



Just Transition Platform – Project fiche:

UPSKILL 4 FUTURE

France, Italy, Poland and Spain

This document is part of a series presenting information and lessons learned on policy approaches at national, regional or local level supporting a just transition to a climate-neutral economy. The Just Transition Platform (JTP) assists EU Member States and regions to unlock the support in this transition. Visit the JTP website: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en

Member State:

France, Italy, Poland and Spain

Region:

n/a

Sector:

Cross sectoral: 1) commerce; 2) financial services/ professional services; 3) utilities (water, gas and electricity); 4) food, drink and tobacco; 5) health services; 6) basic metal production; 7) transport equipment manufacturing; 8) mechanical and electrical engineering; 9) chemical industries; 10) construction; 11) media, culture and graphics; 12) forestry, wood, pulp and paper; 13) postal and telecommunications services; 14) transport.

Total project budget (€):

Data not publicly available

Financing conditions (co-financing rate in %):

n/a

Sources of funding:

JP Morgan Chase Foundation

EU funding:

n/a

National funding:

n/a

Regional funding:

n/a

Project Duration:

Three years

Responsible managing authority / agency / company:

CSR Europe

Summary

In 2019, the Upskill 4 Future project was established to help companies develop upskilling initiatives for vulnerable workers who are at risk of losing their jobs due to technological progress and company restructuring. The project provided companies with methods and tools necessary to reskill and upskill their employees, making them fit for changing roles and new jobs.

Funded by the JP Morgan Foundation and coordinated by CSR Europe, the project ran for three years and involved more than 30 companies from a wide variety of sectors. It was implemented in France, Italy, Poland and Spain through the support of CSR Europe's National Partner Organisations: Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion; and Forética; Fondazione Sodalitas; Responsible Business Forum Poland; Impronta Etica.

Type of activities:

The project involved creating a seven-step methodology which includes an HR readiness tool to evaluate a company's preparedness for inclusive workforce transitions.¹ The steps included raising awareness about upskilling, conducting a skills assessment, analysing the results, creating a SMART action plan, implementing pilot activities, evaluating the results, and communicating about the initiative. More than 30 companies from 14 sectors benefited from the methodology and the different project activities, which aimed to raise awareness, provide capacity building, and facilitate upskilling initiatives within the company. Specifically, the Upskill 4 Future conducted assessments, benchmark analysis, and impact measurements, arranged workshops and capacity-building sessions, and conducted upskilling pilots within and for the participating companies. In addition, accompanying study reports on [Company readiness for inclusive workforce transitions](#), [Workforce Transition Best Practices Booklet](#), and a final results and recommendations report entitled [Upskilling and Reskilling in the Age of the Just Transition](#) were produced along the project implementation.

Goals and approach:

The goal of Upskill 4 Future is to identify skills gaps, engage vulnerable employees, design a targeted upskilling initiative, and communicate the success of the programme to all stakeholders.

To achieve this, the project recommends a seven-step approach to implement an effective upskilling initiative within a company. The steps within the approach include:

1. Raising awareness of the importance of upskilling.
2. Conducting a skills assessment via the HR assessment tool which uses a questionnaire and employee skills metrics in three areas: (i) strategic workforce planning; (ii) training and development; (iii) flexibility and mobility.
3. Analysing the results of the assessment by developing a benchmark and identifying the companies' skills gaps. Then, engage vulnerable employees in a conversation to review the results of the assessment (e.g. capacity-building sessions).
4. Developing a smart action plan.
5. Implementing pilot activities.
6. Carrying out a retrospective by gathering takeaways and learnings to identify the success factors of the pilot activities.
7. Communicating both internally and externally about the initiative.

Important outputs, results or achievements:

Upskill 4 Future successfully conducted peer learning activities to equip companies with the tools and know-how to invest in the life-long employability of their most vulnerable workers.

The main outputs of the project include:

- webinars & workshops to gain comprehensive knowledge on the future of work and upskilling;
- trainings and capacity-building sessions;
- in-depth analysis (Issue insights) and training kit for small and medium enterprises;
- assessments, benchmark analysis and impact measurement for participating companies;
- high-level EU events and European-level study papers on key learnings;
- upskilling pilots within companies.

Scalability² and transferability³:

The seven-step approach and methodology developed by Upskill 4 Future proved to be successful to most of the participating companies, regardless of their size (large or small and medium enterprises) or sector. This means that the model could be applied by companies anywhere in the world and from a variety of sectors. Its simplicity makes it an easy-to-replicate model that can be useful for businesses seeking to prepare their workforce for inevitable transition and change. By following this approach, companies can better equip themselves with specific tools and techniques to manage change effectively leaving no one behind in the transition.

¹ HR Readiness tool study report - <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5df776f6866c14507f2df68a/t/60350284b0fe0037ab1327c6/1614086796188/Upskill+4+Future+Study+Report.pdf>

² Scalability entails that a policy approach can be adapted to a bigger scale than just the local context.

³ Transferability entails that a policy approach can be applicable to a similar setting and replicated.

Key success factors and lessons learnt:

The project proved successful for most of the companies. Only a few companies withdrew from the project activities due to insufficient capacity.

One of the success factors was that CSR Europe worked together with its national partner organisations which are located across Europe, and which facilitated the support with local companies, also helping with the language barriers.

In terms of lessons learnt to tackle the upskilling challenge, companies should focus on the HR skills of managers, encourage cross-sectoral collaboration involving several departments, engage with territorial stakeholders and local actors, especially when deciding to open or close a branch, and put the HR department at the core especially when mapping skills. HR can provide managers with accurate information on the job positions that are more likely to disappear and facilitate the dialogue between the HR department and the employees.

To improve the effectiveness of the upskilling strategy, employees need to be part of the process and provide feedback that needs to be taken into consideration. Active internal and external communication is essential to make any trainings or upskilling strategy a true success.

Key challenges:

Over the three years, CSR Europe faced several challenges during the project implementation. These included:

- The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the HR sector, altering the priorities and the resources of the participating companies, which in turn impacted the pilots' action plans and their timeline.
- Most employees have a wrong perception of the HR department: before participating in the pilot activities, they did not expect the HR department to be so influential and engaged in supporting them. They thought the HR was confined to a purely administrative role.
- At company level, there is a lack of internal communication: upskilling activities must be well communicated within the company, underlining their specific added value.
- Upskilling tools or trainings are often reserved exclusively to white collars.
- Employees mistrust upskilling strategies and tend to avoid trainings even when the company offers them.
- Reluctancy to change, especially for senior employees makes it harder to adopt new ways of working or learning new skills.

Tools for supporting economic diversification and reskilling/upskilling via projects:

- supporting vulnerable workers during the period of industrial transition;
- providing workforce and start-up with training and upskilling programmes;
- supporting green skills and jobs through training and upskilling.

Central framework conditions⁴:

Businesses and the European Union recognise that there cannot be a Green Deal without a Social Deal. To ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, companies need to adopt a just transition strategy, leaving no one behind.

However, many companies are not ready yet to deal proactively with the issues and challenges that the green and digital transitions ('twin transition') bring and therefore are not prepared to contribute effectively to reduce problems like lack of diversity, poverty and exclusion.

One of the key challenges for companies when dealing with the just transition is related to skills requirements and how they invest in these. That is why, CSR Europe launched Upskill 4 Future, to investigate and help Human Resources to foster the employability of vulnerable workers who are at risk of losing their job due to technological progress and companies' restructurings.

⁴ Framework conditions encompass the institutional, informational and socio-economic factors that determine a given environment (contextual information), e.g. market conditions, access to finance, tax regulation, infrastructure and support.

Outlook:

The project ended in 2022, but CSR Europe is now considering ways to incorporate it into their business activities. One option they are considering is applying for funding from the EU or other organisations, which would enable them to extend the initiative to countries outside the EU.

In addition, CSR Europe aims to promote and share the effective methodology and tools developed, as well as highlight the pilot endeavours undertaken by participating firms and the related publications created.

Partners & contacts:

Lead organisation: CSR Europe

Website: <https://www.csreurope.org/upskill-4-future>

Figure 1. Participating companies and variety of sectors per country

	NUMBER OF COMPANIES PER COUNTRY	VARIETY OF SECTORS PER COUNTRY
	5	3
	8	7
	11	8
	9	5

Source: Upskill 4 Future/CSR Europe (2021)

Sources:

Interview with representative from CSR Europe, 18.4.2023.

CSR Europe. Upskill 4 Future. <https://www.csreurope.org/upskill-4-future>.

CSR Europe (2022). Upskill 4 Future Celebrates its Third Year Driving Upskilling Practices in Europe. <https://www.csreurope.org/newsbundle-articles/upskill-4-future-celebrates-its-3rd-year-driving-upskilling-practices-in-europe>.

CSR Europe/Upskill 4 Future. Study Report: Upskilling and Reskilling in the Age of the Just Transition. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5df776f6866c14507f2df68a/t/6344194d1e95b012dbce6bbc/1665407316861/CSR+Europe+Upskilling+%26+Reskilling.pdf>.

Upskill 4 Future/CSR Europe (2021). Study Report: Company readiness for inclusive workforce transitions. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5df776f6866c14507f2df68a/t/60350284b0fe0037ab1327c6/1614086796188/Upskill+4+Future+Study+Report.pdf>.

Upskill 4 Future/CSR Europe, Workforce Transition: Best Practices Booklet. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5df776f6866c14507f2df68a/t/620398e2f4c2c80774f9b0da/1644402914631/Upskill+4+Future+Booklet+Final.pdf>.