressed to people who are employed before and after the training. Stakeholders are

involved in the supervisory board or/and as informants, but there is certainly room for improvement in the existing evaluation system by adding new qualitative dimensions such as collaboration.

Conclusions

Programme evaluation is a consolidated practice, established in conformity with EU regulations for the use of EU Funds, but the existing set of indicators might be enriched to grasp qualitative dimensions that are presently not covered or not developed enough. The involvement of stakeholders in evaluation can also be improved.

Appendix

Designing Policy

Dimension	Question	Answer
I. The Placing of LLL In a Regional Development Strategy / LLL in a Regional Development Strategy	34. Is lifelong learning an important focus of the regional development plan or of the regional strategy?	Yes, partially
II. Promoting And Implementing Democratic Governance Within the Regional LLL System	35. Are stakeholders, learners and educators involved in the governance system of LLL (or specific education sectors)	Yes
III. Inter-Institutional Coordination and Integration of LLL Policies	36. Does a lifelong learning policy exist at regional level? covering all education sectors (see below)?	Yes, partially
	37. Does a lifelong learning policy cover all education sectors (see below)?	Yes, partially
	d) formal	Yes
	e) informal	Yes, partially
	f) all age groups	Yes, partially
	38. Is there cooperation and coordination between central and regional levels?	Yes, partially
	d) financial	No
	e) administrative	Yes, partially
IV. Identifying Learner Needs and Monitoring Participation	f) other	Yes, partially
	39. Does the region monitor the participation rates in LLL; Does the region monitor emerging learning needs?	Yes, partially
	40. How frequently does monitoring occur?	Yearly
	41. Are there tools and incentives to identify and communicate learning needs?	Yes, partially
V. International Comparisons, Cooperation and Learning	42. Are organizations provided with tools and incentives to identify learning needs?	Yes, partially
	43. Is the Region a member of an overarching association or network specifically focused on LLL or more specific education sectors (e.g., VET, adult learning, etc)	Yes

Dimension	Question	Answer
	44. Are exchange learning opportunities in place?	Yes
VI. Managing and Sustaining Partnerships	45. Has the regional authority promoted, supported, and achieved sustainable partnerships for lifelong learning?	Yes, partially
	46. If there are multi-stakeholder partnerships (see below):	Yes
	d) do they exist?	Yes
	e) are they supported by regional authority?	Yes
	f) are they promoted?	Yes
	47. Are there multi-stakeholder partnerships?	Yes

Implementation

Dimension	Question	Answer
VII. Information and Guidance	48. Is the information easily accessible to all, i.e., if stakeholders' specific needs are taken into account?	Yes, partially
VIII. Developing Learning Motivation and Skills or Creating a Yes culture of Lifelong Learning	49. Are there awareness and promotion campaigns in place to support lifelong learning?	No
	50. Does the promotion of learning to learn cover all stages of life (see below)?	Yes, partially
	e) children?	No
	f) youths?	Yes
	g) adults?	No
IX. Professionalisation of Educators and LLL Staff	51. Does the regional authority support continue professional development of:	Yes, partially
	d) management staff at school?	No
	e) teachers?	Yes, partially
	f) educators in informal education?	No
X. Promoting Demand	52. Are learners financially supported to access available learning opportunities?	Yes
	53. Are there initiatives in place to support:	Not applicable
	g) learners with Special Needs?	Yes
	h) learners with migrant background?	Yes
	i) long-term unemployed?	Yes
	j) unemployed youth?	Yes

Dimension	Question	Answer
	k) unemployed women?	Yes
	l) other categories?	Yes
XI. Online Learning and Digital Gap	54. Is access to online learning opportunities part of the regional LLL policy?	Yes, partially
	55. Is there a quality system for digital learning provided, implemented by regional authorities?	Yes, partially
	56. Are learning outcomes of digital learning assessed and certified?	Yes, partially
	57. Are there specific measures to help older or disadvantaged learners to access digital learning?	Yes, partially
XII. Supporting Lifelong Learning	58. Is the job-related training of adults supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes
	59. Are other forms of education and training (not job related) supported by regional/public financial support?	Yes, partially
XIII. Valuing Learning	60. Is there a validation system for all adult learning?	Yes, partially

Monitoring and Evaluation

Dimension	Question	Answer
XIV. Capacity To Evaluate Results, Progresses and Impact of Regional LLL Policies	61. Is a formal evaluation for LLL policies in place at the regional level?	Yes
	62. How frequently is an evaluation activity conducted?	Yearly
	63. Are evaluation reports publicly available?	Yes
	64. Are all Stakeholders categories aware/involved in the evaluation?	Yes
	65. Are evaluation results actually used to improve LLL Policies?	Yes
	66. Is collaboration regularly evaluated?	No

