

# Integrated Action Plan (2026-2030) developed by Lepida and the Urbact Local Group of the metropolitan area of Bologna

Digi-Inclusion

*Leaving no-one behind in a digital world*



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## Glossary of abbreviation used

Abbreviation	Description
ADER	Agenda Digitale Emilia-Romagna
COMTem	Thematic Communities System of Emilia-Romagna
DVBC	Data Valley Bene Comune
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
FSE	Fascicolo Sanitario Elettronico (Personal Electronic Health Record)
FTTH	Fiber to the Home
FTTC	Fiber to the Cabinet
IAP	Integrated Action Plan
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PNRR	Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan)
RRP	Recovery and Resilience Plan
SPID	Sistema Pubblico di Identità Digitale (Public Digital Identity System)
SUM	Seniors United against Misinformation
ULG	Urbact Local Group
URBACT	Urban Development Network Programme



## Glossary of terms used

Term	Description
Digital Facilitator	Individuals trained to assist citizens in using digital tools and services
Mission	A statement describing the project's purpose and approach to achieving its goals
Problem Tree Analysis	A methodology for identifying and understanding the root causes of a problem.
Stakeholder Ecosystem Mapping	A tool to visualize and categorize the network of stakeholders involved in a project, identifying public, private, and non-profit actors, as well as their roles and interconnections.
SWOT Analysis	A tool to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a project or initiative.
Vision	A long-term aspiration for what the project aims to achieve



## 1. Introduction

The Digi-Inclusion network consists of nine partners dedicated to addressing the digital divide and promoting digital inclusion within their communities. This network operates under the URBACT programme, a European territorial cooperation initiative aimed at fostering integrated and sustainable urban development across European cities.

## 2. The Objectives of Digi-Inclusion

**Reducing the Digital Divide:** Helping cities close the digital gap by addressing various dimensions of digital exclusion, including lack of access to digital technologies, insufficient digital skills, and limited awareness and understanding of the benefits and opportunities offered by digital technologies.

**Promoting social inclusion:** recognizing that digital exclusion contributes to social exclusion and ensuring that all citizens can fully participate in the digital society.

**Sharing good practices and peer learning:** Facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and best practices among partner cities to develop and implement effective Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) to address the digital divide locally.

### 2.1. The Digital Divide addressed by Digi-Inclusion

The Digi-Inclusion Network focuses on three main types of digital divide

#### Access Divide

It refers to the lack of physical access to digital technologies, such as the internet, mobile devices, and computers. This divide is most visible and primarily affects individuals with limited economic resources.

#### Use Divide

It pertains to the lack of skills and knowledge necessary to effectively use digital technologies, even when access is available.



## Usability Divide

It occurs when people, despite having access and basic skills, are unable to fully exploit the information and services available online. This is the most complex to identify, focusing on the individual's ability to use content rather than the inherent usability of the technology itself

# 3. Context, needs and vision of the Integrated Action Plan of Lepida

## 3.1. General context

At the **national level**, the main reference framework is the Plan for ICT in Public Administration (2024–2026), aligned with the EU Digital Decade 2030. It provides operational guidelines for digital transformation across four pillars: digital skills, digital public services, digitalisation of enterprises, and secure infrastructures.

Data on digital skills highlight persisting gaps. In Italy, women represent about 60% of all university graduates, yet their presence in ICT and computer science remains very limited, reflecting a structural gender imbalance. More broadly, ISTAT (2024) shows that only 44–47% of the population has basic digital competences. Women slightly outperform men overall (47% vs. 44%), but elderly women with low education are at particular risk of exclusion (29% vs. 40% among men of the same group).

The NEET population (youth aged 15–29 not in education, employment or training) accounted for 15.2% in 2024, with a higher incidence among women (16.6%) than men (13.8%). In Emilia-Romagna, the rate is lower (9.3%), but still represents a vulnerable group in need of attention.

At the **regional level**, digital policies are framed by Regional Law 11/2004 and the Digital Agenda of Emilia-Romagna (ADER). These instruments pursue equitable access to knowledge, the reduction of digital divides, and the promotion of social and economic development through innovation and competitiveness. The region is consistently among the top three in Italy for infrastructures, digital skills, services and enterprise digitalisation (DESI regional index).

Nevertheless, significant **territorial disparities** remain. In the Metropolitan City of Bologna, broadband coverage is highly uneven:



- Urban centres such as Bologna (74.9% FTTH, 24% FTTC) and Imola (66.9% FTTH, 28.7% FTTC) are close to full modern connectivity.
- Medium-sized municipalities show mixed performance: Casalecchio di Reno (77% FTTH) and San Lazzaro di Savena (65% FTTH) perform well, while Budrio relies more on FTTC (58%).
- Small mountain municipalities face the greatest challenges, with some showing 0% FTTH and depending almost entirely on wireless solutions (up to 97%).

These figures underline a persistent urban–rural and mountain–plain divide, requiring targeted measures to ensure equity.

Emilia-Romagna has positioned itself as a “Data Valley”, investing in artificial intelligence, big data, IoT and high-performance computing. The regional mission is to innovate inclusively, ensuring full digital accessibility for all citizens and building a sustainable and cohesive digital future.

The following table provides a summary of the main national and regional indicators on digital skills, NEETs, and broadband connectivity.

Dimension	Indicator	Value
Education	Share of women among university graduates	~60% (but low presence in ICT/computer science)
Digital skills	Population with basic competences	44–47% (women 47%, men 44%)
	Basic competences – over 60, low education	Women 29%, Men 40%
NEETs	Youth 15–29 not in education, employment or training	Italy: 15.2% (women 16.6%, men 13.8%)
	NEETs in Emilia-Romagna	9.3%
Connectivity – Metropolitan City of Bologna	FTTH coverage (provincial average)	39%





Dimension	Indicator	Value
	FTTH coverage – Bologna (capital)	74.9%
	FTTH coverage – Imola	66.9%
	FTTH coverage – mountain municipalities	11%
	FTTC coverage (provincial average)	47%
	Wireless dependency – small mountain municipalities	up to 97%

### 3.2. Specific features of the digital divide in Emilia-Romagna

While the Digi-Inclusion framework identifies the **Access Divide** as a key area, referring to the physical availability of internet connections and digital infrastructure, this is not the central focus of the Bologna IAP led by Lepida.

This is because the issue of connectivity and infrastructure is already being addressed at a broader strategic level, through coordinated actions promoted by the Emilia-Romagna Region and implemented by Lepida in other contexts.

Some of the major ongoing interventions include:

- incentives for connectivity targeted at families and businesses in rural and mountainous areas, aiming to ensure that no community is left behind in the digital transition.
- a specific regional objective on Networks and Connectivity, which includes the deployment of ultra-fast broadband (BUL) in so-called “white areas” (locations where no commercial operator currently provides high-speed internet access).
- the goal of connecting 100% of primary and secondary schools across the region to high-speed internet (1 Gbps).



- the extension of the EmiliaRomagnaWiFi network to cover public beaches, sports centres, and other key outdoor areas, making free public Wi-Fi more widely available.

These structural efforts are essential elements for digital inclusion. However, they fall outside the scope of this IAP, which focuses instead on enhancing digital skills, trust, and understanding among citizens, once connectivity is in place.

For the **Usability Divide**, It is worth noting that., Lepida is not a municipality or a city authority. It is a regional in-house ICT company that acts as a strategic and technical support body for public administrations in Emilia-Romagna, including the Region, the Metropolitan City of Bologna, and the municipalities that are its members. Lepida supports these entities in designing and implementing digital services and strategies, particularly through the regional Digital Agenda (ADER).

In the context of this IAP, Lepida's role is to enable and coordinate actions that help local authorities better support citizens in accessing and using digital services. This includes training, knowledge sharing, and the development of facilitation tools and materials.

In relation to the usability divide, it is important to clarify that Lepida does not directly design user interfaces or technical platforms, which are often developed at the national level or by third parties. Instead, Lepida's focus is on supporting users' ability to understand and use these services. Lepida works on the content side — helping municipalities and facilitators explain the logic, usefulness, and steps involved in accessing digital services.

In this sense, Lepida contributes to reducing the usability divide not by redesigning services, but by empowering people to navigate them effectively.

Within the Digi-Inclusion framework, the Bologna IAP coordinated by Lepida takes a clear position: while the Access Divide and Usability Divide are crucial components of digital exclusion, they are already being tackled through other regional or national strategies and technical actions. For this reason, we deliberately avoid duplication and do not directly intervene in areas such as broadband deployment or user interface design.

The Access Divide is addressed by ongoing infrastructure programmes that promote universal high-speed connectivity, especially in rural and mountainous areas. Similarly, aspects related to technical usability are managed through the design of national and regional digital platforms (e.g. SPID, FSE, App IO), where Lepida has no direct role in interface development.



Instead, this IAP focuses specifically on the **Use Divide**. In this context, our goal is to empower both public organisations and citizens. We do so by supporting local actors in becoming digital facilitators, promoting intergenerational learning, building long-term cooperation across sectors, and developing tools and formats that can be shared, scaled, and sustained. The emphasis is on capacity building and adaptation of good practices, helping people and institutions turn digital access into meaningful digital participation.

### 3.3. Local context

The Metropolitan City of Bologna is a complex reality, comprising 56 municipalities spread across an area of 3,702 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population exceeding one million residents. This territory includes densely populated urban areas, suburban zones, and vast rural regions, each with specific socio-economic characteristics and challenges. Among these challenges, digital inclusion emerges as a priority to ensure equitable access to services and opportunities for all citizens.

The analysis of demographic and socio-economic data reveals the existence of groups particularly vulnerable to the digital divide<sup>1</sup>.

Indicator	Value	Risk
Percentage of population over 80	9,2% of the total population	Significant difficulties in accessing and using digital technologies.
Percentage of population over 65	37,2% of the total population	Need for tailored digital literacy programs.
Foreign population turnover rate	9,7%	Linguistic and cultural barriers in using digital services.
Percentage of	44% (over 53% in	High risk of social isolation,

<sup>1</sup> Source: Atlante statistico Metropolitano,  
<https://www.cittametropolitana.bo.it/atlantemetropolitano/> (accessed on 2025/01/20)



Indicator	Value	Risk
single-person households	Bologna city))	especially among the elderly.
Feminization of single-person households	Over 50% (women above 64)	Elderly women are at greater risk of digital exclusion.

These data highlight how advanced age, social isolation, linguistic barriers, and socio-economic conditions contribute to widening the digital divide. Digital inclusion in the Metropolitan City of Bologna requires a targeted approach that combines educational initiatives, personalized support, and strengthening local networks to facilitate access to digital services and overcome existing barriers.

### 3.4. Needs analysis

Digital transformation represents a great opportunity for the Metropolitan City of Bologna, but also a significant challenge, as many people lack access to or are unable to effectively use digital services.

#### 3.4.1. Disparities in access to and use of digital services

The Metropolitan City of Bologna faces significant disparities in access to and use of digital services, particularly affecting the following vulnerable groups.

**Elderly:** 37.2% of the population is over 65 years old, and 9.2% is over 80. This segment faces considerable challenges with digital technologies due to low digital literacy and the perceived complexity of technological tools.

**Economic barriers:** the cost of digital connections and devices is a hurdle for many families, especially single-person households (44% of total households, exceeding 53% in the Municipality of Bologna), often composed of elderly individuals or those with limited income.

**Migrants and linguistic minorities:** with 9.7% of the population being foreigners, linguistic and cultural barriers hinder access to digital services.



**Limited technical support:** elderly individuals and other vulnerable groups often lack the necessary assistance to configure and use Wi-Fi networks or access online services.

### 3.4.2. Main challenges

Promoting digital inclusion involves addressing the following challenges:

- **Digital literacy for the elderly.** This demographic requires dedicated, tailored training programs to overcome technological challenges.
- **Reducing infrastructure costs.** Initiatives are needed to implement free or low-cost Wi-Fi networks and provide accessible devices to vulnerable groups.
- **Establishing support networks.** Local help desks and digital tutors must be set up to offer ongoing assistance.



### 3.4.3. Problem Tree analysis

To deepen the understanding of local needs and challenges, a participatory Problem Tree analysis was conducted during the ULG meeting in December 2023.

This exercise allowed participants to identify root causes, intermediate effects and core consequences of digital exclusion in the Metropolitan City of Bologna., including:

- The complexity of digital platforms.
- Challenges in using smartphones and digital applications.
- Lack of digital literacy and accessible information.
- Distrust of digital technologies and fears of social isolation.

The effects of these challenges—such as exclusion from essential services (healthcare, education, administrative services)—guided the creation of a shared vision and mission. The focus is on reducing the digital divide through targeted, inclusive strategies.



**Initial moment of using the Problem Tree**



**One of the final moments after using the Problem Tree**

### 3.4.4. SWOT analysis

To understand the challenges and opportunities related to digital inclusion in the Metropolitan City of Bologna, a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) was conducted. This strategic assessment tool analyzes



internal and external factors influencing the territory's ability to address the digital divide and promote equitable access to digital services.

The SWOT analysis was conducted by the Lepida team as part of the Digi-Inclusion project, utilizing data and insights from the Emilia-Romagna Region's strategic documents of the Digital Agenda related to the Data Valley Bene Comune strategy and direct experiences with the eCare network.

### Strengths

- **Established collaboration.** The metropolitan area boasts a strong collaboration between public entities, private organizations, and associations, enabling the development of integrated initiatives for digital inclusion.
- **Existing innovative projects.** Initiatives such as the eCare network<sup>1</sup> and "Everyone Connected"<sup>2</sup> serve as successful, replicable models.
- **Political commitment.** The dedication of local institutions, supported by the "Digital Agenda" of the Emilia-Romagna Region<sup>3</sup>, ensures a strategic vision and dedicated resources.
- **Educational links.** The presence of well-established networks with schools and adult education centers facilitates the promotion of digital literacy programs.

1 - eCare network: <https://lepida.net/welfare-integrazioni-digitali/e-care>

2- Project Everyone Connected (Tutti Connessi)

[https://www.dareperfare.it/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/news/Report\\_Tutti\\_Connessi\\_-\\_fase\\_3.pdf](https://www.dareperfare.it/Engine/RAServeFile.php/f/news/Report_Tutti_Connessi_-_fase_3.pdf)

3 - Digital Agenda Emilia-Romagna Region:

<https://digitale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/strategia/lagenda-digitale>



### Weaknesses

- Insufficient digital literacy for the elderly. Many elderly individuals still find digital tools challenging, making personalized educational programs essential.
- Persistent exclusion of women from the potential benefits of digital technologies in terms of education, employment, and access to citizenship rights.
- Persistent economic barriers. The cost of internet connections and devices limits access to digital services for the most vulnerable groups, requiring innovative solutions to overcome these obstacles.
- Limited technical support. The lack of easily accessible assistance for configuring and connecting devices (printers, PCs, smartphones, TVs, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi) in the home environment represents a significant barrier for less experienced users.
- Credential management. The complexity of managing credentials for accessing online services is a widespread issue among less skilled users, calling for simpler and more intuitive solutions.

### Opportunities

- Participation in the URBACT Network. The opportunity to learn from other European cities and adapt successful initiatives represents a strategic asset.
- Expansion of the collaborative Network. Extending existing networks to include new beneficiaries and organizations, maximizing the impact of initiatives.
- Resources from the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). Funds available for digital inclusion projects, such as improving digital skills for the elderly and strengthening social cohesion.
- Student engagement. Educational pathways in high schools to train young digital facilitators.





### Threats

- **Persistent digital skills gap.** If unaddressed, the gap between vulnerable groups and the rest of the population could perpetuate digital inequality, limiting access to essential services and user autonomy.
- **Supporter burnout.** Over-reliance on volunteers or digitally skilled operators to support others could lead to resource exhaustion, reducing the sustainability of initiatives.
- **Privacy and security concerns.** Fear of online fraud or personal data theft may discourage the use of digital tools, particularly among the elderly, who often perceive higher risks compared to benefits.
- **Limited financial and infrastructural resources.** Scarcity of funding and resources could hinder the expansion of initiatives, making it difficult to reach a broader population.
- **Cultural and language barriers.** For some immigrant communities and linguistic minorities, cultural and language differences may pose additional obstacles to accessing digital services.

## 3.5. Vision and strategic objectives

The vision and strategic objectives of the IAP for Bologna are the result of a collaborative process that involved various stakeholders through meetings and structured activities. Their definition was guided by a deep understanding of local challenges related to the digital divide and the contributions of experts, institutions, and local associations. In particular, the Urban Local Group meeting on December 20, 2023, represented a key moment in consolidating discussions and insights gathered in previous months.

This meeting adopted a participatory approach, combining different methodologies to identify the main issues, outline solutions, and define a shared vision and mission.



### 3.5.1. Vision and Mission articulation

Based on the problem analysis, an ambitious yet realistic vision was formulated, accompanied by a concrete mission capable of addressing the identified challenges.

#### VISION

Bologna has a digitally inclusive community where citizens are aware of the necessity and opportunities offered by digital services and feel empowered to acquire the right skills and actively participate in digital life

#### MISSION

"To provide individuals with a network of facilitators and digital tutors to inform, motivate, train, and support citizens in accessing services and overcoming cultural and economic barriers to access."

The mission highlights the importance of building a localized support network to dismantle barriers to digital inclusion.

### 3.5.2. Strategic Objectives of the IAP and expected results

Building on the shared vision of a digitally inclusive community and the mission to empower citizens through local networks of support, the Bologna IAP defines a set of strategic objectives that translate these guiding principles into actionable and measurable priorities. These objectives serve as the backbone of the plan, ensuring that each intervention directly contributes to reducing the digital divide in a structured and sustainable way.

In line with this shared vision and mission, the Bologna IAP is structured around four strategic objectives (SO) that provide direction and coherence to the planned interventions.

**SO1 - Enhance digital skills among vulnerable citizens**, through accessible training and tailored educational materials.



**SO2 - Establish and sustain a territorial facilitation network**, activating synergies among schools, volunteers, associations and public services.

**SO3 - Promote mutual learning and sharing of good practices**, locally and internationally, to inspire and adapt inclusive digital solutions.

**SO4 - Ensure collaborative and sustainable governance**, leveraging the Urban Local Group and stakeholder engagement to ensure long-term sustainability.

The Bologna IAP includes 3 indicative results that reflect the strategic ambitions of the plan and provide a direction for future monitoring and evaluation. While these are not strict performance targets, they represent a shared commitment to tangible progress in the areas of capacity building, governance, service uptake, and gender equity.

The table below shows the 3 results and related SO, indicator and target that reflect the strategic orientation of the Bologna IAP and its long-term ambition.

Together, these outcomes reflect the IAP's dual focus on empowering citizens and strengthening local ecosystems, while ensuring alignment with broader regional and national strategies.

RESULT	DESCRIPTION	RELATED SO (s)	INDICATOR	TARGET
<b>Result 1</b> Manifesto on Digital Inclusion	A shared declaration of intent co-signed by stakeholders to guide implementation from 2026.	SO2, SO4	Number of stakeholders signing the Manifesto	20+ institutions by Nov 2026
<b>Result 2</b> Knowledge Sharing Platform	An online platform to collect and share good practices and tools related to digital inclusion.	SO3	Number of practices/tools published	Platform live by mid-2026; 30+ practices by 2027



RESULT	DESCRIPTION	RELATED SO (s)	INDICATOR	TARGET
<b>Result 3</b> Increase in SPID (digital identity) Lepida ID usage	Growth in the average number of SPID (digital identity) Lepida ID accesses per user	SO1	% increase in total number of SPID-based Lepida ID usage	At least 10% in the total number of SPID-Lepida ID accesses per year by 2025

### 3.5.3. Stakeholder Ecosystem Mapping

This tool was used to visualize the network of stakeholders involved in digital inclusion, categorizing public, private, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions. New stakeholders were also identified through consultations.

The mapping exercise enhanced understanding of challenges and opportunities, providing a strong foundation for developing an Integrated Action Plan (IAP) tailored to local needs.



The stakeholder ecosystem map created by the ULG members



## 4. Overall and integrated logical approach

### 4.1. Areas of intervention and actions

The following intervention areas translate the Strategic Objectives into operational priorities.

Each area is designed to address one or more objectives through concrete and coordinated actions, ensuring that the plan is coherent and impact-driven.

The Integrated Action Plan (IAP) of the Metropolitan City of Bologna aims to address the digital divide and promote digital inclusion within the territory. This plan is structured around three main thematic areas, representing strategic priorities to meet local needs and fully capitalize on identified opportunities. The intervention areas are organized according to the three key themes of the Digi-Inclusion project: access, use, and usability. Each area includes a set of priority actions designed to tackle identified challenges and maximize the impact of the initiatives.

#### 4.1.1. Theme 1: Development of tools to enhance skills (upskilling people)

This area focuses on enhancing citizens' digital skills, with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups. The goal is to ensure that every individual has access to training resources that enable them to independently use digital technologies, addressing the gaps in usage and usability.

The included actions are:

- **Creation of digital resources:** development of tutorials, guides, and training videos tailored to specific groups such as the elderly, youth, caregivers, and foreign citizens. These materials will enable citizens to easily access essential digital services, such as e-health and civil registry services;
- **Implementation of digital desks:** establishment of local digital desks across the metropolitan territory, designed to provide practical and personalized assistance to those facing difficulties in using technologies and online services;
- **Educational training kits:** production of training kits for digital facilitators, students, and volunteers, featuring practical tools to support citizens in acquiring the necessary skills.

These actions aim to create an accessible and widespread support network, improving citizens' digital autonomy and reducing the digital divide.



#### 4.1.2. Theme 2: Long-term engagement strategies for active citizen participation (sustainability)

The second intervention area aims to ensure that the planned actions are sustainable over time and capable of actively engaging the territory. The participation of local institutions, associations, and the community is central to building a digital inclusion system with lasting impact.

The planned actions include:

- **Community events and workshops:** organization of activities such as roundtables, workshops, and demonstration sessions during local events, such as the Technical Culture Festival, to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of digital inclusion and showcase the results of ongoing initiatives.
- **Creation of collaborative networks:** strengthening collaborations among public entities, associations, and educational institutions to ensure integrated and shared support.
- **Promotion of scalable solutions:** implementation of operational models that can be replicated and adapted in other areas of the territory, leveraging existing infrastructures and regional resources.

This area aims to build a resilient and replicable system capable of adapting to the evolving needs of the territory.

#### 4.1.3. Theme 3: Sharing knowledge and good practices (capacity building)

The third thematic area focuses on the exchange of experiences and the promotion of mutual learning among local and international stakeholders. Sharing best practices is a key element in developing innovative and informed approaches to digital inclusion.

The main actions include:

- **Virtual exchange platforms:** creation of an online space dedicated to collecting and sharing best practices and solutions emerging during the plan's implementation. This platform will also serve to identify common challenges and propose shared solutions.
- **Digital guide to good practices:** publication of a manual documenting experiences and achievements, providing a useful reference for other entities facing similar challenges.



- **Participation in international networks:** collaboration with European programs to adapt successful models from other cities and broaden the learning perspectives of the territory.

This area helps to utilize and capitalize on the knowledge gained to inspire and support other initiatives, both locally and internationally.

#### 4.1.4. Alignment between Strategic Objectives and intervention areas

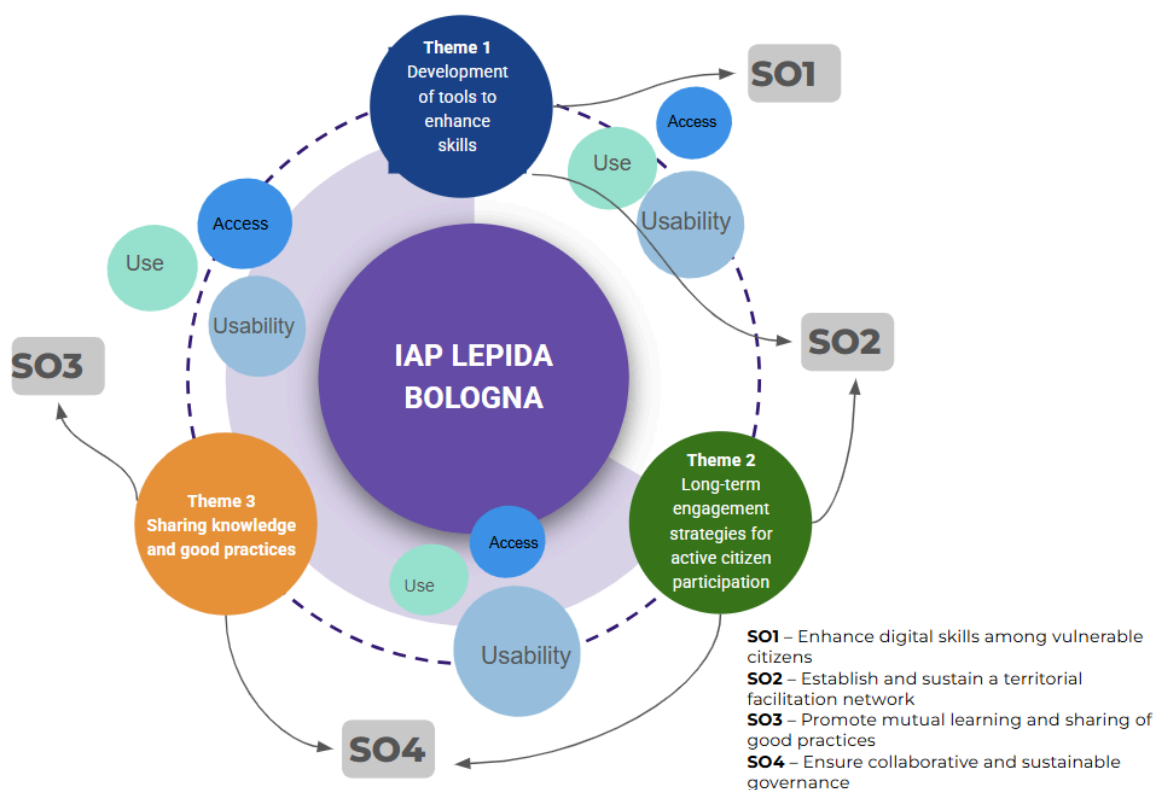
The Bologna IAP is structured around three thematic Areas of Intervention, which have been described in the previous section.

The table below summarises how each area contributes to achieving one or more of the Strategic Objectives defined in Chapter 3.5.2, providing an overview of the internal coherence of the plan.

Area of Intervention	Strategic Objectives Addressed
Theme 1 – Development of tools to enhance skills	SO 1 – Enhance digital skills among vulnerable citizens SO 2 – Establish and sustain a territorial facilitation network
Theme 2 – Long-term engagement strategies for active citizen participation	SO 2 – Establish and sustain a territorial facilitation network SO 4 – Ensure collaborative and sustainable governance
Theme 3 – Sharing knowledge and good practices	SO 3 – Promote mutual learning and sharing of good practices SO 4 – Ensure collaborative and sustainable governance



The figure below shows how each Area of Intervention contributes to the achievement of the Strategic Objectives (SO) of the Bologna IAP and provides a visual summary of these relationships, highlighting the integrated logic of the plan and the cross-cutting nature of the strategic goals.



Alignment between Areas of Intervention and SO of the Bologna IAP





## 4.2. Integration challenges

The integration of digital inclusion initiatives in the Metropolitan City of Bologna requires a multi-stakeholder approach that leverages collaboration among public institutions, the private sector, the third sector, and citizens. This approach is based on already activated tools and established strategies while simultaneously promoting innovation and adaptation to emerging challenges.

In addition to horizontal collaboration, the IAP also ensures vertical integration, aligning local actions with broader regional, national, and European digital strategies. The involvement of actors such as Lepida, the Emilia-Romagna Region, and the Metropolitan City of Bologna allows for multilevel coordination and coherence across governance layers.

Furthermore, the plan embraces territorial integration, addressing the digital divide across urban, suburban, and rural contexts within the metropolitan area. Specific attention is given to peripheral and underserved communities, ensuring equitable access to digital services and opportunities throughout the territory.

### 4.2.1. Horizontal integration: Multi-stakeholder approach

The integration is supported by a network of actors and tools distinguished by their ability to promote targeted and coordinated actions:

- **ADER** (<https://digitale.regione.emilia-romagna.it/>), the Digital Agenda of Emilia-Romagna, is the regional body responsible for coordinating and promoting actions for digital and technological development in the territory. The regional planning tool for digital and technological innovation and the territorial development of the information society is the Emilia-Romagna Digital Agenda, Data Valley Bene Comune (DVBC). It consists of strategic objectives and priorities summarized in 8 challenges, of which the following are particularly relevant to DIGI-Inclusion:
  - Challenge 2 - Digital Skills. It aims to spread digital skills and awareness across all age groups, with a specific focus on addressing the gender gap;
  - Challenge 8 - Women and digital. It aims to promote gender equality and opportunities in science and the digital field.



- **comTEM Facilitazione Digitale** a Thematic Community within Emilia-Romagna's Digital Agenda that works to bring digital opportunities into everyday life for all citizens. It coordinates a regional network that gathers citizen needs and shares operational solutions, training methods, and facilitation materials. The community co-designs scalable, replicable training actions and digital learning tools, strengthens local capacity, and shares territorial best practices to build long-term citizen digital skills and trust.
- **The Metropolitan City of Bologna** plays a crucial role as a coordinator and facilitator, thanks to its ability to operate across various administrative and thematic levels:
  - Central role in digital policy planning and implementation. It coordinates activities among the municipalities within the metropolitan area, fostering synergies between regional strategies (e.g., the Emilia-Romagna Digital Agenda) and local actions.
  - Governance tools. Through shared protocols and working groups (e.g., the Technical Culture Festival), the Metropolitan City guides the development of a common territorial vision to overcome the digital divide.
- **Municipality of Bologna.** Strategy and/or projects to address the digital divide. It promotes specific actions to expand access to digital services, with particular attention to the most vulnerable citizens.
- **Regional Protocols and Strategies**
  - Protocols for the Promotion of Digital Culture. Shared actions for disseminating and informing about the use of digital tools to access public administration online services. These are carried out through informational and training programs aimed at volunteers/operators belonging to organizations that have signed the agreements. The chosen training approach is a "cascade" model: "train the trainers," developing "competent groups" within organizations that, in turn, disseminate digital skills widely among their members and the public. The territorial impact of this approach is the establishment of digital facilitation points accessible to all citizens. This initiative has been integrated into the regional strategies for 2024 and 2025 through the PNRR Measure 1.7.2 project detailed below.
- **Protocols with Schools** play a central role in promoting digital literacy and developing strategic skills to address the digital divide, with a focus on collaboration, inclusion, and generational impact.
- **Italian RRP** Measure 1.7.2. A strategy promoted by the Emilia-Romagna Region to establish Punti Digitale Facile (Easy Digital Access Points) aimed at fostering digital literacy among citizens, as well as their inclusion and integration,



ultimately leading to the creation of genuine digital communities. Particular attention is given to groups potentially starting from disadvantaged conditions, such as the elderly, foreigners, women, and residents in mountainous or peripheral areas. Within the project, local entities (municipalities, unions) act as leaders, creating synergies across the territory to ensure accessibility and support for citizens through individual or group facilitation initiatives. In 2024, the Municipality of Bologna opened 11 digital facilitation points covering the entire municipal area.

- **Training for Young Universal Civil Service Volunteers:** an integrative action involving young people to support vulnerable citizens in accessing digital services, promoting intergenerational solidarity.
- **Protocol between Trade Unions and the Emilia-Romagna Region (RER)** aimed at creating facilitation points to complement the PNRR Measure 1.7.2 project.
- **Implementation of Pilots:** The protocols developed with schools and third-sector associations have been implemented through two pilot projects that demonstrated the effectiveness of the integrated approach, achieving results such as:
  - The training of digital facilitators for specific target groups (e.g., students and vulnerable families).
  - The establishment of collaborative networks among local entities, schools, and third-sector organizations.
  - A third pilot has been realised as part of a synergy developed with the European SUM project, which addresses key aspects such as user motivation and trust.

#### 4.2.2. Vertical Integration: multilevel alignment

Digital inclusion in Bologna is not only the result of local coordination, but also of strategic alignment with regional, national and European frameworks. This vertical integration ensures that local initiatives are consistent with broader policy goals and benefit from multi-level institutional support.

At the regional level, the IAP aligns with the Emilia-Romagna Digital Agenda (ADER), which defines the strategic vision for digital transformation in the region. In particular, the IAP supports Challenge 2 (Digital Skills) and Challenge 8 (Women and Digital), two pillars of the regional agenda that resonate strongly with the objectives of Digi-Inclusion.



The involvement of Lepida, as an in-house company of the Region, plays a key role in facilitating this alignment. Lepida supports the design and implementation of local digital services while maintaining consistency with regional planning.

At the national level, the plan leverages resources and guidelines from Italy's Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), notably Mission 1, Component 1, Investment 1.7.2, which promotes the creation of Punti Digitale Facile to support citizens in accessing online public services. The IAP contributes to this national objective by integrating and scaling local facilitation points across the Bologna metropolitan area.

At the European level, the IAP reflects the goals of the EU Digital Decade 2030, particularly regarding digital skills, inclusive digital public services, and the empowerment of citizens. It also reflects the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, aiming to ensure equal access to essential digital infrastructures and services for all.

This multi-level alignment reinforces the coherence and sustainability of the plan, allowing Bologna's and Lepida's actions to contribute meaningfully to the broader digital inclusion agenda at all levels of governance.

### 4.2.3. Territorial integration: inclusive spatial outreach

The digital divide is not only a matter of individual skills or motivation, but also of geographical disparities in access to infrastructure, services, and support. For this reason, the Bologna IAP adopts a territorial integration approach that ensures inclusion across the entire metropolitan area, including peripheral, rural, and underserved municipalities.

The Metropolitan City of Bologna, composed of 55 municipalities with diverse demographic and socio-economic profiles, plays a crucial role in bridging urban and non-urban areas. The IAP actively involves local authorities, schools, associations and service providers from both central and peripheral zones, aiming to create a distributed network of digital facilitation points and locally tailored interventions.

Particular attention is given to:

- rural municipalities and mountain areas, where digital services are often harder to access,
- older adults living alone, especially in small towns and isolated contexts,
- and foreign citizens or low-income families in suburban areas, where digital awareness and skills tend to be lower.

The pilot actions and implementation plan reflect this commitment to territorial balance. For example, the “Digitali senza frontiere” pilot was carried out in a rural



municipality (Castel di Casio), demonstrating that digital inclusion is not confined to urban spaces. The future expansion of facilitation points will also consider spatial equity criteria, ensuring fair access and participation across the territory.

Through this territorial lens, the IAP reinforces the idea that digital inclusion is also territorial inclusion, and that equal access must go hand-in-hand with geographic justice.

#### 4.2.4. Bologna ULG

Lepida's integrated approach is realized through the crucial role played by the Urban Local Group (ULG) of Bologna. This group serves as a unique collaborative platform that brings together public, private, third-sector actors, and civil society to address the challenges of the digital divide and promote digital inclusion.

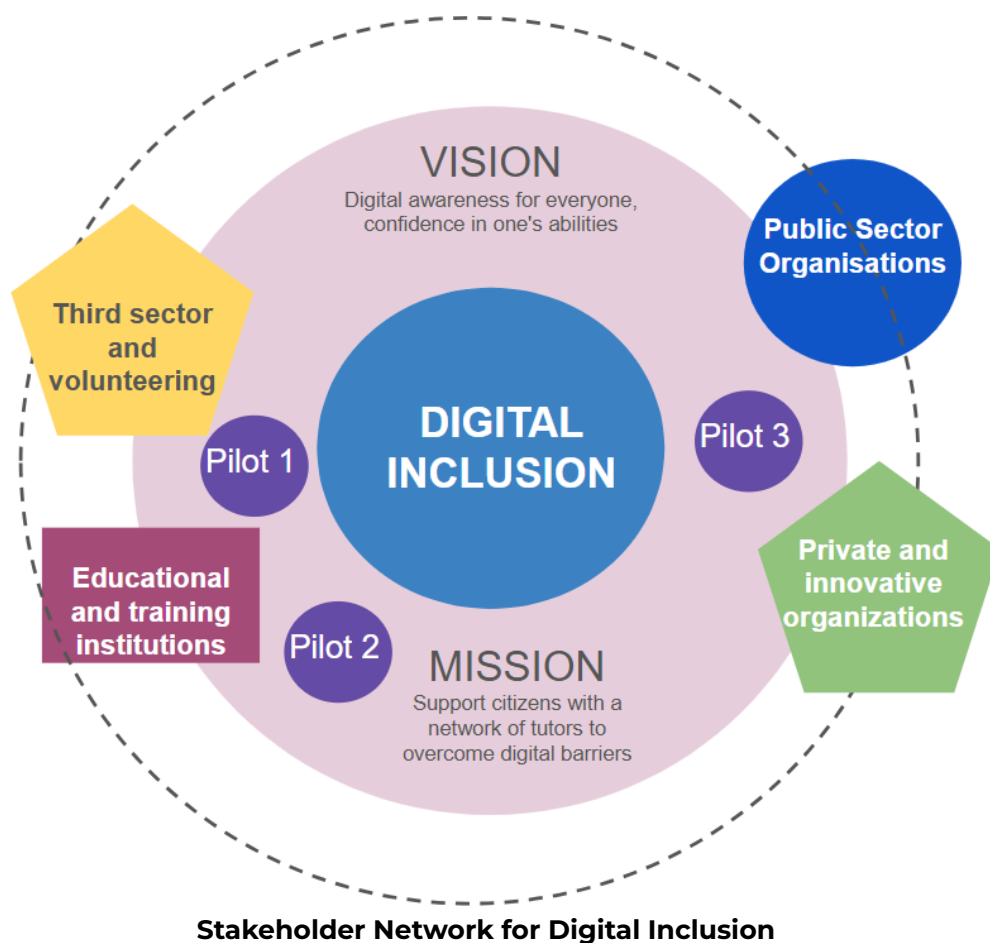
The ULG is composed of members who bring cross-cutting expertise and in-depth knowledge of local dynamics. Among the key members are:

- **Public Sector Organisations/Institutions**
  - Emilia-Romagna Region through the coordination of the regional Digital Agenda.
  - Metropolitan City of Bologna with key representatives for strategic digital planning and territorial coordination.
  - Municipality of Bologna that contributes technical and operational expertise for the implementation of local actions.
- **Third sector and volunteering**
  - AUSER that promotes active aging and facilitates the participation of the elderly.
  - Ancescao that develops activities to engage the elderly in social and digital initiatives.
  - Centro Antartide Università Verde that focuses on education and social sustainability.
  - Innovapolis APS that provides innovative solutions for digital literacy and skill development.
  - AIAS Bologna Onlus, ensures respect for the dignity of people with disabilities and promotes their right to a serene and inclusive life within the community.
- **Educational and training institutions**
  - CPIA Montagna, an adult education school actively involved in digital literacy.



- Istituto Crescenzi-Pacinotti-Sirani, a high school actively engaged in digital literacy and the training of both young people and adults.
- **Private and innovative organizations**
  - BOLAB APS committed to promoting educational and inclusion projects.
  - Housatonic facilitates creative and co-design processes, contributing to the collaborative development of training paths and digital activities.

The implementation of Bologna's IAP is based on a collaborative network that involves public institutions, educational entities, third-sector organizations, and innovative initiatives. Each category of stakeholders plays a crucial role in overcoming the digital divide, contributing specific expertise and resources to support the vision of digital inclusion and the mission of providing tools, skills, and confidence to citizens.



## 4.3. The piloting activities

Pilots represent a fundamental element for testing and validating the integrated approach and operational tools outlined in the IAP. Through these practical experiences, it has been possible to engage schools, third-sector associations, and citizens, promoting digital inclusion in a tangible and measurable way. Below are the two pilots implemented and a third one currently in the planning phase.

### 4.3.1. Pilot 1 Digitali senza Frontiere (Digital without barriers)



#### Objective

Promote basic digital literacy for people of different nationalities using a practical and inclusive approach.

The pilot, organized with the support of Bolab APS and coordinated by Lepida, took place from October 17 to 27, 2023, at CPIA Montagna, an adult education center in the





municipality of Castel di Casio. The course involved 15 participants, primarily adult students with diverse backgrounds, evenly divided between men and women.

The sessions, each lasting 2 hours, covered six training modules, including:

- Technical modules: use of devices, digital vocabulary, Google apps (Gmail, Drive, Meet).
- Practical skills: creating a résumé, managing passwords, navigating for educational and job opportunities.

### **Methodology**

- Each session integrated theory and practical exercises, encouraging active participation and adapting to the varying skill levels of the participants. The participants used their own devices to foster technological familiarity.

### **Results**

- Greater autonomy in the use of digital technologies.
- Positive interaction among participants, supported by educators and tutors.
- Identification of areas for improvement, such as managing linguistic diversity and varying skill levels.

### **Lesson learned**

The continuation of the "Digital without Barriers" pilot in early 2025 demonstrated its sustainability and adaptability, particularly in terms of geographical outreach and accessibility. Based on the experience of the first edition, the school initiated a second cycle of the course with several important modifications aimed at improving participation and inclusion:

The program was replicated in three municipalities in the Apennine area, selected for their strategic location in terms of accessibility by public transport and balanced territorial coverage. The course schedule was adapted to ensure compatibility with participants' study, work, and family commitments, which proved crucial for sustaining engagement.

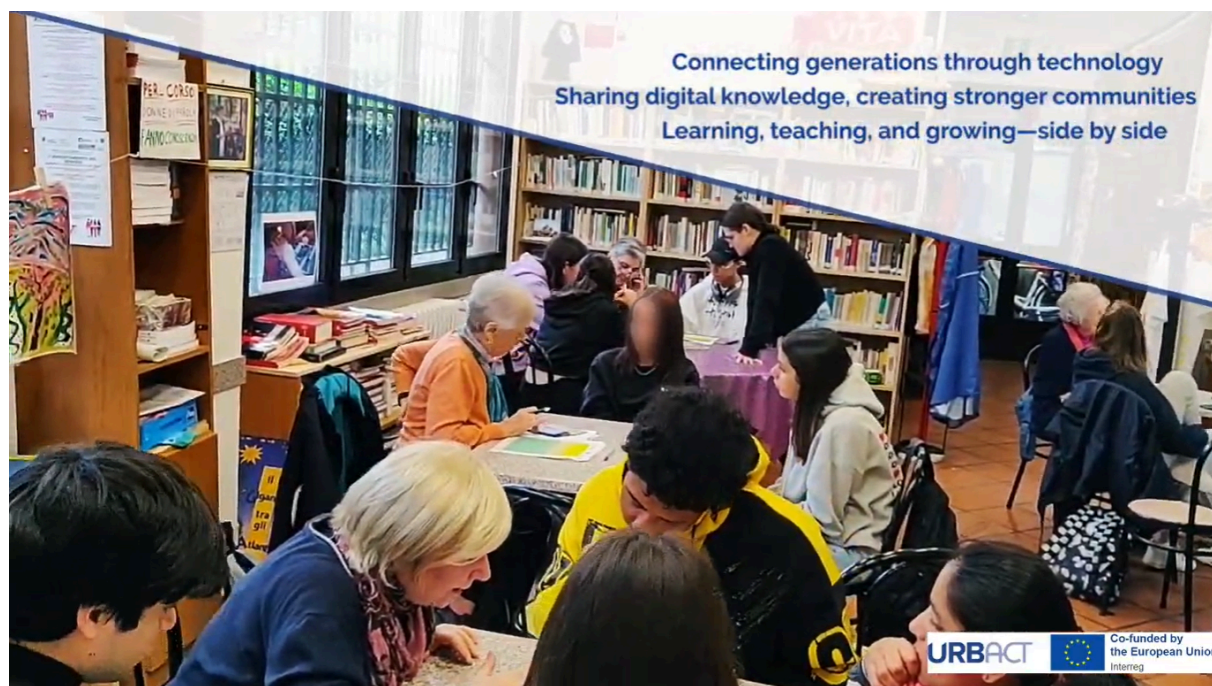
A revision and update of course topics and supporting materials was introduced. This was identified as a key factor in maintaining participant motivation and encouraging ongoing attendance. Keeping content relevant and tailored to evolving digital needs was essential.

The inclusion of supporting figures, such as a cultural mediator, was considered highly valuable. Integrating this role into the training helped facilitate communication and participation for individuals from diverse backgrounds, reinforcing the inclusive nature of the initiative.





### 4.3.2. Pilot 2 Digital Facilitators with school



#### Objective

Develop the skills of young people as digital facilitators and promote digital inclusion among the elderly.

In collaboration with UniVerde, Lepida implemented this pilot from March to May 2024 at IIS Crescenzi-Pacinotti-Sirani in Bologna, involving students specializing in social services.

The activities included:

- Training for Digital Facilitators: 2 modules, each lasting 2 hours, covering:
  - Types of digital barriers and support methods.
  - Use of SPID, FSE, and other essential digital services.
  - Role-playing to prepare students for field activities.

Digital practice groups: 4 modules, each lasting 2 hours with the involvement of 25 elderly participants, in collaboration with the Casa di Quartiere Due Agosto 1980, through practical training sessions on topics such as WhatsApp, SPID (digital identity), and smartphone use.

#### Methodology



This project is co-funded by the European Union through the URBACT IV programme

The activities were organized into small groups (2 tutors and 2 participants), fostering social interaction and tailored learning based on individual needs.

### Results

- Increased digital skills among the elderly, particularly in the use of smartphones and online services.
- Greater confidence and relational skills among students involved as digital tutors.
- A replicable methodology that connects schools and local communities.

### Lesson learned

The second edition of the pilot, developed in response to a direct request from the school, provided valuable insights into how to improve the structure and effectiveness of the initiative. Several important lessons emerged regarding both educational methods and organizational factors.

- The project demonstrated strong sustainability and replicability: the new edition ran from December 2024 to March 2025, involving 20 older adults and 18 students (16 female, 2 male). The fact that the school actively requested to repeat and expand the initiative confirms its perceived value.
- Two enhancements were introduced based on previous experience:
  1. an updated theoretical training module was delivered in the classroom, incorporating feedback and new content;
  2. a peer-to-peer session was added, allowing newly trained student facilitators to interact with those who had already participated in the first edition. This moment of exchange not only supported learning but also strengthened student motivation and ownership of the project.
- On the organizational side, the experience confirmed that certain logistical conditions help foster participation among older adults. In particular, the introduction of a regular, predictable meeting schedule (e.g., every other Tuesday morning) and the assurance of continuity over time proved essential. This attention to planning led to greater attendance and engagement from older participants throughout the cycle.



### 4.3.3. Pilot 3 User motivation & trust: synergy with SUM project



#### Objective

Test the SUM toolkit to enhance motivation and confidence in using digital technologies, integrating it into IAP activities.

The pilot promotes a peer-to-peer learning model that fosters autonomy, inclusion, and community resilience. The initiative also aims to bridge the generational digital divide, empowering older adults to protect themselves and others from scams, misinformation, and social exclusion.

#### Methodology

The SUM project implemented a peer-to-peer learning strategy that included:



This project is co-funded by the European Union through the URBACT IV programme

- co-designing training content with older adults and continuously updating it to reflect current misinformation examples (e.g., online scams, AI-generated fake content, and WhatsApp messages);
- organizing a training of trainers (ToT) path, where selected older participants were prepared to lead workshops independently;
- delivering 3 formal training sessions (3 hours each) and 1 peer-to-peer workshop (2 hours), supported by updated visuals, printed materials (e.g., fake news recognition decals), and contact information for public security services;
- providing certificates of participation to all peer trainers, boosting their sense of legitimacy and encouraging future facilitation;
- partnering with AUSER, which provided accessible and familiar community spaces, helped reach a trusted audience, and supported participant engagement.

The activities were held between February 26 and March 31, 2025, with additional sessions conducted by the trainers shortly thereafter.

Key logistical features:

- movable chairs and open layouts were favored to promote dialogue and equity;
- adequate technical equipment (projectors, good acoustics, readable fonts) was essential for clarity and accessibility;
- attention was paid to visual accessibility for participants with impaired vision.

## Results

The implementation of the SUM project in Bologna demonstrated the strength of a community-based, peer-to-peer approach to digital inclusion and media literacy. The collaboration with AUSER allowed the initiative to reach a wide network of older adults, ensuring both participation and continuity. The combination of structured training sessions and accessible environments fostered active engagement, while the content co-designed with participants increased relevance and effectiveness. The project yielded tangible results, both in terms of numbers and in the depth of impact on individuals and the local community.

- 10 peer trainers emerged and led peer workshops;
- awareness and preparedness against misinformation and scams increased measurably;
- participant feedback, collected via printed questionnaires, highlighted satisfaction with the practical focus and inclusive, respectful learning environment;
- a ready-to-use toolkit and training model were developed for replication in other contexts.

## Lesson learned



Throughout the implementation of the SUM project, several key insights emerged that can inform future initiatives targeting older adults and digital inclusion. The experience confirmed the importance of accessible spaces, adaptive content, and active involvement of participants as co-creators. It also highlighted critical factors for sustaining engagement and maximizing impact. These lessons offer valuable guidance for replicating and scaling similar interventions in other communities and contexts:

- older adults are highly capable of leading and participating in digital literacy initiatives when learning is participatory and adapted to their needs;
- peer-to-peer methods foster trust, engagement, and community learning;
- regular content updates are essential to keep up with evolving misinformation, especially due to the growing impact of AI;
- visual and auditory accessibility are critical and should be considered in all materials and environments;
- certificates and formal recognition reinforce motivation and sustainability for peer trainers.





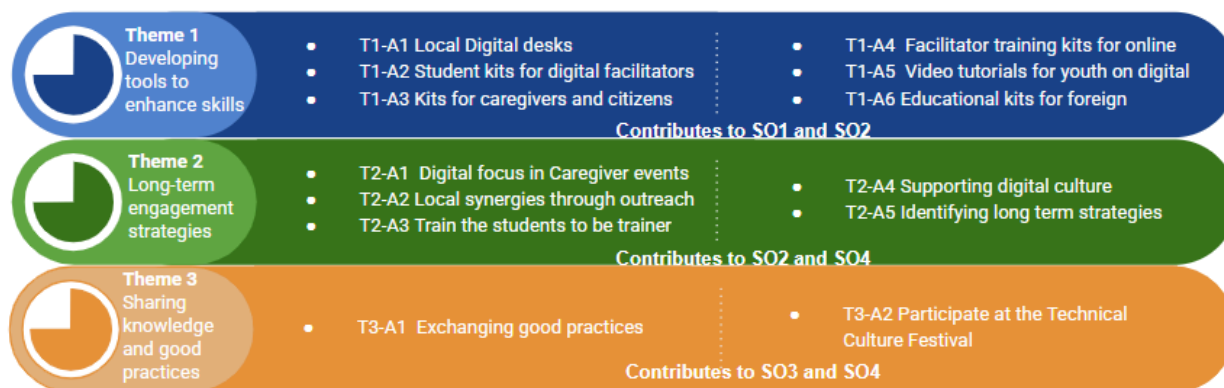
## 5. The actions of the IAP

The present section provides a detailed overview of the main actions that compose the Bologna Integrated Action Plan. Each action is designed to respond to specific local needs and is framed within a coherent structure based on three main Areas of Intervention. These actions are the result of participatory co-design processes carried out with the ULG and key stakeholders, and represent the operational core of the IAP.

### 5.1. Description of main actions

The infographic below offers a visual summary of all planned actions, grouped under the three thematic areas. For each Theme, the infographic lists the individual actions with their reference codes and clearly shows how each group of actions contributes to the overall Strategic Objectives (SO1–SO4). The Bologna IAP strategically positions itself within the Digi-Inclusion framework's dual approach to tackling digital exclusion. While digital inclusion requires both "Developing Individuals" (enhancing citizens' resources, skills, motivation, and trust) and "Changing the Offer" (improving affordability, usability, value, and security of digital services), our IAP primarily focuses on the "Developing Individuals" dimension. As a regional in-house company, Lepida does not directly control the design or delivery of most digital services. Instead, it acts as a facilitator and enabler, bridging the gap between existing digital services and citizens who struggle to access them.

While the Emilia-Romagna Region and municipalities work on improving service design and accessibility (the "Changing the Offer" side), our IAP complements these efforts by ensuring citizens have the capabilities to benefit from these improvements. Rather than waiting for perfect, fully inclusive services, we empower citizens to navigate the current digital landscape while advocating for continuous service improvements.



## THEME 1 - DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS TO ENHANCE SKILLS

Action code	TI-A1
Title	Local Digital help desks
IAP Theme	Theme 1 - Development of tools to enhance skills
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Use divide
Description	Creation of local digital desks for easy access
Involved entities	Lepida, Regione Emilia-Romagna, Beneficiaries: Municipalities, Volunteer associations
Resources	Trained personnel, physical spaces, internet access, educational materials. Estimated cost: €5,000 per desk for setup and €2,000-3,000 annually for maintenance, initially funded through Italian RRP and later through direct Structural Funds.
Timeline	From 2025 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	At least 20 digital desks in the metropolitan area of Bologna supporting approximately 10,000 citizens per year

Action code	TI-A2
Title	Kits for student digital facilitators
IAP Theme	Theme 1 - Development of tools to enhance skills
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Use and usability divide
Description	Create kits for digital facilitators among students in PCTO (Pathways for



Action code	T1-A2
	Transversal Skills and Orientation)
Involved entities	Lepida Beneficiaries: High schools, Schools for adults, Third sector
Resources	Experts for material design and editing. Regional resources (ex. Structural Funds) and collaborations with third-sector entities. Estimated cost: €2,400 una tantum, plus residual costs for regular updates.
Timeline	From 2025 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	Create one kit for the management and organization of PCTO to train digital facilitators in high schools.

Action code	T1-A3
Title	Info kits for caregivers and citizens
IAP Theme	Theme 1 - Development of tools to enhance skills
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Use and usability divide
Description	Create one informational kit for caregivers and citizens supporting vulnerable individuals.
Involved entities	Lepida Beneficiaries: healthcare organizations, caregiver associations, social centers, municipalities, third sector
Resources	Experts for material design and editing. Regional resources and collaborations with third-sector entities. Estimated cost: €2,400, plus residual costs for regular updates.
Timeline	From 2025 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	One kit including tutorials and instructions for accessing services





Action code	TI-A3
	(healthcare, social, registry, tax, etc.) digitally.

Action code	TI-A4
Title	Facilitator training kits for online services
IAP Theme	Theme 1 - Development of tools to enhance skills
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Use and usability divide
Description	Create one training kit for digital facilitators focused on online services.
Involved entities	Lepida, Regione Emilia-Romagna, Beneficiaries: Volunteer associations, municipalities
Resources	Experts for material design and editing. Estimated cost: €2,900. To be financed with funds from Italian RRP, ERDF, and Chamber of Commerce vouchers.
Timeline	From 2025 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	One kit of slides, tutorials, and guides for using the Lepida ID platform, including instructions on activating and using SPID and the electronic health record.

Action code	TI-A5
Title	Video tutorials for youth people on digital
IAP Theme	Theme 1 - Development of tools to enhance skills
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Use and usability divide
Description	Create video tutorials for young people on using digital services



Action code	T1-A5
Involved entities	Lepida, Emilia-Romagna Region Beneficiaries: municipalities, schools, citizens, third sectors
Resources	Experts for material design and editing. Estimated cost: €2,500 per video. To be funded through Italian RRP, ERDF.
Timeline	From 2025 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	13 video tutorials for young adults.

Action code	T1-A6
Title	Educational kits for foreign citizens
IAP Theme	Theme 1 - Development of tools to enhance skills
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Use and usability divide
Description	Create educational material kits for foreign citizens for digital literacy and access to online services.
Involved entities	Lepida Beneficiaries:: schools for adults
Resources	Experts for material design and editing. Estimated cost: €2,900 initially funded by URBACT, with €300 annually for potential updates.
Timeline	From 2024 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	One educational kit aimed at providing foreign citizens with the basics for using tools for educational purposes and accessing major online services offered by public administrations.



## THEME 2 - LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR ACTIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Action code	T2-A1
Title	Digital focus in Caregiver Day events
IAP Theme	Theme 2 - Long-term engagement strategies for active citizen participation
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Usability divide
Description	Participation in Caregiver Day to raise awareness on available digital services on the territory
Involved entities	Lepida, Local Health Authority of Bologna
Resources	Experts for material design and editing. Regional resources and collaborations with third-sector entities. Estimated cost: €1,000 per event.
Timeline	Starting in 2024, annually
Output indicators	Include a focus on digital services in the planned event program.

Action code	T2-A2
Title	Local synergies through events
IAP Theme	Theme 2 - Long-term engagement strategies for active citizen participation
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Usability divide



Action code	T2-A2
Description	Foster synergies with the territory
Involved entities	Lepida, Emilia-Romagna Region, Municipalities, Local Health Authority of Bologna
Resources	Organizational staff, logistics, experts in facilitation and communication. Regional resources and collaborations with third-sector entities. Estimated cost: €800-1,300 per event.
Timeline	From 2025 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	Organizzazione di 3/4 eventi annuali per individuare nuove collaborazioni, monitorare le attività in corso, sensibilizzare le comunità locali

Action code	T2-A3
Title	Train the students to be trainers
IAP Theme	Theme 2 - Long-term engagement strategies for active citizen participation
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Usability divide
Description	Train digital facilitators in high schools - intergenerational solidarity
Involved entities	Lepida, Metropolitan City of Bologna, High Schools of the Province of Bologna
Resources	Qualified trainers, internet access, volunteers, Lepida staff, teachers. Estimated cost: €1,000 per program.
Timeline	Starting in 2025, annually
Output indicators	1 PCTO program with schools involving at least 60 students per year



Action code	T2-A4
Title	Protocols on digital culture
IAP Theme	Theme 2 - Long-term engagement strategies for active citizen participation
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Usability Divide
Description	Promote protocols supporting digital culture for vulnerable citizens
Involved entities	Lepida, Emilia-Romagna Region, Workers' and pensioners' unions
Resources	Trained personnel, physical spaces, internet access. Estimated costs: Use of existing spaces and volunteer support, with regional funds of approximately €3,000 per year.
Timeline	From 2025 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	At least 10 help desks across the territory

Action code	T2-A5
Title	Identifying long term strategies
IAP Theme	Theme 2 - Long-term engagement strategies for active citizen participation
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Usability divide
Description	Collaborate with the Thematic Communities System of Emilia-Romagna (COMTem) and the Working Group Fac.Dig.-ob.3-Sustainability to identify strategies for institutionalizing the digital facilitation service.
Involved entities	Lepida, Emilia-Romagna Region, Public Sector Organisations, other regional in-house companies
Resources	Digital facilitation experts, data analysis, collaborative platforms,



Action code	T2-A5
	organizational experts, catering, and logistics expenses. Regional funds estimated at approximately €12,000.
Timeline	End of 2025 to 2027
Output indicators	Development of a methodology and data collection for a sustainability analysis of digital facilitation, including the creation of at least three case studies and successful models applicable to diverse public administration contexts.



### THEME 3 - SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD PRACTICES

Action code	T3-A1
Title	Exchanging good practices
IAP Theme	Theme 3 - Sharing knowledge and good practices
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Access, use, usability divide
Description	Collaborate with COMTem and the Working Group Fac.Dig.-ob.1 to create a virtual space for exchanging and sharing best practices and challenges (lessons learned) in digital facilitation.
Involved entities	Lepida, Emilia-Romagna Region, Public Sector Organisations, other regional in-house companies
Resources	Analysts, community moderators, regional funds estimated at approximately €15,000.
Timeline	From mid-2026 to 2027
Output indicators	Publish a digital guide containing the cataloged good practices and solutions to address the most common challenges.

Action code	T3-A2
Title	Digital inclusion at the Technical Culture Festival
IAP Theme	Theme 3 - Sharing knowledge and good practices
Prevalent Digi-Inclusion theme	Access, use, usability divide
Description	Promote digital inclusion at the Technical Culture Festival



Action code	T3-A2
Involved entities	Lepida, Emilia-Romagna Region, Metropolitan City of Bologna, Municipalities, Local Health Authority of Bologna, Third sectors, innovative private organisations
Resources	Organizational staff, logistics, experts in facilitation and communication. Regional resources and collaborations with third-sector entities. Estimated cost: €500-800 per event.
Timeline	From 2023 onwards on a continuous basis
Output indicators	Conduct 2-3 sessions during the festival focused on digital inclusion (e.g., roundtables, interactive workshops) to showcase ongoing projects and achieved results.





## 6. Implementation framework

### 6.1. Governance and coordination

The governance of Bologna's IAP is based on a streamlined and participatory model that emphasizes sharing and collaboration among the members of the Urbact Local Group (ULG). The goal is not to build a new superstructure but to create an open and flexible space where each member can contribute freely and voluntarily, leveraging the resources and skills already present in the territory.

#### 6.1.1. An inclusive and motivating model

The strength of this approach lies in its ability to mobilize existing resources and collective commitment toward the shared vision of digital inclusion for all. Participation in the IAP is not driven by formalities or rigid hierarchies but by interest in the issues at hand and the desire to create a positive impact for citizens.

Each member of the ULG contributes their expertise, tools, and infrastructure, fostering a collaborative, action-oriented ecosystem. Lepida acts as a facilitator, promoting dialogue among members and ensuring continuity of activities. There is no dominant role but rather a supportive one to coordinate initiatives and maintain focus on the shared vision.

#### 6.1.2. Key principles of governance

**Flexibility and adaptability:** the IAP is a platform for dialogue and sharing, capable of adapting to emerging needs and priorities. There are no fixed roles or bureaucratic structures; collaboration is based on autonomy and mutual trust.

**Motivation and voluntary participation:** personal motivation and interest in the topics are the primary drivers for engagement. Each member contributes with the resources at their disposal, respecting their capacities and the institutional or organizational role they represent.

**Enhancing existing resources:** the goal is not to build new structures but to coordinate and systematize already available resources. The network of active collaborations (e.g., schools, associations, municipalities, Lepida) serves as the foundation for the plan's success.



### 6.1.3. Ongoing stakeholder engagement: a shared Manifesto

Since December 2023, the stakeholder engagement process in Bologna has progressively evolved from a series of participatory meetings into a growing community of practice. This evolution has been facilitated by the region's fertile ground for digital collaboration, built on strong institutional coordination, active third-sector participation, and a shared sense of purpose among local actors.

To consolidate this collaborative momentum and ensure continuity beyond the IAP timeframe, the ULG members have collectively decided to develop a **Manifesto for Digital Inclusion**. This document will not be legally binding, but will serve as a public declaration of intent, affirming a common commitment to pursue the IAP's strategic goals in the long term.



**Signing ceremony of the Manifesto, 26 November 2025, Bologna**

It serves as a shared foundation for governance, collaboration, and accountability for the **period 2026–2030**, in line with the implementation horizon of the Bologna



Integrated Action Plan and its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Manifesto has been co-designed and finalized through a series of working sessions and was formally signed during a dedicated Urban Local Group (ULG) event held **on 26 November 2025** in Bologna, hosted at the Sala Acquario of the Regional Legislative Assembly of Emilia-Romagna. The event was conceived as a public moment to consolidate the local Digi-Inclusion process, bringing together regional and local institutions, ULG members, and key stakeholders. It combined institutional dialogue, reflection on project results, and a symbolic act of commitment. The signing ceremony represented the central moment of the event. The Manifesto was officially signed by the **Regional Councillor for the Digital Agenda**, followed by representatives of the **Metropolitan City of Bologna** and the **Municipality of Bologna**, on behalf of the institutional members of the ULG.

The logos of other participating organisations of the ULG appear in the document. Importantly, this list will remain open to new stakeholders over time, ensuring inclusiveness and adaptability.

By affirming this shared vision, the Manifesto will become a symbolic yet practical foundation for continued collaboration, enabling current and future ULG members to stay aligned and engaged in the pursuit of inclusive digital transformation across the Bologna metropolitan area.



6.1.4. Manifesto for Digital Inclusion – Bologna  
Digi-Inclusion IAP

## Manifesto for Digital Inclusion

We, the organisations participating in the Bologna Urban Local Group of the Digi-Inclusion project, endorse this public declaration of intent to support the implementation and sustainability of the Bologna Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for digital inclusion. Leveraging the strong culture of territorial collaboration, we commit to the following principles and shared responsibilities.

- 1 Common vision and responsibility**  
We share the vision of a city and region where all people can access, understand and benefit from digital services, particularly those most at risk of exclusion. We recognise that local institutions, schools, associations, and regional actors all play a vital role in achieving this goal.
- 2 Support for the IAP's Implementation**  
We acknowledge the Bologna Digi-Inclusion IAP as the shared framework guiding our local actions. We commit to contributing to its implementation and to supporting the actions identified within the plan.
- 3 Commitment to enabling conditions**  
We commit to supporting the organisational and where possible also the identification of financial opportunities, that can support the implementation of the Bologna IAP. This may include planning efforts or the identification of synergies with existing programmes and funding opportunities.
- 4 Strengthening local ecosystems**  
We recognize the value of territorial facilitation networks to deliver direct support to citizens through digital help desks, community events, training programmes, and intergenerational initiatives.
- 5 Open participation and shared learning**  
We welcome new organisations who align with these values, and we will actively promote knowledge sharing and the mutual adaptation of practices to address emerging needs and challenges.



# Manifesto for Digital Inclusion

**A shared commitment to supporting the Integrated  
Action Plan towards an inclusive digital transformation.**

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AGENZIA DIGITALE  
REGIONE EMILIA ROMAGNA



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Digi-inclusion



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### 6.1.5. Alignment with the Emilia-Romagna Digital Agenda 2025–2029 (ADER)

The Bologna IAP is fully aligned with the forthcoming ADER (Agenda Digitale dell'Emilia-Romagna) for 2025–2029, which has been co-designed through extensive regional and local consultation and emphasises:

- digital inclusion and reducing the skills and access divide, especially among vulnerable groups;
- upskilling and participation ;
- resilience and security of digital infrastructures;
- interoperability, usability, and citizen-centred services.

By linking the Bologna IAP within this regional framework can:

- reinforce relevance and legitimacy, positioning the IAP as a local implementation of shared strategic priorities;
- open access to regional tools, training programmes, and funding lines, avoiding overlap and amplifying impact;
- ensure coherence with regional governance, such as COMTem system and the ADER co-design process itself.

This strategic alignment therefore strengthens the IAP's potentials for resourcing, sustainability, and replicability.

In this context, **Lepida plays a key enabling role**, not only as local coordinator of the IAP, but as a regional actor supporting digital inclusion policies. With the purpose to promote dissemination and scalability at the regional level, Lepida has produced a catalogue of ready-to-use actions designed for its members and stakeholders and including training paths, educational materials, facilitation protocols and communication tools, many of which were co-developed or tested within Digi-Inclusion. The catalogue offers low-cost and modular solutions that local actors can implement independently or with Lepida's support, using already available content and tested methodologies.



## 6.2. Costing, resources and funding of the Bologna Digi-Inclusion IAP

The core of Bologna's IAP lies in the ability of the Urbact Local Group (ULG) members to collaborate in mobilizing resources already available in the territory and integrating funds at local, regional, and national levels. The financial plan is designed to align with existing opportunities and promotes synergies among institutional and local partners.

It does not introduce rigidity or new superstructures but promotes flexibility and efficiency, ensuring that each action receives appropriate funding based on its importance and local needs. This approach optimizes resources, ensuring the sustainability of the plan without unnecessarily burdening participants or creating additional operational complexities.

### 6.2.1. Estimated Cost and strategic alignment (2026–2030)

While the estimated direct costs for the implementation of the Bologna IAP, as identified in the action plans, amount to approximately €210,000 over the period 2026–2030, this figure represents only the core operational expenditures (“out-of-pocket costs”) such as the production of educational materials, event organisation, platform development, and communication outputs.

However, the real economic value of the plan is significantly higher. Thanks to the active involvement of public administrations, schools, associations, and volunteers, and through synergies with regional programmes and national initiatives (e.g. ADER, Fondo Repubblica Digitale), the IAP **is expected to mobilise a total value close to €1 million over the five-year period.**

This overall amount accounts for:

- in-kind contributions (staff time, use of public spaces, technical resources);
- institutional coordination and policy alignment;
- the integration of actions into existing service frameworks;
- and co-funding opportunities unlocked through collaboration.

This demonstrates that the IAP is capable of generating high collective value through local collaboration and synergies.





### 6.2.2. Funding sources

The funding of the actions outlined in the IAP is based on a combination of European, regional, and local resources. The identified sources include:

- Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP): commonly referred to as PNRR funds, these are a critical lever for initiating activities such as the creation of local digital desks and staff training. The Italian RRP covers initial costs for infrastructure and materials, providing a solid starting point for the plan.
- Regional and local funds: the Emilia-Romagna Region and the municipalities within the Metropolitan City contribute through funds aimed at improving social and digital inclusion. These funds are essential to ensure the operational continuity and medium- to long-term sustainability of the actions.
- European Structural Funds: at a later stage, financing from programs such as the European Social Fund (ESF) or the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will be activated to consolidate launched activities and replicate best practices in other areas.
- Voluntary contributions and partnerships: volunteer associations and private partners can offer support in terms of human resources, spaces, and expertise, helping to reduce overall costs.
- Lepida has an area dedicated to supporting its members in accessing funding and opportunities to develop innovative and inclusive initiatives. Specifically, for this IAP, together with 2 members of ULG, Auser and Hausatonic, 2 project proposals have been submitted under Erasmus+ and CERV Programmes. One of these proposals, SUM 2 has been approved and started in October 2025, with a strong focus on expanding intergenerational learning models and local digital facilitation.

### 6.2.3. Required resources

The resources required for implementing the actions are divided into three main categories:

- **Financial resources:** each local digital desk requires an initial investment of approximately €5,000 to cover the purchase of equipment, educational materials, and the preparation of spaces. Subsequently, the operational maintenance of each desk requires around €2,000-3,000 per year, allocated for personnel, equipment maintenance, and support activities.





- **Technical resources:** reliable digital infrastructure is needed, including computers, high-speed internet connections, and specific software for managing services. Educational materials such as guides, video tutorials, and online learning platforms are key elements for the effectiveness of the actions.
- **Human resources:** the plan includes employing digital facilitators trained to support citizens in accessing and using technologies.

Additionally, the involvement of volunteers (e.g., high school students or members of local associations) is a fundamental resource for expanding the impact of the initiatives.

#### 6.2.4. A sustainable and collaborative approach

The financial plan aims not only to ensure immediate cost coverage but also to establish a long-term sustainability model. The ability to combine public funds, private contributions, and volunteer resources allows for the optimization of available resources, avoiding waste and redundancies. This approach leverages existing territorial assets, such as municipal and volunteering associations spaces and established collaborative networks, minimizing the need for new infrastructural investments.

### 6.3. Implementation timeline overview

The implementation timeline spans five years from 2026 to 2030. Actions begin at different implementation stages based on their current operational status, not as sequential phases.

Actions categorized as "Planned" require foundational work in 2026: defining methodologies, identifying partners, and establishing initial frameworks. These are initiatives that need to be designed from the ground up before moving into active delivery.

Actions categorized as "In Development", such as the knowledge sharing platform (T3-A1) and events for target populations (T2-A1), can advance more rapidly because they build on existing initiatives through regional programs and pilot activities already underway. These actions are already in a design or testing phase and require refinement rather than creation.

Actions categorized as "Ongoing/Initial" are already operational but need expansion, consolidation, or integration into the broader IAP framework.



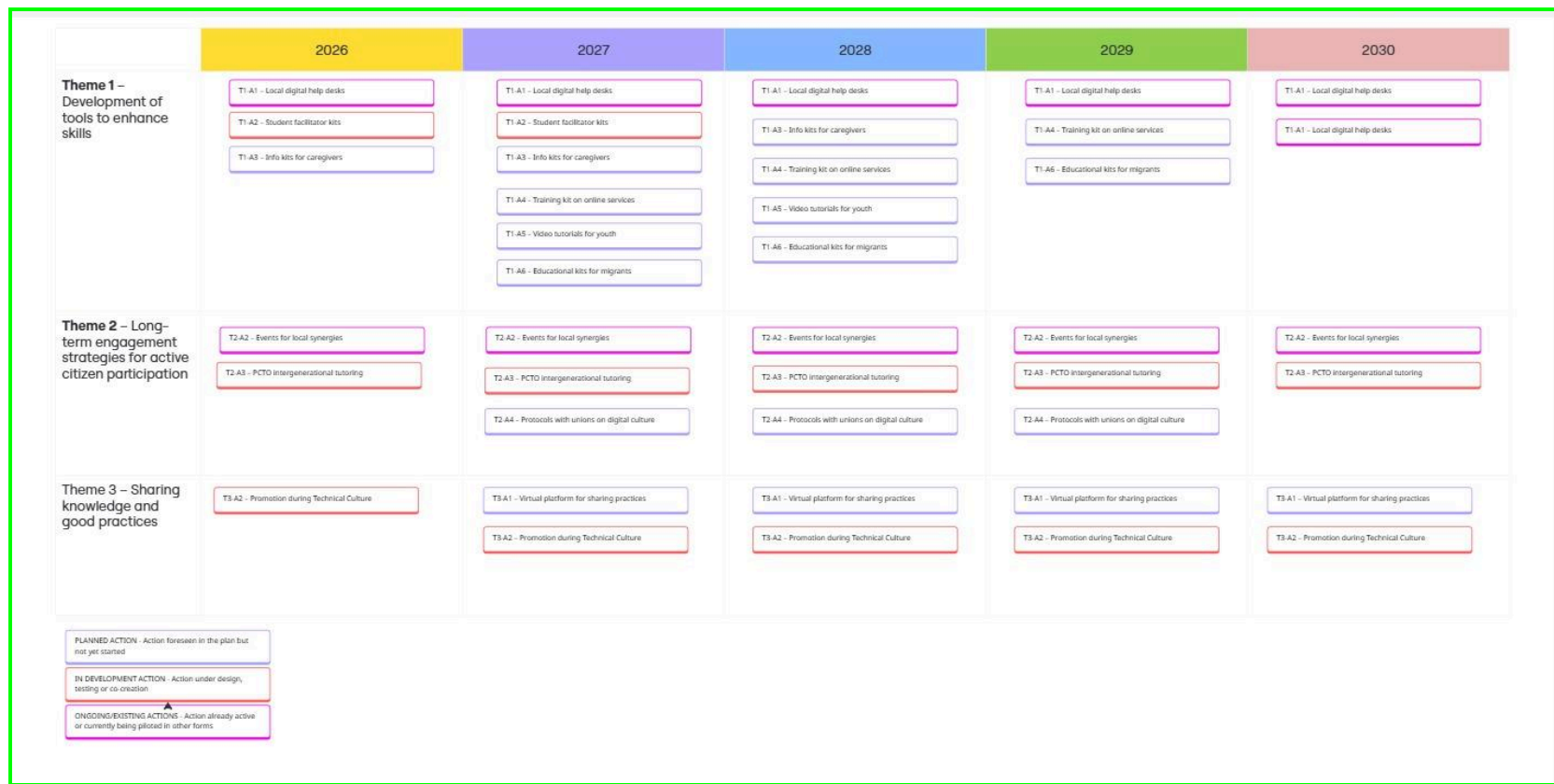
During 2027 and 2028, the focus shifts to active delivery and scaling. Actions that started as planned move into execution, pilot programs expand, training materials are refined, and coordination mechanisms are established. This is when we see the most dynamic activity across all three themes, as lessons learned from early implementations inform improvements across the entire program.

By 2029 and 2030, most actions reach full operational maturity. The local facilitation points are functioning across the territory, intergenerational programs between schools and elderly communities have become routine, and the knowledge sharing platform serves as an established resource for the entire network. Importantly, the initial categorization (planned/in development/ongoing) refers to the starting point of each action, not to these later stages of maturity. Some actions maintain a development-oriented approach even in these later years, recognizing that digital inclusion requires continuous adaptation to evolving technologies and citizen needs.

The GANTT CHART (Chapter 6.4) shows how actions within each theme support and reinforce each other. For instance, the facilitator training programs (Theme 1) directly enable the intergenerational activities (Theme 2), while both generate practices and experiences that populate the knowledge sharing platform (Theme 3). This interconnected approach ensures that investments in one area strengthen the entire ecosystem, creating a sustainable framework for digital inclusion that will continue beyond the formal IAP period.



## 6.4. GANTT CHART



## 6.5. Risk Assessment

The Bologna Digi-Inclusion IAP will be implemented over multiple years (2026–2030) and involves various local actors and institutions, therefore, it is essential to anticipate potential risks that could affect its success. The table below focuses on a series of high-level risks, assessed in terms of impact and likelihood, and provides corresponding mitigation strategies.

RISK	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	MITIGATION STRATEGY
<b>RISK-1</b> Lack of institutional continuity or political support	MEDIUM	HIGH	Build a wide and diverse support base via the Manifesto; link actions to existing programmes (e.g. ADER, COMTem Digital Facilitation) to avoid dependency on individuals or political cycles.
<b>RISK-2</b> Limited availability of trained human resources (e.g. facilitators, tutors)	HIGH	MEDIUM	Promote co-responsibility across institutions and schools; design modular training kits; engage volunteers (e.g. students, seniors)
<b>RISK-3</b> Fragmentation or duplication of digital inclusion efforts	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	Use the knowledge-sharing platform (T3-AI) and COMTem coordination to align practices, share tools and prevent silos

The emphasis is placed on risks that are systemic or cross-cutting, such as loss of political momentum, lack of human resources, or fragmentation of efforts, which could affect multiple actions or hinder the integrated nature of the plan.

The mitigation strategies proposed leverage existing mechanisms already embedded in the IAP: shared governance tools like the Digital Inclusion Manifesto, long-term



networks such as COMTem Digital Facilitation, and cross-institutional tools like the Knowledge-Sharing Platform. These are designed to ensure resilience across time and organisational change.

## 6.6. Monitoring and reporting

The Bologna Digi-Inclusion IAP has realised a simple and feasible monitoring approach, grounded in data sources that are already available or can be activated through the planned actions. Rather than creating a parallel reporting system, the strategy is to build on existing tools, institutional knowledge and shared platforms, ensuring that monitoring is both practical and meaningful.

The selected indicators are designed to capture the outcomes of the IAP — not only the immediate effects of the actions, but above all the broader changes in stakeholder collaboration, knowledge transfer, and citizens' access to digital services. The focus is therefore on the true results of the plan rather than on operational outputs, which are monitored separately at the level of individual actions (see Section 5 and the Gantt in Section 6.4). The table below presents the expected results and their outcome indicators, highlighting both measurable progress and qualitative dimensions that reflect the long-term transformation the IAP aims to generate.

Where quantitative data are available, for example through Lepida open data or regional statistics, they will be systematically collected and reported. At the same time, the framework recognises that not all impacts can be measured with numbers alone. For this reason, ad hoc surveys with stakeholders and specific user groups (such as elderly citizens, schools or associations) may be conducted to capture qualitative aspects such as changes in trust, awareness or collaborative behaviour. The involvement of associations within the Digi-Inclusion network will be key in supporting this process, providing insights and evidence from the ground.

The outcomes described in the table go beyond the immediate delivery of outputs and point to the long-term change that the IAP intends to generate. The **Manifesto on Digital Inclusion** is not valuable simply because of the number of signatories, but because it should ensure that institutions, associations, and schools maintain active collaboration, leading to new joint actions that would not otherwise occur. This type of systemic effect is harder to measure, yet it represents the real ambition of the plan.

Similarly, the **Knowledge Sharing Platform** is more than a repository of practices: its true outcome lies in the reuse and adaptation of those practices by schools, municipalities, and associations. This reduces duplication of effort and accelerates the spread of effective solutions across the territory. Again, the impact is qualitative as



much as quantitative: numbers of uploads can be tracked, but the real added value is whether these practices become embedded in daily work.

Finally, the increase in **SPID Lepida ID usage** illustrates how the plan aims to make public services more accessible. While total access numbers are measurable through regional open data, the outcome focuses on a deeper shift: a larger share of vulnerable groups, especially elderly citizens and migrants, using SPID regularly to access essential services. This represents not only higher service usage but also greater confidence, autonomy, and inclusion.

This mixed-method approach ensures that monitoring reflects both measurable progress and lived experiences. It combines quantitative indicators, which show the scale of change, with qualitative evidence, which illustrates how the IAP makes a difference in people's lives and in the local ecosystem.

Finally, Lepida intends to maintain an informal communication channel with the URBACT community, to share updates and lessons learned beyond the project's formal closure. This will help reinforce transnational collaboration and inspire similar initiatives in other cities.



RESULT	OUTCOME	OUTCOME INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE	FREQUENCY
<b>Result 1</b> Manifesto on Digital Inclusion	Local institutions, associations, and schools maintain active collaboration on digital inclusion generating new joint actions	Actions or initiatives implemented by organisations	IAP Coordination (Lepida/ULG)	Annual
Result 1.1 Shared vision and commitment to the IAP	A common vision on digital inclusion is maintained, and signatories actively support the implementation of IAP actions.	- % of organisations reporting alignment of their internal strategies with the Manifesto's principles; - Perception of the Manifesto's usefulness in supporting collaboration	Strategies and reports of the members; Periodic surveys	Annual
Result 1.2 Mobilisation of resources and enabling	Organisations mobilise organisational and financial resources, activate synergies, and create the conditions to	- Synergies or resources mobilised by signatories in support of the IAP;	Evidence of partnerships with regional/natio	Annual



RESULT	OUTCOME	OUTCOME INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE	FREQUENCY
conditions	sustain digital inclusion beyond the IAP timeframe.	- Increasing willingness to invest resources	nal programmes; Evidence from interviews	
Result 1.3 Strengthened ecosystems and shared learning	Territorial facilitation networks are reinforced, and the Manifesto remains open to new organisations	Number of help desks, community events, or intergenerational initiatives supported by organisations	number of new organisations joining annually	Annual
<b>Result 2</b> Knowledge Sharing Platform	Schools, municipalities, and associations reuse practices and tools, reducing duplication of effort and accelerating the spread of effective solutions.	Number of practices/tools reused or adapted by organisations; Evidence from stakeholder feedback	Platform analytics + organisation reporting	Annual
Result 2.1 Practices/tools uploaded	A critical mass of practices is made available.	Number of uploads per year; Stakeholder feedback on the	Platform analytics + survey	Annual





RESULT	OUTCOME	OUTCOME INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE	FREQUENCY
		accessibility and clarity of uploaded practices		
Result 2.2 Practices reused/adapted	Practices are actively reused and adapted by local actors.	Number of organisations declaring reuse/adaptation of at least one practice/tool; Stories of adaptation and reuse collected through interviews/case studies	Platform survey + interviews	Annual/Biennial
<b>Result 3</b> Increase in SPID (digital identity) Lepida ID usage	A larger share of vulnerable groups (especially elderly citizens and migrants) <b>actively use</b> SPID to access health, welfare, and municipal services.	Increase the % of vulnerable groups regularly accessing services by SPID Lepida ID	ADER / Lepida (regional open data)	Annual
Result 3.1 Practices	Overall usage of SPID Lepida ID services increases.	% increase in total SPID-based Lepida	ADER / Lepida open data +	Annual



RESULT	OUTCOME	OUTCOME INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE	FREQUENCY
reused/adapted		ID accesses per year; Users' perception of easier access to services	user surveys	
Result 3.2 Vulnerable groups adoption	More vulnerable groups (elderly, migrants) start to use SPID Lepida ID	% of elderly and migrants among SPID users	Stories from digital desks or associations supporting vulnerable users	Annual
Result 3.3 Confidence and autonomy	Users gain confidence and autonomy in accessing digital services.	% of participants in pilots/desks reporting higher autonomy in using SPID Lepida ID	Evidence of reduced dependency on intermediaries, collected through interviews or focus groups	Biennial



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