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Continuing Training, Self-Employment, and Inclusive Democracy in Italy: Ecosystem Integration and Policy Innovation

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Panel H.06. Continuing Training for Self-Employed Workers: Lifelong Learning and Inclusive Democracy

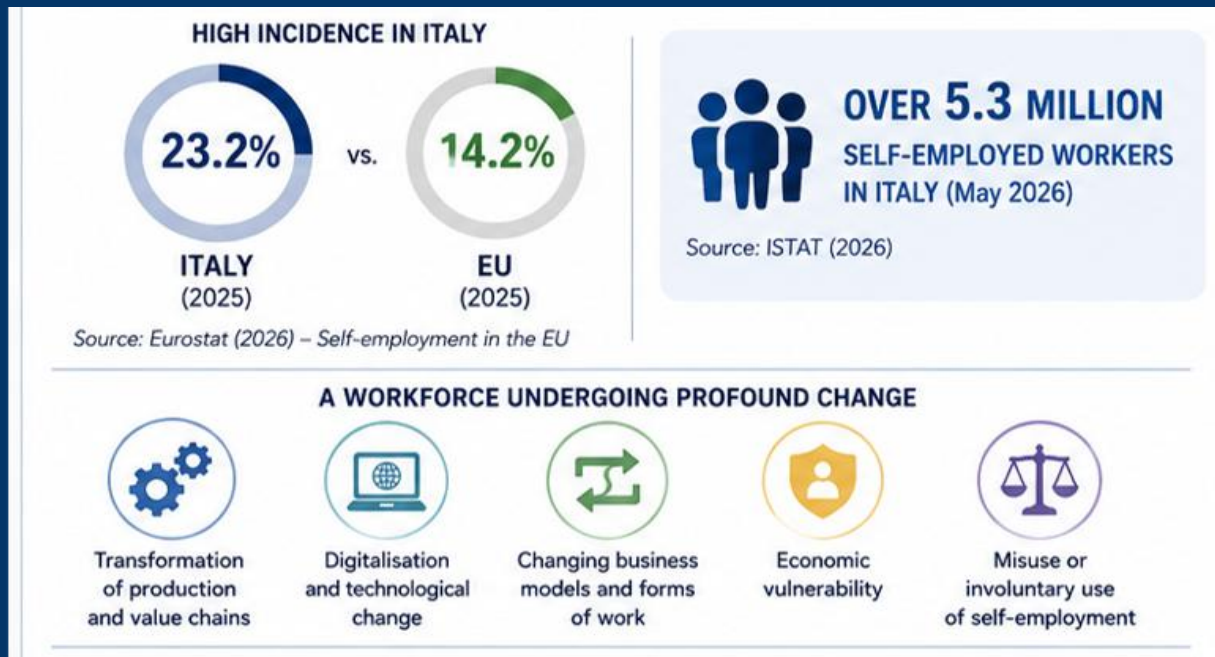
Research-based evidence

The findings and policy implications presented in this paper draw on researches and surveys conducted at INAPP:

- ***Research Project (INAPP): Policies supporting new business creation and start-up accompaniment, mapping and analysis of European, national and regional measures. Based on empirical research (2023–2025), explores how an integrated entrepreneurial ecosystem can widen economic participation and strengthen individual and territorial resilience.***
- ***Complemented by data from INAPP Indaco Surveys and the 25th INAPP Report on Continuing Training (INAPP 2026).***

Introduction

Why Focus on Self-employed Workers? → Structurally important but rapidly changing workforce



(Eurostat 2026; ISTAT 2026; INAPP, Bergamante F., Bensi C., della Ratta-Rinaldi F. 2026)

Context



Two distinct pathways:

OPPORTUNITY-DRIVEN
(Innovation, autonomy, growth)

NECESSITY-DRIVEN
(Unemployment, insecurity, limited alternatives)

(Barricelli 2022; Pedone & Barricelli 2025; Eurofound 2004)

Context

The Continuing Training Gap → Large Population but low Participation



OVER
5.3 MILLION
SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS
IN ITALY (May 2026)

Source: ISTAT (2026)



Source: INAPP (2025) –
XXV Report on Continuing Training
(2023–2024)

CONSEQUENCES OF THE GAP



Skills shortages
(digital, managerial,
green, transversal)



Lower productivity
and innovation



Greater economic
vulnerability



Unequal access to opportunities
and support



Continuing training is a prerequisite for adaptability,
resilience and sustainable autonomy in a changing economy.

Main obstacles

- Training costs
- Time constraints
- Lack of structural funding
- Weak learning-network ties

(INAPP, Angotti, Premutico 2026; Barricelli, Carolla 2023)

Introduction - Why does continuing training matter?

For self-employed workers, lifelong learning supports:

- employability and professional sustainability
- adaptation to digital and ecological transitions
- managerial and transversal competences
- resilience in changing markets

For entrepreneurs, it additionally supports:

- opportunity recognition
- innovation and business development
- resource mobilisation
- enterprise sustainability

(Pedone & Barricelli 2025)

What competences are needed?

Entrepreneurial competences extends beyond business creation.

The EU **EntreComp** framework conceptualises **entrepreneurship as a transversal, lifelong competence** that enables individuals to act upon opportunities, create economic, social and cultural value, **participate actively in society**, and navigate employment and self-employment transitions (Bacigalupo et al., 2016; European Commission, 2018).

ENTRECOMP FRAMEWORK
The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework



Analytical perspective

From Training to Democratic Inclusion → The Pathway



(Valenti 2021; OECD, European Commission 2023, INAPP 2025)

Conclusions

Results from the INAPP Research

An integrated ecosystem for self-employment and entrepreneurship combining:

- lifelong learning
- entrepreneurship education
- mentoring and accompaniment
- access to finance
- institutional coordination

could strengthen individuals' capacity to enter and remain in self-employment on more sustainable and equitable terms.

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Thank you

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