



Co-funded by
the European Union

MOVE-UP Final Brief

move up

Motherhood is an asset

The MOVE-UP project developed a **flexible and quality upskilling pathway for unemployed women who are dedicating most of their time and efforts to the role of mother** and who are in need to (re) join education activities and the job market, following the core process proposed by the Upskilling Pathways guidelines ([Council Recommendation on Upskilling pathways 2016](#) and following Evaluation in 2023).

The approach offers the opportunity of discovering, assessing, recognising, possibly validating, and further developing the **competences they acquired thanks to the motherhood experience**, therefore mostly through informal learning and daily activities. The outcome of this process is thus the opportunity to make value out of these competences to facilitate their participation in training and possibly in the labour market, and at societal level. The focus of this path for upskilling is on the Personal, Social and Learning to learn competence (PSL), that has already proven to be an effective driver for developing other [Key Competences for lifelong learning](#) (literacy, numeracy, and digital skills) and improve employment opportunities, through women involvement in more formalised training.

The comprehensive approach of the MOVE-UP initiative underscores the **importance of reversing the narrative about motherhood by promoting a cultural change** and addressing both internal and external barriers to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for women re-entering the workforce.

Empowerment is a continuous process that should be coupled with education and sensitisation of employers and HR managers regarding the skills acquired through motherhood. Recognising and valuing these skills in the workplace is extremely relevant for supporting mothers' re-entry into the workforce. Participants often face societal and family biases that act as barriers to their empowerment and reintegration into the labour market. **Addressing these internal and external barriers** as done in the MOVE-UP project is essential for **creating lasting change**.

The MOVE-UP initiative's emphasis on inclusivity, empowerment, and community building created a supportive learning environment that led to positive changes in participants' self-perception and employability prospects in general. The recognition and validation of motherhood-derived skills provided a foundation for long-term personal and professional growth. By addressing the unique challenges mothers face, the project helped them build confidence, acquire new skills, and find their place in the workforce. Ultimately, this initiative has proven the value of empowering marginalised groups and promoting gender equity in the labour market, highlighting the importance of a competence-based approach in today's work environments.

Who are we?

MOVE-UP is organised by 6 international partners:

- [FORMA.AZIONE](#)
- [RIDAP-Rete Italiana Istruzione degli Adulti IT](#)
- [APEFA - Associação Portuguesa para a Educação e Formação de Adultos](#)
- [AKEP - Academy of Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Die Berater Unternehmensberatung](#)
- [EAEA - European Association for the Education of Adults](#)

The project is also supported by a group of 10 Associated Partners, representing policy makers, labour market, educational and Civil Society organisations (UIL – Unione Italiana del Lavoro, Forum del Terzo Settore, Università degli Studi di Udine, Confindustria Udine, Municipality of Tripoli, Cruz Vermelha, Centro Qualifica Litoral Cávado, Associação Social Recreativa Cultural e Bem Fazer Vai Avante, ÖJAB – Österreichische JungArbeiterBewegung, Plattform für berufsbezogene Erwachsenenbildung).

Benefits for participants

Organisations working on ALE, employment and social sector

- Gain new knowledge on how to better engage with their audience and how to support learners to participate in learning activities and to (re)join the labour market.
- Gain visibility for their organisations and networks.
- Adopt a more gender equal approach in training activities, thus actively contrast gender stereotypes and discriminations in the labour market.
- Ensure that good practices and experience is leveraged and exploited by others and more broadly, at regional, national and international level.
- Ensure more sustainability for own projects and activities.
- Contribute to new insight to support policy review and policy feedback cycle from a regional, national and European perspective.

Women experiencing unemployment

- Participate in a collaborative process to concretely make value out of the competences and skills gained thanks to experience as a mother, including powerful learning experiences to overcome gender stereotypes and discrimination that can negatively affect women (re)entering training and labour market.
- Value experience as mother for (re)joining training and job market.
- Gain new knowledge and practical skills that are very important in our current society and also in the job market, such as digital skills and personal and social skills.
- Find information on learning activities and what is needed in the job market and how to participate more and/or again.
- Ensure regular support in these processes, across the various steps.

Our lesson learnt

Ecosystem and engagement with stakeholders

The MOVE-UP Alliance methodology is an effective approach for engaging with stakeholders, from general outreach to their active involvement and exploitation activities, creating a good space for sharing practices and enabling collaboration.

Stakeholders from educational institutions and training providers are generally positive about co-designed and tested methods, such as the MOVE-UP outreach strategy, self-assessment toolkit and training plan.

In touching upon gender equality and inclusion topics, developing a key narrative of the messages that are appropriate and well-toned for stakeholders and learners is a major challenge.

In terms of engagement activities flow, the most effective approach is keeping a dynamic relation between core projects activities and actions involving stakeholders.

Finally, as for sustainability and follow-up, it is a key aspect and a major challenge to translate these concrete contributions, at different levels of the initiative actions, into tangible policy changes or long-term commitments from involved stakeholders.

Outreach to women and mothers

One of the key lessons learned from the outreach activity is the importance of actively identifying and deconstructing gender biases and stereotypes. Many women face societal expectations that limit their professional growth, and addressing these biases requires targeted strategies. Encouraging self-esteem and self-awareness among women is highly needed, as it empowers them to recognize their own potential and capabilities. The use of influential female role models has also proven to be effective in inspiring and motivating women to pursue education and employment opportunities.

A narrative approach is another valuable strategy, allowing women to share their personal experiences and challenges. This method helps reduce stereotypes by presenting real-life examples. Engaging community organizations in a multi-stakeholder approach has further strengthened the outreach efforts, as it ensures the involvement of various sectors that can provide support and resources. Gender equality topics must also be integrated into educational curricula to create a long-term impact at the societal level.

The use of inclusive language is essential to avoid reinforcing traditional gender roles, and multilingual materials help break down linguistic barriers, particularly for migrant women. Creative expressions have been identified as powerful tools in outreach efforts, as they allow women to express themselves freely and engage in discussions about their experiences. It is also important to avoid closed and homogeneous groups in outreach activities, as diversity fosters richer discussions and perspectives.

Choosing the right communication channels plays a significant role in challenging gender biases and effectively reaching the target audience. Traditional media, social platforms, and local networks should be utilized to ensure broad engagement. The use of social media campaigns has been particularly successful in spreading awareness and connecting with a larger audience.

Competences assessment and identification of training needs

The assessment tools were highly effective in helping participants recognise and appreciate their skills. To maximise their effectiveness, clear instructions are essential to ensure participants fully understand how to use them. The tools should also incorporate simple language and interactive elements to enhance accessibility. Additionally, language translations and culturally sensitive materials are fundamental to accommodating participants' diverse backgrounds.

Creating a supportive environment with clear communication and adequate assistance was critical in encouraging active participation. A comfortable and inclusive setting enabled participants to feel at ease and provide honest feedback. Flexibility in adapting to diverse needs, along with well-equipped venues, was also key to the success of the testing process.

A group approach was essential for the effective application of the tools, supported by a team of experts to handle critical moments and ensure proper implementation. Furthermore, ongoing counselling sessions fostered self-development, awareness, and empowerment.

The self-assessment and evaluation process proved transformative, helping mothers recognise and leverage their skills while fostering a deeper sense of self-awareness. Through these reflective activities, they identified their strengths and reframed motherhood as a valuable learning experience, enhancing their confidence and resilience. This reframing was instrumental in challenging gender biases and stereotypes by highlighting the significant skills developed through motherhood, which are often undervalued in traditional work environments.

The tools also revealed broader contextual factors influencing women's empowerment, such as socio-economic status, cultural norms, and workplace biases. These factors pose barriers to (re)accessing the labour market and underscore the need for ongoing support and education.

While the project successfully facilitated personal growth and community-building, it also exposed persistent external challenges, particularly the undervaluation of personal, social, and learning to learn competence acquired through motherhood and the continued impact of gender biases in employment.

Finally, the self-assessment and evaluation process proved highly effective and appropriate for identifying participants' training needs, ensuring targeted and meaningful upskilling opportunities.

Designing tailored and flexible learning pathways

Training modules on Personal, Social, and Learning-to-Learn (PSL) competences, Digital literacy, and CV building resonated deeply with participants, well addressing critical gaps in participants professional development.

Overall, digital tools and hybrid learning formats emerged as promising solutions to increase accessibility and maintain continuity.

The hands-on and participatory approach, including activities like role-playing and mock interviews, provided practical insights and real-world applications to all participants. Additionally, the hybrid learning format increased accessibility, allowing participants to engage with the material at their own pace. Finally, reflective exercises encouraged participants to value their unique, motherhood-derived skills, reframing them as assets in professional contexts.

Importantly, the climate of mutual support and solidarity allowed participants to express themselves freely, without fear of judgment, making it easier for them to reflect and express their emotions, while also practising hands on skills like building their CVs and confidently engaging in mock job interviews.

The modular nature of the trainings is also fundamental to ensure appropriate effective localization and customization by national/local organisations, while maintaining relevance. The training's adaptability was evident in its successful implementation across urban and rural areas, as well as among participants with varying educational backgrounds and professional experiences.

Future directions from the MOVE-UP initiative

Design of learning activities for adults

- Design activities that foster a sense of community, safety, acceptance, empowerment, and confidence as well as self and group reflection (key intrinsic motivations for participants), considering the importance of participation in itself.
- Focus on building and reinforcing social learning communities and peer supports activities, with learners and educators, also with the training provider as facilitator of a support system that goes beyond the education programme.
- Approach and relate to women mothers having clear in mind gender stereotypes and discriminations they have suffered with a high level of probability, thus by adopting a non-judgemental position.
- Engage adult learners and women at all levels of the processes, including the design of the initiatives.
- Include in each initiative/education programme the identification of skill and competences and their potential gaps as well as areas of interest for mothers seeking professional development opportunities.
- Embed appropriate (based on clear needs analysis) introductory and scaffolding activities to present the objectives of the initiative, the process, the methods etc.
- Map and propose also wider set of flexible training options, such as online courses or part-time programs, to accommodate mothers' schedules.
- Integrate training modules on confidence-building, negotiation skills, and self-advocacy to empower mothers in the workplace.
- Create also mentorship programs, support networks to guide and encourage mothers/women throughout their upskilling journey.

Transversal actions that support the ecosystem

- Develop awareness for professionals in all relevant areas (education, services, employment, employers etc.), around gender equality and stereotypes, including the promotion of the value of mothers' skills and experiences in the job market.
- Build capacity for the education sector and for labour market professionals, including design and promotion of training on these topics.
- Map and get in contact with relevant institutions and expert organisations on gender equality in VET and labour market, so as to always include the gender perspective and intersectionality in designing and delivering training opportunities and capacity building.
- Develop local collaboration, partnerships, and strategies, including education, employment and welfare services and employers and local businesses.
- Reinforce and establish new partnerships between education/employment services and local businesses, to understand skills and qualifications required in the job market and to improve opportunities (job placements, internships etc.) and support for workplace training for participants in education programmes.
- Build and reinforce collaboration between education and social services and organisations that provide support to families, to provide valuable insights on work-life balance challenges faced by mothers.
- Explore (joint) possibility of financial support or scholarships, to make the upskilling pathways more accessible, across different services and funding organisations.

Policy making and strategic planning to support the ecosystem

- Integrate gender equality and intersectionality aspects in all policies and strategic planning.
- Facilitate and develop awareness activities, across institutions and networks, which aim at tackling stereotypes and supporting positive models of the role of women and mothers.
- Facilitate and support development of collaboration, partnerships, and strategies, among education, employment and welfare services and employers and local businesses.
- Explore and develop integrated schema for social aid and (individual) financial support, and develop and support reconciliation strategies, to make educational initiative more accessible.
- Support and promote (financially and policy wise) initiatives that embed as key actions strong motivators for adult learners and women to join and re-join education and labour market, such as competence assessment activities and recognition, flexible training opportunities, mentorship and tutorship programs, development of support networks, and learning communities, and modules on PSL (including a focus on confidence-building, negotiation skills, and self-advocacy).

MOVE-UP methodologies are available:



<https://academyofentrepreneurship.org/course/moveuppractitioners>



<https://academyofentrepreneurship.org/course/moveuplearners>

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union