



CEDEFOP  
European Centre  
for the Development  
of Vocational Training



## Financing adult learning

The role of public funding

20 and 21 October 2025  
Thessaloniki, Greece

cedefop.europa.eu

## Parallel working group: Digital platforms supporting ILAs Discussion summary

**Rapporteur: Cecilia Ivardi, University of St Gallen, Switzerland**

One of the barriers preventing adults from participation in education and training is lack of awareness of and difficulty in accessing suitable, high-quality learning opportunities. As we heard during the conference that the initiative to uptake adult learning often originates from the individual, the workshop discussions started by considering that ILA digital platforms may help to overcome these barriers.

Digital platforms supporting ILA implementation may serve two key purposes. First, they may act as aggregators of training opportunities, bringing together a wide range of learning offers that are accessible to all individuals – regardless of whether they receive public funding. In this way, they serve as a one-stop shop for adult learning, supporting anyone seeking to upskill or reskill. Second, digital platforms may function as a gateway to funding, facilitating the purchase of training while reducing the administrative costs associated with processing applications.



The Council Recommendation on ILAs recommends Member States to establish and keep updated a national public registry of quality training, career guidance and validation opportunities that are eligible for funding from ILAs. Moreover, the Recommendation calls for an accessible single national digital portal which would allow and help individuals to access their individual learning account and navigate the registry easily (while using secure electronic authentication).

Below is a list of issues that were identified during the workshop on digital platforms for ILAs talking about experiences on how to design and govern such systems effectively.

### 1. Fragmentation and interoperability

A first and recurring challenge is fragmentation. Across Europe, registries of adult learning opportunities exist, but they are often scattered across ministries, regions, and sectors. Because of this, interoperability remains low. What is more, systems use different taxonomies and coding standards, making it difficult to connect information.

Ideas emerging here include building modular systems - starting small, connecting existing elements progressively and promoting shared data languages through already available frameworks, such as Europass.

## **2. Governance and data ownership**

A second major challenge concerns governance. Even when digital services exist, they are often managed by different institutions - ministries, agencies, or regional authorities - each with their own rules and databases. This diversity creates problems of comparability, trust, and data ownership. Who actually owns the data when multiple registries feed into one ILA? How can individuals safely manage their own learning data?

The idea discussed here was to build clear governance frameworks defining who is responsible for what - particularly for data protection, interoperability, and long-term maintenance.

Emerging technologies such as blockchain were mentioned as potential tools to build trust and transparency, especially for tracking learning outcomes and funding flows. But participants also stressed the need for simple and user-friendly design. A second idea is to build on the digital personal identity for learners that can link learning records and entitlements across platforms helping to overcome institutional fragmentation. In this context, it will be important to ensure that when individuals move across countries that the 'digital wallet' follows and is not lost.

## **3. Quality assurance and trust**

Several countries highlighted quality assurance as both a technical and political challenge. If anyone can upload a course to the registry, how do we ensure quality and prevent fraud? It is important to build robust quality control mechanisms before scaling up.

The idea is to link registries only to accredited or quality-assured providers. Over time, data from the ILA platform - such as participation and completion rates - can also feed back into continuous quality improvement of the provision offered.

## **4. Inclusion and accessibility**

Another strong theme was accessibility. Even the best-designed platform will not succeed if it is difficult to use. In general, adults have less time to access learning opportunities. In addition, many adult learners - especially older workers and those with lower digital skills (and we heard during the conference that in the EU, half of the people have insufficient digital skills) - may struggle with complex interfaces or decentralized systems.

The idea is to design ILAs around the learner experience, ensuring they are intuitive, multilingual, and mobile-friendly. Linking ILAs to existing guidance services - such as public employment services - can also help reach less digitally confident users.

Gender issue was also raised as a concern. Research shows that women are less likely to take up digital or technical training, so the presentation and framing of opportunities really matters.

Accessibility is not just a technical issue but is also about making learning feel possible and relevant.

## **5. Funding, priorities, and participation**

A further challenge is making ILAs effective in reaching the people it wants to reach. We know that even with generous funding participation can skew toward those already well-educated e.g., those that have higher education.

The idea emerging here is to adjust eligibility criteria and introduce targeted incentives as well as positive discrimination - for example, focusing more on older workers, people in declining occupations, or those with obsolete skills.

## **6. Building on what exists**

Participants agreed that countries should not start from scratch. Many already have elements that can support an ILA:

- Guidance systems, especially within public employment services;
- Validation of non-formal learning, such as the VAE in France or the Romanian competence recognition system;
- Quality assurance frameworks – they usually exist for VET and higher education, but they may also exist for non-formal providers outside VET and higher education.

The idea is to build upon and connect these existing systems through digital integration rather than creating entirely new structures.

## **7. Sustainability and maintenance**

One often overlooked challenge is keeping the system up and running. Developing a platform is only the first step - maintaining, updating, and governing it sustainably over time requires ongoing resources, coordination, and political support.

The idea is to treat digital ILAs as a public infrastructure rather than a short-term project: something that evolves with user feedback, technology, and policy priorities.

Projects like RALExILA, led by EAEA, are helping to map out how such systems could look like and how should they be designed, for example through modular development, shared taxonomies, and collaborative governance.

Lithuania's KURSUOK shows that an ILA can be embedded in law, linked to existing services, and used as a lever to promote lifelong learning.