BARCELONA, Spain

IT ACADEMY

Key facts

Through its Local development Agency, Barcelona Activa, the City of Barcelona, Spain, set up the Barcelona IT Academy to develop and upgrade the digital skills of professionals in Barcelona.

Timeframe and funding	The programme was set up in 2017.
City population	1,620,000
Governing body	Barcelona City Council
Link	IT Academy - Aprende a programar en 12 semanas - Barcelona Activa (barcelonactiva.cat)

Main objectives

The key objective of the programme is:

- To promote job opportunities, reinforce competitiveness, promote social inclusion and reduce the gender gap in the digital sector.

Content and mode of delivery

The Barcelona IT Academy provides a two-fold IT training and learning offer. First, the academy offers reskilling courses and training for professionals outside the IT sector to address the digital skills gap and to provide them with job opportunities in the technology sector. Secondly, the academy offers lifelong learning activities to upskill professionals who already have IT knowledge to ensure that they maintain their employability. The Academy's training for professionals new to the IT sector applies an innovative learning method based on mentoring where an expert accompanies the student in his/her learning process. This learning process involves access to open educational resources, participation in simulation projects and peer-to-peer learning among students, which ensures that the learning process is personalised and adjusted to the progress of every student. In addition, this system allows new students to join the programme throughout the year, as soon as other students have found a job.

The Academy's use of online resources broadens and simplifies the possibilities of the learning offer. The online resources give students access to a wide range of current and high-quality information at a low cost, while simultaneously enabling individuals to monitor their own progress. This structure ensures a continuous improvement of both the students and the programme. The training of new IT professionals lasts around 350 hours and focuses on the most requested profiles in Barcelona: Front and Back-End Developers, Mobile developers and net developers. For existing IT professionals, the IT Academy provides short-term trainings (maximum of 20 hours), masterclasses with renowned professionals as well as networking and peer learning meetings amongst IT professionals.

Stakeholders

The IT Academy collaborates with IT companies in Barcelona to define training modules and provide job opportunities. In addition, Barcelona Active cooperates with universities and other academic institutions active in the technology sector and public and private institutions to promote Barcelona's work in the technology sector. Funded by the European Development Fund (ERDF), the training is free of charge to ensure that the programme promotes equal opportunities.

Key challenges, success factors & transferability

Since the Academy started in 2018, more than 1500 people have participated in its activities. Forty-three (43%) of the participants are women and 57% of these women are between 25 and 40 years old. 237 people have received reskilling training from the Academy, with 80% of them completing the training programmes. Out of the people who completed the training, 70% of them have found a job in the IT sector. One in 5 of these new IT workers are above 40 years old, which is highly significant given the challenges for older age groups reintegrating into the labour market. Moreover, 45% of the job contracts obtained by participants in reskilling courses are permanent jobs, and these jobs offer wages significantly higher than the average wage in other sectors. Furthermore, from a public policy perspective, the programme is cost-effective as the social security contributions of the new workers is triple the cost of training three people throughout the programme.

The success of the programme indicates the trust of companies in the quality of the programme, built through effective engagement with the IT business sector in Barcelona. In addition, the programme has been successful in addressing the challenge of designing a relevant training programme to meet the needs of the specific target groups and the labour market. The next challenge for the project is ensuring a proper scale-up and developing an effective communication strategy to reach more people.

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