



Media Literacy 45+

Development of Digital Skills Framework
through Social Media for Low Skilled/Low
Qualified Persons over 45 Years Old

National Report for Italy

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Introduction

As ICT spreads throughout our societies, touching more and more parts of our lives, so digital competence has become essential for every individual. In line with the EU trends, in Italy the large majority of jobs now require different ICT skills. Digital competences are one of eight key competences essential for all individuals in a knowledge-based society. Recognising the crucial role of digital competence in today's society, the European Commission's 2010 Digital Agenda for Europe devoted a whole pillar to digital literacy, skills and inclusion¹.

The purpose of this study is to analyze digital literacy in Italy and to develop a methodological framework for the building of digital skills through social media of low-skilled/low-qualified unemployed persons over 45. Main findings are taken from existing relevant sources of data collection such Eurostat, including relevant academic articles, national reports and other publications on digital competence and on social media literacy about Italy. In the current study, structured interviews were held with 10 recruiters and/or HR managers aimed to understand: how HR managers use social media to evaluate prospective employees during the hiring process; what digital skills are expected by HR managers for employees who are 45 years old or older.

¹ DG CONNECT F4, Measuring Digital Skills across the EU: EU wide indicators of Digital Competence, May 2014.

Chapter 1: Setting the Scene: Digital Literacy in Italy

1.1 Digital Literacy in Italy

Digital skills indicators are composite indicators which are based on selected activities related to internet or software use performed by individuals aged 16-74 in four specific areas (information, communication, problem solving, software skills). It is assumed that individuals having performed certain activities have the corresponding skills. Therefore, the indicators can be considered as proxy of the digital competences and skills of individuals.

TABLE 1: DIGITAL LITERACY IN GREECE AND EU (28 COUNTRIES) IN 2016

Age Group	EU/Italy	Individuals who have low overall digital skills	Individuals who have basic overall digital skills	Individuals who have above basic overall digital skills	Individuals who have no overall digital skills
All Individuals	European Union (28)	25%	27%	29%	1%
	Italy	23%	24%	19%	2%
16 to 24 years old	European Union (28)	16%	28%	52%	0%
	Italy	20%	35%	34%	1%
25 to 34 years old	European Union (28)	21%	29%	44%	1%
	Italy	24%	28%	31%	2%
35 to 44 years old	European Union (28)	27%	30%	34%	1%
	Italy	27%	28%	25%	2%
45 to 54 years old	European Union (28)	29%	30%	24%	1%
	Italy	28%	25%	16%	3%
55 to 64 years old	European Union (28)	30%	24%	15%	1%
	Italy	22%	20%	10%	3%
65 to 74 years old	European Union (28)	24%	17%	7%	1%
	Italy	13%	9%	3%	2%

Source: Eurostat, 2017

The graph above shows that 23% of the Italian population has low overall digital skills, while 24% have basic overall digital skills, 19% have above basic overall digital skills, only 2% have no overall digital skills. The percentage of individuals with above basic digital skills decreases with age for both Italy and the EU. Overall, the percentage of Italians with above average digital skills is generally lower than the EU average.

TABLE 2: DIGITAL LITERACY IN ITALY BY AGE GROUP FOR 2015 AND 2016

ITALY					
Age Groups	Year	Individuals who have low overall digital skills	Individuals who have basic overall digital skills	Individuals who have above basic overall digital skills	Individuals who have no overall digital skills
All Individuals	2015	21%	24%	19%	2%
	2016	23%	24%	19%	2%
Individuals, 16 to 24 years old	2015	18%	35%	36%	1%
	2016	20%	35%	34%	1%
Individuals, 25 to 34 years old	2015	21%	29%	32%	1%
	2016	24%	28%	31%	2%
Individuals, 35 to 44 years old	2015	26%	27%	23%	2%
	2016	27%	28%	25%	2%
Individuals, 45 to 54 years old	2015	23%	26%	16%	2%
	2016	28%	25%	16%	3%
Individuals, 55 to 64 years old	2015	21%	19%	10%	2%
	2016	22%	20%	10%	3%
Individuals, 65 to 74 years old	2015	11%	8%	3%	1%
	2016	13%	9%	3%	2%

Source: Eurostat, 2017

The graph above shows that the percentage of Italians who have low overall digital skills has increased from 21% in 2015 to 23% in 2016, while other categories are keeping the same. Results show minimum changes among both young age groups (i.e. 16-24 and 25 to 34) and older age groups (i.e. 45-54 and 55-64 year olds).

TABLE 3: DIGITAL LITERACY AND UNEMPLOYMENT (2015)

Age Groups	European Union (28)		Italy	
	All Individuals	Unemployed	All Individuals	Unemployed
Individuals who have low overall digital skills	25%	31%	23%	28%
Individuals who have basic overall digital skills	27%	24%	26%	25%
Individuals who have above basic overall digital skills	29%	19%	19%	15%

Source: Eurostat, 2017

The graph above highlights how high digital literacy is associated with lower unemployment in both EU in general and Italy. Results shows that the percentage of unemployed people is generally lower for individuals who have above basic overall digital skills.

1.2 Literature Review

According to “e-Skills In Europe - Italy Country Report” (European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry, January 2014), Italy faces a number of problems in the e-skills domain: an inadequate digital culture is the real barrier against a clear and consequent demand. Most SMEs’ owners from ICT demand side, are mainly aged people who scarcely understand the challenges of internet and how the web implicates their business, communication and marketing as well. On ICT skills supply side, the relatively ease of the initial boom with no regulation and a low culture towards quality, led to the establishment of many consultants and very specialized small enterprises which hardly commutated their skills and offer when the ICT landscapes changed into the web and social development. On the demand side, a low digital culture is accompanied by a very low innovation culture. In this scenario, ICT skills and e-leadership skills are delegated to the labor market itself and the key players.

The increasing of the WEB and distributed systems, allowed ICT practitioners to evolve in terms of professionalism, the ICT skills have developed coherently with the developing ICT world and its complexity; the relevant profiles have increased in terms of job roles and specialization. The great changes on ICT determined a selection of the more flexible and really skilled profiles. New technologies led to new markets as well. Those who had the capability to turn themselves into the third generation of ICT practitioners and follow the changing market, focused their activity on three main directions: marketing consultancy (web marketing; digital communication; social media marketing); open source customizations; migration of proprietary client applications into web social applications. A very high offer of training courses in these topics can be easily found within the IT training offer. Likewise, the social media marketing and security is another set of mixed ICT and managerial skills requested by ICT SMEs who are mostly ready now to invest their time and money for acquiring this know-how.

The Hays’ Italia Salary Guide 2017², reports that more and more companies (56%) are using social networking sites for recruitment, screening and selection purposes. The statistical data certainly indicates how social networks are becoming a part of the reality and a part of recruitment and selection processes. Most used social media by the companies include LinkedIn (99%), Facebook (60%) and Instagram (19%). Social media are becoming an innovative and consolidated way of recruitment and selection that can be cost effective,

² Hays, Salary Guide 2017,

http://www.hays.it/cs/groups/hays_common/@it/@content/documents/promotionalcontent/hays_1914512.pdf

time consuming and can spot the talents that are usual hard to reach with traditional means of recruitment.

1.3 Policy and Major Stakeholder Initiatives

Public policies and programmes aimed to increase ICT and digital competences

On 19 October 2012 the national executive law for the implementation of the Italian Digital Agenda was launched in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Digital Agenda for Europe. The Steering group is composed by the six ministries mainly involved in its implementation, including nominated representatives of the Italian Regions, Provinces and Municipalities. The agenda includes short and mid-term actions in the areas of the digital identity, digital PA/open data, digital school and university, digital health, digital justice, digital divide, e-payments³.

Data from the Global Information Technology Report 2016⁴ shows that Italy is one of the countries that improved the most during the last year its ability to leverage information and communication technologies to improve its competitiveness and the well-being of its population. On top of billion-euro investments in broadband access, the new strategy for ultra-fast internet connection expects to raise €12 billion to meet the EU h2020 broadband targets. The advances in internet rights and bandwidth have been complemented by the realization of the Italian strategy for digital growth⁵, which includes the constitution of a coalition of associations, companies, institutions and foundations, which will support projects that develop digital competences.

Overall the Italian government has focused its legislative interventions in ICTs on two main priorities:

1. Bridging the digital divide in terms of access to network, digital rights and digital competence development.
2. Developing normative and digital infrastructures to foster innovation in both public administration and industry.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

³ European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry, “e-Skills In Europe - Italy Country Report”, January 2014

⁴ World Economic Forum, Global Information Technology Report 2016,
<http://reports.weforum.org/global-information-technology-report-2016/>

⁵ Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Strategia per la crescita digitale 2014-2020,
http://www.agid.gov.it/sites/default/files/documentazione/strat_crescita_digit_3marzo_0.pdf

The following is a list of multi-stakeholder partnerships of major relevance to the e-skills issue:

- “RETE - Competenze per l’Economia Digitale” (Italian Competence Network for the Digital Economy) [selected as Good Practice]: The network aims to raise awareness about e-competences and disseminate the e-CF.
- The Italian Coalition for Digital Skills aims to promote, support and integrate national and regional projects, linking them to the initiatives of the Digital Agenda as well as to promote the exchange and implementation of best practices.
- Job ICT: this initiative of the Italian service sector trade unions is a job matching web portal for ICT practitioners and SMEs, based on the Italian e-CF national standard.
- “Futuri IT Leader”: the objective of this initiative by the Chief Information Officer Forum of the IT industry association (CIO AICA Forum), is to provide a whole, very concrete, experience based picture of the future IT leaders, to promote awareness about IT professionals and their growing role within Italy's economy.
- Seminars and communication campaigns on e-commerce: The seminars are organised by the local Chambers of Commerce and sectoral company associations addressing SMEs; whilst the communication campaign is mainly managed by RAI, the main Italian broadcasting corporation, under the direction of the Ministry of the Economic Development.
- “Adotta un’impresa” (Adopt An Enterprise): the project aims to disseminate among micro enterprises digital culture, communications, marketing of goods and / or services, improvement of management processes.
- The Italian National Plan for Digital Education (Piano Nazionale Scuola Digitale — PNSD) is a policy launched by the Ministry of Education, University and Research for setting up a comprehensive innovation strategy across Italy's school system and bringing it into the digital age (“La Buona Scuola” school reform, law 107/2015).
- Italian Digital Innovation Hubs is part of the I4MS (ICT Innovation for Manufacturing SMEs) initiative, coordinated by the Federation of Innovative and Technological Services of the Confindustria system and aimed at orienting businesses, especially SMEs, to opportunities for digital innovation.

Success of e-skills policies and activities in meeting the objectives of the EU e-skills agenda

Longer term cooperation: large ICT companies, especially telecommunication, have joint partnerships with the PA to foster and support experimental digital implementations especially in the school system. In the last few years, SMEs from both demand and offer side, have started to understand more and more the importance and the strategic relevance to set synergies between them and build up informal networks.

Attractiveness of ICT jobs: especially thanks to the recent eSkills week initiatives, new campaigns and events have been developed for young people.

Employability and e-inclusion: The main investments on ICT from the central Government in the last ten years have been addressed to reduce the digital divide and focused on digital literacy of population: young people, teachers, SMEs employees. The interprofessional funds have been quite engaged in funding basic IT training aimed at spreading the basic user ICT skills mainly referring to ECDL.

1.4 Synopsis

The effectiveness of e-skills policies and activities in meeting the objectives of the EU e-skills agenda, will depend on: the capability of the Italian government and multi-stakeholder partnerships to apply them in the short terms; investments on research and development, population's ICT usage (e.g. internet users), further innovation in the education and VET system. On the one hand, innovation and digital culture might be fostered by the young ICT practitioners coming out of the education system. On the other hand, ICT SMEs should enhance their culture in terms of management and marketing skills. Likewise, innovation in the Public Administration Sector should represent another key driver for ICT skills demand and offer.

Chapter 2: The Perspectives of HR managers

2.1 Objectives of the study and research questions

In order to explore the training needs of low-skilled/low-qualified unemployed person over 45 years of age, interviews with 10 recruiters and/or HR managers were organized in Italy. The objective of the research interviews is twofold:

- a) Understand how recruiters and HR managers use social media to evaluate prospective employees during the hiring process.
- b) Understand what digital skills are expected by HR managers for employees who are 45 years old or older.

The interviews captured the perspectives of recruiters and identify ideas, opinions and issues in the area of investigation. Research questions focused on the importance of Digital Competence in the workplace for people 45+ years old, what skills and competences related to Digital Competence are expected out of prospective employees who are 45+ years old, what are the most common social media platforms used in advertising, screening and selection process.

2.2 Methodology

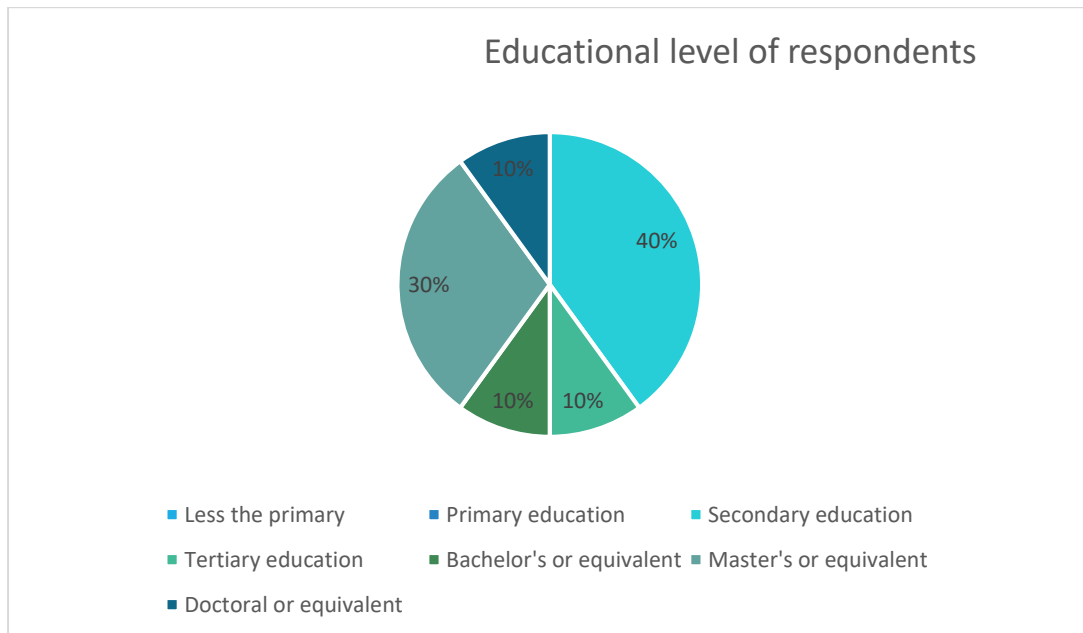
The interviews targeted recruiters and/or HR managers and firms from different towns in Italy in order to guarantee a national coverage: Caltanissetta, Palermo, San Cataldo, Milano, Bologna, Bari, Trabia. The interviews were taken in the national language of each partner to ensure participants comprehension. Each interview was conducted face-to-face based on a set of predefined questions including: closed questions providing people with a fixed set of responses in order to collect quantitative data, and open questions allowing people to express what they think in their own words in order to collect qualitative data. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to get completed and got recorded.

2.3 Results

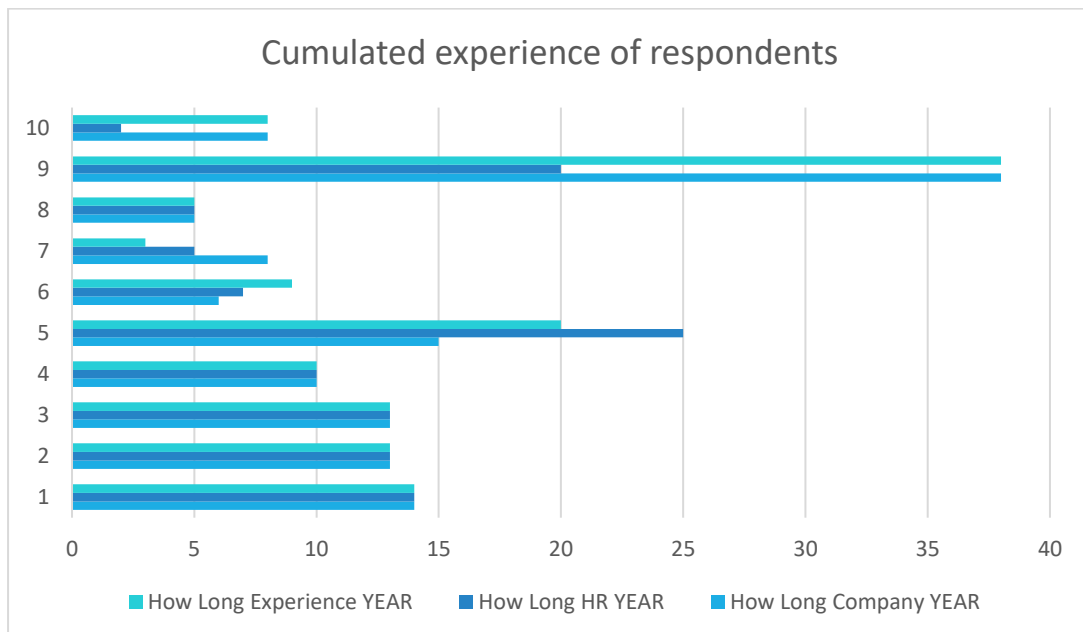
2.3.1 Demographic Information

The average age of participants is 46,6 years, while 90% of respondents are males and 10% are females.

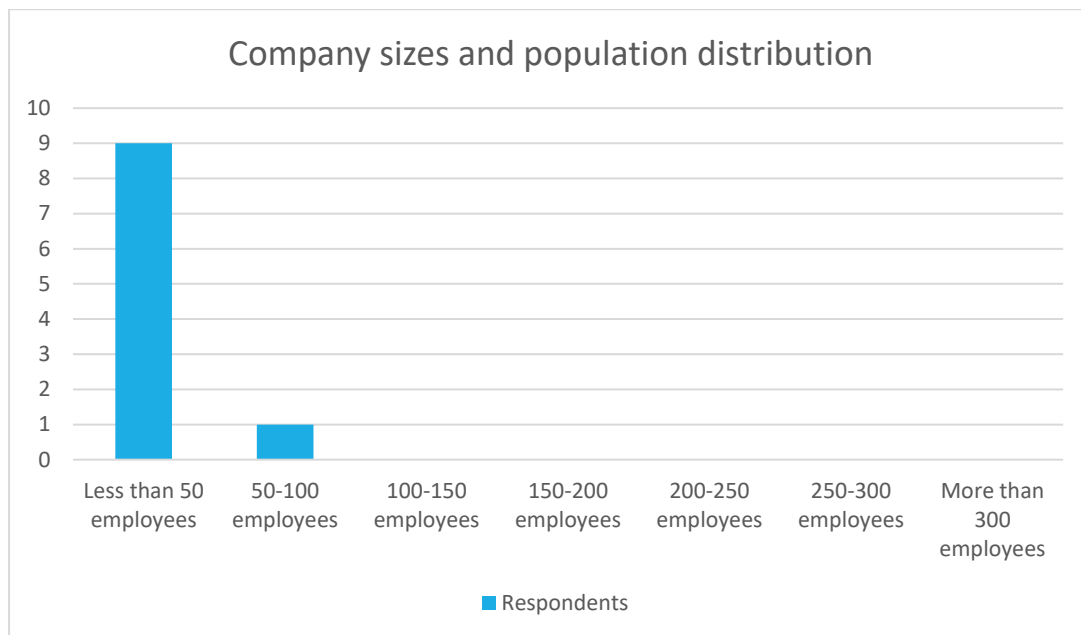
Here below a pie chart summarizing the educational level of respondents:



Here below a horizontal bar chart summarizing the years of cumulated experience of respondents in relation to the working experience in general, in human resources (HR) and in the current company:



Here below a vertical bar chart summarizing the information regarding the sectors the participants work in:



2.3.2 Open-ended Questions

2.3.2.1 Digital literacy

Most of the respondents declare that the importance of digital literacy is depending on the specific sector, business activity and/or specific responsibilities and activities within the same firm. For instance, a rural enterprise would require employees equipped with digital literacy in relation with the area of marketing, sells, transformation and production. Digital literacy would be not necessarily required for employees working in planting, harvesting, etc... Most of the respondents declare that nowadays, all employee should be able to use a computer, Internet or some other form of technology at work, and this number will continue to grow as will the scope and sophistication of technology. This implies that workers, especially older workers who may not have been upgraded in technology and digital literacy, will need to engage in training activities to remain competitive in the work force.

2.3.2.2 Duties of employees 45+ years of age and their link to digital competence

The employees (45+) most commonly have coordination's tasks in relation to specific key units or departments. As in the previous paragraph, the importance of competences is depending on the specific sector, specific responsibilities and activities. Most of respondents declare that employees (45+) most commonly are required to have advanced digital skills in relation to administrative and financial work, current use of internet, e-mail, word processing, data entry, creation of spreadsheets and presentations, use of Word, Excel, Power Point, etc... On a general level, only few respondents declare to invest in training programs relating to digital skills for their employees. Training programs are offered to upgrade and equip employees only in specific key areas where digital skills are relevant.

2.3.2.3 Digital literacy and recruitment

Most of respondents declare that digital competence has seemed a barrier in recruitment of qualified employees in relation to adults 45+ and older workers, while young people have in general more consolidated digital competences. 90% of respondents rejected promising candidates due to lack of digital skills in vacancies and work places where digital competences are required.

2.3.2.4 Digital literacy gaps

According to the respondents, employees should increase their proficiency in specific programs for administration and management (such as Office), including the capacity to use of clouds, management tools and familiarity with social media.

2.3.2.5 Role of Social Media Platforms in the hiring process

The most commonly used Social Media platforms during the hiring process LinkedIn and Facebook. Most of respondents use the SM platforms to research specific / focused job profiles or promote job vacancies. Prospective employees that are active in Social Media platforms would be more reachable and visible.

2.3.2.6 Role of Social Media Platforms in advertising new openings

According to most of respondents, the most commonly used Social Media platforms in advertising are Facebook and LinkedIn. HR managers use the SM platforms to advertise jobs vacancies and openings, particularly on Facebook. Prospective employees that are able to use social media to their full potential, they'll be able to improve their job search.

2.3.2.7 Importance of Social Media Profile

Some of the respondents declares that LinkedIn is a useful professional networking site looking for focused candidates based on references. Facebook is used to get information on the private profile of the candidate according to the information available. Prospective employees that are able to use social media, particularly LinkedIn, to their full potential, they'll be competitive and quoted candidates.

2.3.2.8 Social Media and Internal Usage

According to the interviews, only 30% of targeted firms use SM for interviews. All firms use SM for internal purposes, especially in terms of internal communication, coordination and exchange of information. The most commonly used platforms used for internal purposes is Skype, including also Whatsup and Facebook. The use of SM for both interviews and internal purposes varies depending on the company size, sector and business activity. More structured firms use SM for both interviews and internal purposes since about 5 years, while in small and medium firms the use is more recent. The use of SM seems to be very limited in the rural sector. Employees of all ages are expected to use SM in order be able to conduct interviews and ensure internal communication within the work place.



2.3.2.9 Concluding Remarks

The interviews were considered enough structured and completed, so that there were not additional remarks that were made during the interviews.

2.4 Synopsis

The development of digital skills and competences is fundamental at all levels and stages of learning. An essential conclusion is that there is a need for employees 45+ years of age to upgrade and get equipped with digital competences and skills in order to get access to the job market. This implies that older workers would need to engage in training activities to remain competitive and get qualified jobs.



Conclusions

The research shows that the percentage of Italians with above average digital competences are generally lower than the EU average. According to “e-Skills In Europe - Italy Country Report” (European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry, January 2014), Italy faces a number of problems in the e-skills domain: an inadequate digital culture is the real barrier against a clear and consequent demand. A low digital culture is accompanied by a very low innovation culture. In this scenario, ICT skills and e-leadership skills are delegated to the labor market itself and the key players. Overall, the main findings from study and research questions confirm that digital competence are a barrier in recruitment of qualified employees in relation to adults 45+ and older workers in general. Therefore, low skilled and qualified adults over 45 years old should be supported to acquire and reinforce their digital competences in order to access to the job market and get qualified jobs.

In line with our research, we suggest the following policy recommendations for increasing digital competence of adults over 45 years old at both national and European level:

- Both adult and firms should invest more and more on training programs to upgrade and equip employees with key competences needed to remain competitive in the job market.
- Regulations in force and policies should facilitate the development and upgrade of digital competences of adults over 45 years to ensure their full participation into the society.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships should be highly promoted in order to strengthen and develop digital competences among adults over 45 years old and other vulnerable target groups.
- Innovation and major investments in the adult education and VET system should be promoted and pursued.

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