



European  
Association  
of Regional  
and Local  
Authorities  
for Lifelong  
Learning

## **EARLALL WORK PLAN 2009-2010**

### **General aims:**

The Lisbon Agenda aims to make the EU the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, with lifelong learning being central in this process. High quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and vocational education and training are more important than ever. All our people must have the opportunity to develop the skills to enable them to meet the challenges of ever-evolving technologies, local pressures brought about by global economic changes, increasing internationalisation and demographic changes. Nowadays, lifelong learning encompasses the development of individuals from the youngest child to the oldest learner and is key to jobs and growth, as well as to allow everyone the chance to participate fully in society.

EARLALL aims to benefit learners, practitioners, institutions and policy makers in the European regions by:

- Seeking to influence Lifelong Learning policy development within the European Union;
- Facilitating cooperation between its members in order to promote the exchange of experiences and best practice between European regional and local authorities; and
- Encouraging the development of joint projects, many of which are supported by EU funding programs.

Our activities include the following:

- Common position papers and responses on consultations by the European Commission;
- Monitoring of EU policy developments; and
- Participation in EU-funded projects.

### **Achievements and Work to Date:**

#### **- Mobility of workers, trainees, researchers and students**

In March 2008 EARLALL organised an awareness-raising seminar in the Committee of the Regions where members, other interested regions, CoR members and Commission officials were present. One aim of the seminar was to create criteria offering transparency to mobility exchanges between EARLALL member regions in order for participants to be able to make an informed choice when choosing the destination of their work/study/traineeship. This Criteria for interregional mobility was subsequently adopted by Members at the October 08 General Assembly in Heidelberg.

A further aim in the area of mobility has been to support the signing of bilateral and multilateral mobility agreements between EARLALL members regions. Details of these agreements are available on the Association website.

EARLALL representatives also took part in the Mobility Conference in Bordeaux under the French Presidency, where the regional perspective was presented and well received.

### **- European Social Fund (ESF) and Transregional cooperation**

The 2007-2013 ESF programme offers increased opportunities for transregional cooperation for regions. EARLALL has raised awareness among its member regions and beyond, and supported project ideas and partner-search in the broadly understood area of Lifelong learning (ie not restricted to projects in EARLALL's priority areas).

In March 08, EARLALL organised an awareness-raising seminar on ESF and transnational cooperation. The programme included speeches about ESF structures in European various regions, as well as a project market place. Following the event, Commission representatives expressed interest in co-organising a further event focussed outside the EU15 Member States.

In April 09, the Association organised a further follow-up event focussed on regions from the newer EU Member States, which took place in Olomouc, Czech Republic. Participation was very good for this type of event in central Europe, and in addition to discussing ESF development issues, the event presented Earllall to representatives in the region – important given that some one third of EU population resided in this area.

### **- Entrepreneurship, Innovation and E-learning**

The aim in 2008 was to develop priority areas for the Association's future work, each with a particular focus/project. Regions which previously have expressed interest are: Innovation: South Denmark; E-learning: Basque Country and Entrepreneurship: Andalucia and Västra Götaland.

The October 08 General Assembly in Heidelberg was also devoted partly to e-learning and entrepreneurship and set the scene for further discussion for these two areas in early 2009. Following presentation of project proposals at the March 09 General Assembly, further work is now under consideration.

### **- Responses to EU Consultations**

EARLALL discussed a draft response to the EC's Green Paper on Migrant Education at the October 08 General Assembly in Heidelberg. This resulted in a revised response being submitted to the Commission at the end of December 08.

The Association commented on the EC's wide ranging Communication (December 07) on The Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Members felt, among other areas, that the document did not pay sufficient regard to the vital role of regions.

Many of the points noted in the EARLALL response to the EC's consultation on the ECVET proposals in March 07, have since been incorporated.

Further EARLALL contributions have been submitted on: the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) funding allocation; the EQF consultation; the LLP Transversal strand; general lifelong learning position statements; the development of the current ESF programme; and strengthening the lifelong learning dimension of the European Union's regional policy.

All responses can be viewed on the EARLALL website.

### **- Monitoring of EU Policy Development**

On mobility, during 2008 Members monitored the EC's High Level Working Group's recommendations and the Commissions' subsequent development of conclusions during the French Presidency. Given that the conclusions were broadly inline with the Association's agreed position, no formal commentary was necessary. However, in 09 the EU has since adopted mobility in one of its 4 strategic priorities for education and training, and also published a Green Paper on Youth Mobility – on which EARLALL is responding.

## **- Wider EARLALL Engagement**

Representatives of both the DG EMPL and DG EAC attended the March 08 General Assembly in Brussels.

Increased cooperation with the Committee of the Regions. Mr Kent Johansson was Rapporteur on ECVET and EQUAF during 08. Earlier in 08 EARLALL also involved the former Rapporteur on Adult Learning, Mrs Mary Shields, in discussions on the Association's work.

In September 08 the Board met Mrs Bulgarelli, Director General of CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) to discuss potential areas of cooperation. CEDEFOP expressed an interest in supporting and cooperating with EARLALL and contact points in both organisations were established.

In July 08, Mr Kent Johansson had a fruitful meeting with the President of FREREF (Fondation des Régions Européennes pour la Recherche en Education et en Formation), Mr Jean Vanoye. EARLALL was present at the Summer University in Thessaloniki in September 08, which was jointly organised by Cedefop and FREFEF.

A new information brochure was launched at the March 08 General Assembly.

## **Priority Themes for 2009-2010 – and Development of Working Groups:**

These proposed Priority Themes are presented in this document under 4 main headings. The content below is designed to focus debate and contributions from Member regions and local authorities, and does not exclude any other areas of business members wish to take forward through the Association.

### **- Mobility**

The theme of learner mobility will continue to be a priority of the EU throughout the coming years, particularly given its adoption as one of the 4 EU strategic priorities for education and training earlier this year. Indeed, at a time of global economic downturn, with the consequent pressures on local employment, it is more important than ever that our young people are equipped with the skills and experience necessary to make them more mobile in the labour market. This theme, therefore, will continue to feature strongly within EARLALL's work. A number of member regions have signed bilateral or multilateral agreements for student mobility, and this needs to be further expanded to incorporate more partner regions, greater volumes of participating students and more variety in the type of mobility action (eg work placement, training placement, practitioner mobility, virtual mobility etc). EARLALL will continue to play an important role in facilitating this.

EARLALL also needs to consider ways in which it can better support the development of member regions' mobility actions. Currently, model bilateral agreements and criteria for transparency in mobility are available. The Mobireg project also produced some useful tools – such as the Mobireg website – for which the Association needs to develop and facilitate implementation. A number of Members are already seriously exploring the area of sector based mobility, which while maintaining activity within the Lifelong Learning field, encompasses a more horizontal approach involving social partners, in addition to student placement activities. The Association can also broker specific activity in areas such as: dissemination of current good practice (building on the 12 Ldv projects); the development of pre-placement materials; the production of information / guidance documents on student mobility within specific regions; facilitating virtual mobility actions; partner search requests etc. In addition, it is expected that EARLALL should be able to record and disseminate electronically information on Member's mobility agreements and plans.

The Association is establishing a Working Group of interested member regions and local authorities to take forward this work. Members interested in participating in this work should contact the EARLALL Business Manager in the first instance.

## **- Gender**

The issue of gender identity impacts in different regions in different ways, and has been noted as a priority area for consideration under the Swedish Presidency in the second half of 09. The findings of the 1<sup>st</sup> European Conference on Politics and Gender in Belfast (21-23 January 09) could help inform the development of EARLALL's network, which was discussed at the General Assembly in March 09. EARLALL Members should seek to contribute to EU thinking on the issue, particularly through participation in Presidency events.

The Association is establishing a Working Group of interested member regions and local authorities, including the involvement of non-member organisations in specific project activity. Members interested in participating in this work should contact the EARLALL Business Manager in the first instance.

## **- Distance / E-Learning**

Discussion at the October 08 General Assembly highlighted a wide range of issues in this area for future consideration and potential collaboration. These include areas such as platform development, product sharing, open source platforms and pedagogical issues. Member regions presented project ideas at the March 09 General Assembly – and members will wish to now consider interested in developing this work further through a possible 'virtual' Working Group.

## **- Employability**

Within Member regions and across the EU more generally, education and training policy is increasingly being linked more closely to better preparation of our young people and adults for the world of work. The Council of Ministers, for example, have stressed the need to integrate school and work – education and labour policies. EARLALL has a role in facilitating the transfer of policy and programme ideas and good practice between Members, most notably through the SMOC project. Indeed, some bilateral agreements and action are already starting to take place between Member regions. Areas for consideration can include work culture, curriculum review, entrepreneurship programmes, transfer of innovation activity, engagement of social partners etc. The theme can be considered to broadly encompass work underway in most Member regions and, therefore, provide the opportunity to promote a high level of joint programme development.

## **- EU Funding Programmes – ESF and LLP**

Member regions and local authorities are already becoming aware of increased discussion across Europe on the future shape and focus of key European Union funding programmes, such as the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) after 2013. Discussions are also likely to take place during the Spanish EU Presidency in review of the current LLP programme. In the light of current financial difficulties, the importance of fit for purpose and accessible EU funding for lifelong learning has been notably highlighted. There is a need, therefore, for EARLALL to develop a considered view towards the development of these programmes and engage in active lobbying of EU institutions to ensure that the view of Member Regions and Local Authorities are properly taken into account.

The Association is, therefore, establishing a Working Group of interested Member Regions and Local Authorities to take forward this work. The Working Group will be led by Kent Johansson from Region Västra Götaland, and any interested Members should contact West Sweden officials or the EARLALL Business Manager.

## **General Objectives and Measures for 2009-2010:**

**- Increased interaction with the European Commission (DG EAC and DG EMPL), the Committee of the Regions and CEDEFOP**

The Association needs to ensure continued cooperation with the Commissioners' Cabinets, preferably through joint action on specific project or areas of activity. Any changes in individuals should be mapped by the EARLALL Business Manager, and efforts made under the new EARLALL Presidency to develop close working relationships with key decision makers.

Contact with CEDEFOP should be maintained, with CEDEFOP representatives to be routinely invited to attend General Assemblies and, where the agenda is relevant, to specific Board meetings. Work with CEDEFOP should also continue to be promoted with Member regions and progressed through the SMOC and Precoll projects.

The Association President will continue to meet CoR representatives on a regular basis and, where relevant, EARLALL Members will assist the work of CoR.

Likewise, links with other lifelong learning associations, such as FREREF, will be developed.

#### **- Monitoring the decision-making process and taking key initiatives**

EARLALL Members and Secretariat, will continue to monitor all relevant EC lifelong learning initiatives, with particular regard to the development of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the use of the transregional elements of the European Social Fund programmes. The Board and General Assembly will continue to receive quarterly EU policy updates, which will also be made available on the EARLALL website. All Members will be given the opportunity to promote and contribute to EARLALL responses to EC consultations and initiatives – and are encouraged to participate in the Working Groups on the development of EARLALL policy and project proposals.

#### **- Work related to EU Presidencies**

EARLALL will follow the work programmes of EU Presidencies and identify opportunities to influence the policy making process. The Association is including key speakers from both the Swedish and the Spanish Presidencies in the General Assembly programme for October 09 in Göteborg – and Members from Spain are already committed to using their contacts to further EARLALL's agreed policy positions.

#### **- Increasing the number of EARLALL members**

EARLALL's objective to be a strong and influential organisation requires an increasing number of members, which is being realised year on year. Recruiting new members is an ongoing process which needs to be pursued in a structured manner – and the new Presidency will be working closely with the EARLALL Business Manager in taking this forward, with particular emphasis on increasing Membership from France and the newer EU Member States.

#### **- Involving our members**

In order for EARLALL to benefit from the diversity of its members, and for its members to benefit from their EARLALL membership, the importance of members being involved in work the priority areas highlighted in this Workplan needs to be emphasised. Amendments to the Association's structure and working practices are being presented to the October 09 General Assembly made to facilitate this.

Updated September 2009

**EARLALL CALENDAR OF EVENTS: 2008-2010**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>ORGANISER</b>
7/02/2008	BOARD	BRUSSELS	EARLALL
26/02/2008	SEMINAR, INFORMAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION	BRUSSELS	WALES
27/03/2008	GENERAL ASSEMBLY	BRUSSELS	EARLALL/COR
27-28/03/2008	SEMINARS ON MOBILITY IN EUROPE" AND "TRANSREGIONAL COOPERATION IN ESF	BRUSSELS	EARLALL/COR
25/09/2008	MEETING WITH MRS BULGARELLI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CEDEFOP	THESSALONIKI	EARLALL/CEDEFOP
9-11/10/2008	GENERAL ASSEMBLY	HEIDELBURG, BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG	EARLALL/ BADEN- WÜRTTEMBERG
23 JANUARY 2009	BOARD	BRUSSELS	EARLALL
26 MARCH 2009	GENERAL ASSEMBLY	BRUSSELS	EARLALL/COR
28-29 APRIL 2009	SEMINAR ON ESF TRANSNATIONAL	OLOMOUC, CZECH REPUBLIC	EARLALL
3 JULY 2009	BOARD	GRANADA	EARLALL
30 SEPTEMBER 2009	BOARD	GOTHENBURG	EARLALL
1 OCTOBER 2009	GENERAL ASSEMBLY	GOTHENBURG	EARLALL
2 OCTOBER 2009	GENERAL ASSEMBLY - SEMINARS	GOTHENBURG	EARLALL/VGR

**EARLALL ACTION PLAN: 2009-2010**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Use of the Swedish EU Presidency	Prepare proposals to maximise EARLALL participation in official programme...	1 October 09	Region Västra Götaland	Key speakers included in GA programme
Mobility	Consider and prepare proposals on how best to support Member mobility actions	15 Dec 09	Mobility Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals for Mobility Working Group prepared for Oct GA</li> <li>Draft response to EU Green Paper prepared for Oct 09 GA</li> <li>Initial findings on EARLALL scoping study to be presented at Oct 09 GA</li> </ul>
Mobility	Publish details of bilateral agreements on EARLALL website	End Oct 09	Business Manager	Requests for information issued – currently compiling details. Summary to be included in EARLALL response to EU Green Paper.
Mobility	Develop proposals on how to roll-out Mobireg project website for use by EARLALL members	March 10	Mobility Working Group	
Mobility	Prepare and circulate to Members information on proposed ESF/LLP mobility event for employed people – to include linking to Oct 09 GA	1 October 09	Region Västra Götaland	Event incorporated into ‘reacting to the crisis’ seminar on 2 October
EuroregionSkills	Prepare and circulate to Members a paper on proposals for this new initiative	tbc	Basque Country	Paper was presented at March 09 GA. Basque Country to confirm current situation regarding this proposal
Gender	To prepare and circulate a paper to all Members on remit and funding for the Working Group / network	Tbc	Tuscany	Network under development
Distance Learning	To consider proposals presented at the March 09 General Assembly – and possible working group	March 10	Board	Feedback from Oct 09 GA to determine interest in a Working Group.
SMOC	To facilitate Policy Learning and Policy Transfer actions through use of EU funded project.	March 11	Business Manager	SMOC project approved and underway. Partner currently planning study visits.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Prevalet Project	To evidence value in regional and local authority level strategic policy making in the lifelong learning field, through EU funded project.	March 10	Tuscany	Project approved and underway. Partner meetings taken place, parameters agreed (with useful input from CEDEFOP) and study visits currently being planned.
Expand Board	To bring forward proposals to Oct GA for an increased Board to reflect increased size of EARLALL and to engage wider participation from membership	1 October 09	Southern Denmark	Paper prepared, considered by TG and Board, and presented to Oct 09 GA
Facilitate changes in Membership	Develop training and welcome information etc for new members to EARLALL and when politicians or key officials change.	March 10	Technical Group	TG considering the 'welcome pack'. Board already agreed that President should write in cases of political changes.
Change Membership structure	Develop proposals for a revised membership structure better representing current levels and type of membership	1 October 09	Board	Outline proposals presented at March 09 GA – and brought forward for ratification at Oct 09 GA for 4 tier membership structure, with definition based on 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier of elected representation within the Member State.
Develop Website	Further development of EARLALL website to ensure that all members can easily access details of Board meetings and Gas, minutes, policy papers, project proposals, EU policy updates and the workplan.	December 09	Technical Group	Work already underway on the technicalities. Some additional information already being placed on the site – but needs to be made more user friendly. Consider whether separate section on reacting to the crisis would be useful to facilitate policy sharing?
Revised Brochure	Update EARLALL Brochure following Board elections for use with new EU contacts and potential new members.	March 10	Technical Group	New brochure to reflect working groups and agreed workplan. Also to promote revised website as main source of information.
Increase Membership	To approach potential new members which have expressed an interest in the Association	Sept 09	Business Manager	Specific potential new members to be invited to the Oct GA – and key members asked to discuss membership with them.
Scoping Study on reacting to the crisis	Following discussion at the March 09 GA, EARLALL to commission short study on how it can aid membership in responding to the current economic situation	Nov 09	Wales	Study approved by Board in July 09 – commissioned – and initial results due for presentation at Oct 09 GA.