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Policies for REgional COoperation in the field of Lifelong Learning

Building a broad strategy for the next European planning period

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Presentation

As the Committee of the Regions maintains: any important strategic community reform must be accompanied by a territorial plan of action, it must be founded on multilevel governance, i.e. on coordinated action of the Union, of the Member States and of the regional and local entities founded on partnership and aimed at defining and implementing EU policies.

This is why Earlall and the Member Governments are committed to drawing up this Policy Paper, the purpose of which is to identify the contribution that the Regions can make in implementing European strategy in the field of lifelong learning within the framework of European cooperation in the education and training sector in the 2020 perspective.

The conclusions of the Lisbon Strategy evaluation documents published by the Commission on 2nd February 2010 also aim at this. The Commission also recognises that the Lisbon Strategy did not have the necessary tools for dealing with some of the causes of the crisis. Thus, between commitments and concrete actions there is an implementation gap and it points out how the involvement of regional, local and social partners was less significant than what was due; even though in the sectors concerned by the Lisbon Strategy the regional and local actors often had important political competences and considerable resources.

The response of 120 regional governments to the consultation on Europe 2020 gave precise indications about some of the decisions to be taken on the matter: it deals with "reinforcing the role of regional and local authorities in the strategy, in order to guarantee a full and equal partnership among the various government levels, i.e. "multilevel governance".

In the lifelong learning field, many regional and local authorities demand important competences since they are the institutional subjects that can make a significant contribution to creating in loco reforms. The same can be said for educational and innovation policies, infrastructures, the job market, social inclusion, the environment, high quality public services and ICT policy.

An analysis of the regional policies described in the first part of this document shows how the regional governments have an essential role regarding:

- Qualifying the offer of competences
- Reform and qualification of training systems
- Preparation of such duties through governance that implies the commitment of all public and private actors.

In order to strengthen the role of the regional governments, Earlall laid out a plan of action aimed at strengthening interregional cooperation opportunities:

- To reinforce dialogue with European institutions about lifelong learning;
- To operate on priorities such as:
 - a. Creating European instruments that encourage mobility between Regions for purposes of study and work;
 - b. Increasing the quality of our education and training systems;
 - c. Taking as a common priority the reduction of the number of people with low skill levels: 77 million is an unsustainable quantity;
 - d. Encouraging the development of businesses;
 - e. Opening forms of mutual learning by implementing regional strategies of lifelong learning.

These are the ideas that inspire the actions that Earlall will initiate over the next two years thanks to the direct commitment of the member regional governments.

Gianfranco Simoncini - President of Earlall

European cohesion regarding the 2020 targets is dependant on the policies adopted at the regional level and the nature of common goals.

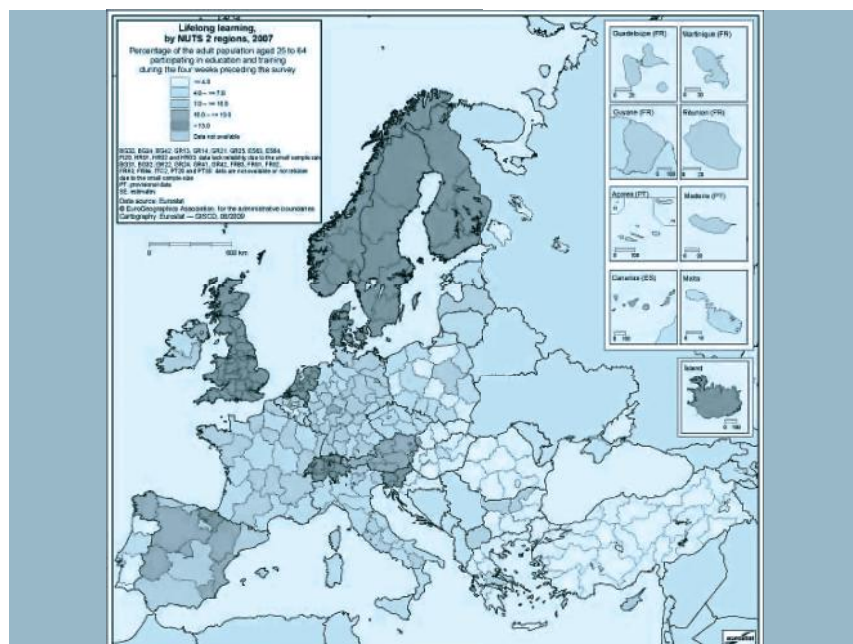
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1. Implementing lifelong learning strategies remains a challenge for all Member States and European Regions.

The differences between Member States in reaching European benchmarks are even more pronounced if we consider progress at the regional level.

The data shows how regional diversities coexist within Member States, characterised by opposing trends which make differences even greater.

Even more problematic is the difficulty of comparing regional results in different countries.



Tab. 1 – Lifelong learning Benchmark: Major distances among Regions (Nuts) per Countries.

Countries	Region with higher performance		Region with lower performance	
AT	Wien	15,1	Burgenland	10,8
BE	Région de Bruxelles-Capitale / Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest	10,4	Hainaut	3,7
BG	Yugozapaden	2,7	Yuzhen tsentralen	0,7
CH	Zürich	29,6	Ticino	24,2
CY	Kypros / Kibris	8,4	-----	---
CZ	Praha	9,7	Moravskoslezsko	4,3
DE	Berlin	10,7	Chemnitz	5,7
DK	Hovedstaden	33,2	Nordjylland	26,4
EE	Eesti	7	-----	---
ES	Comunidad Foral de Navarra	13,3	Cantabria	7,6
FI	Etelä-Suomi	24,9	Åland	20
FR	Bretagne	9,2	Poitou-Charentes	5,9
GR	Attiki and Kentriki Makedonia	2,7	Peloponnisos	1
HR	Sjeverozapadna Hrvatska	3	Jadranska Hrvatska	1,8
HU	Közép-Magyarország	5,4	Nyugat-Dunántúl	2,5
IE	Southern and Eastern	8,1	Border, Midland and Western	6,2
IS	Island	27	-----	---
IT	Provincia Autonoma Trento	9,6	Sicilia	4,9
LT	Lietuva	5,3	-----	---
LU	Luxembourg (Grand-Duché)	7	-----	---
LV	Latvija	7,1	-----	---
MT	Malta	6	-----	---
NL	Groningen	18,7	Zeeland	14,6
NO	Oslo og Akershus	21,2	Hedmark og Oppland	15,2
PL	Mazowieckie	8,3	Łódzkie	3,5
PT	Centro	5,6	Alentejo	3,5
RO	București – Ilfov	1,7	Sud-Est/Sud – Muntenia/Sud-Vest Oltenia	1,1
SE	Småland med öarna	34	Sydsverige	29,8
SL	Zahodna Slovenija	16,2	Vzhodna Slovenija	13,3
SK	Bratislavský kraj	12,7	Východné Slovensko	1,8
TR	Antalya	2,6	Manisa	0,7
UK	Inner London	26,2	Northern Ireland	10,4

Source: Eurostat Regional Yearbook (2009), Statistical annexes.

This shows that creating a European and state strategic framework must be followed by the inception, programming and implementation of policies at regional level.

Lack of progress at the regional level undermines European cohesion. Only an advance on a broad front towards the European objectives will avoid the risk of European objectives being achieved by increasing the imbalance between Regions.

The regional and local level is the one most suited to understanding the results of ongoing efforts and for building adequate solutions.

This is because, aside from institutional differences, regional governments often have legal powers and control programme delivery.

In addition, and along with provincial and municipal authorities, regional governments make available and manage considerable elements of the financial and material resources necessary for effective lifelong learning provision.



The form of the State is divided in three types:

1. Federal states

"In practice it is not easy to distinguish the competences"

2. Regionalized states

"Some Regions have legislative power some others are limited to administration".

Spain: *The actual organisation of the Spanish political model provides the seventeen autonomous Regions in Spain with independent competences in the education field.*

Educational responsibilities have been transferred and developed by the 17 regional governments (Autonomous Communities). The management of financial and human resources of all levels of public education except for University is the responsibility of the Regional Education Authority.

3. Unitary states

"In unitary states there exists only administrative self-government at provincial and local levels of government". In Southern Europe local governments were subject to close control by the central government. In Northern Europe there was a stronger tradition of local autonomy or self-government.

Sweden's 290 municipalities are run according to national legislative and regulatory frameworks. Municipal responsibility for schools is based on the Swedish commitment to self-government and democracy. Among their duties, municipalities:

- Provide preschool activities and education for their residents.
- Set goals and make decisions about preschools and other education.
- Set priorities and allocate resources.
- Fund independent schools for students registered in the municipality.
- Act as the employer for teachers and other school staff.

Source: Quotations from European University Institute, Study on the Division of powers between the European Union, the Member States and Regional and Local Authorities, 2008.

2

2. Regions are already engaged in developing **comprehensive and coherent strategies**.

Their close proximity to the challenges of economic and social growth and its main actors, encourages strategies that increase the correspondence of education and training policies with respect to the demand for training throughout life.

The experience of regional governments shows how this has already produced trends useful for building a concrete strategy.

That is why the Committee of the Regions urges the EU for **multilevel governance**, as “coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities, based on partnership and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies”.



Generalitat de Catalunya

In 2009 the Catalan Parliament approved the *Education Law of Catalonia* that includes the following among its main objectives:

- The quality of education, which enables the achievement of basic skills and achieving excellence, in a context of equity.
- Promoting entrepreneurship.
- The fostering of education beyond school.
- Lifelong learning.

Regione Toscana

Details about integrated planning in the sector of education, instruction, guidance, vocational training and work are provided by the political organisation of the Tuscan Regional Government, which, in this case, provides for one decision-making body at Ministry level, representing the uniformity of policies and controls their application in terms of territorial *governance*. The instruments that come together to form the decision-making processes are represented by the bodies provided for by Law 32/2002 and the consultation promoted by the local bodies and with representative organisations in the territory, such as cultural associations and organisations, the third sector (Regional Law 41/2005), sports clubs and training agencies.

The 2006-2010 Integrated General Guidance Plan (IGI) of the Tuscany Regional Government concerning education, instruction, guidance, vocational training and work is the instrument provided for by the Regional Law no. 32 of 26 July 2002 with the subject "*Consolidation Act of the legislation of the Tuscany Regional Government concerning education, instruction, guidance, vocational training and work.*" By means of this law, the regional government pursues the Lisbon Strategy to create an innovative, competitive and socially cohesive society, based on knowledge, the development of human capital and the creation of stable and skilled work. The Guidance Plan incorporates the strategy of lifelong learning and is structured by integrated specific objectives that identify operating purposes to be achieved through structured measures in relation to the range of ages of the Tuscan people.

Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

Strategic level planning is undertaken by the WAG in conjunction with operational planning by 22 Welsh Local Education Authorities (LEAs) – part of the local authority network – for schools. Planning relates to demographics, and also includes careers advice and guidance from primary school play based activities.

Strategic level planning is also undertaken by the WAG for tertiary, vocational training (institutional and work-based), adult continuing education, higher education (universities), and all-age careers advice and guidance. Planning relates to assessed needs of employers, local areas and individuals.

Jämtland County Council

To reach the objectives set out in ET 2020, an operative programme for lifelong learning in the Region will be produced during 2010. This programme will take various variables into account, such as the situation on the labour market, the distribution of age groups, and the scarcely populated areas of the Region.

3

3. Simple everyday or emergency management is not enough to guarantee that policies produce the necessary innovation.

The basic problem is choosing **strategic goals that are suitable and important**, not just for the training system, but that can also construct a quality lifelong learning environment open to everyone.

Welsh Assembly Government

Skills For A Prosperous Wales. Lead the contribution that the post-16 education and training system makes towards the achievement of a highly-educated, highly-skilled, high-employment Wales by identifying and prioritising the knowledge and skills needs of employers, learners, communities and WAG; and by driving education and training institutions to be flexible, of high quality, and responsive to national and local needs.

Comprehensive regional strategies

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4. The crucial task for regional strategies is to align the skills and competences of the working population with the economic and social growth ambitions of the Region and its various territories.

It is a strategic goal requiring, first of all, **increased training demand** and the direct commitment of all the Region's citizens.

Three regional policies appear particularly effective in increasing training demand. These are policies aimed to:

4.1

4.1. Encourage all citizens to take **one step ahead** in their training, regardless of their level. Such action can help spread acquisition of basic competences, reduce the numbers of low-skilled people in the Region, and help to raise the level of all types of competences: mathematics, science, technology. The aim of this policy is to provide each citizen with a goal for their personal growth and encourage them to achieve it.

Generalitat de Catalunya

To align the skills and competences of the working population with the economic and social growth ambitions of Catalonia, the Government is applying the "2nd General Plan for Vocational Education and Training in Catalonia". The period of application of this plan is 4 years, from 2007 to 2010. The plan draws the guidelines allowing the accomplishment of this plan into an integrated, coherent system, linked to the needs of labour market, and to improve the quality of its offer.

The plan contains:

3 priority lines:

- Adaptation and innovation of the VET mechanisms and resources to the new requirements of the Catalan economy.
- Consolidation of the integrated system of qualifications and vocational training.
- Promotion of the acknowledgement and the social value of Vocational Training.

10 objectives:

- To increase training and qualification levels of the working population.
- To promote the adaptation and innovation of the educational offer.
- To promote “transnationality” within the European Qualification Framework and to promote the learning mobility for VET students.
- To encourage entrepreneurship .
- Development and application of measures to integrate the training and qualification system.
- To encourage social acknowledgement of Vocational Training.
- To develop the tools, information criteria and guidance that allow general access to system users.
- To improve tools in training quality.
- To improve the continuous training of teachers.
- To promote the social value and qualification of vocational training in the enterprise context.

38 key actions:

Every objective has several key actions that impact more directly in its execution. The list of these key actions has not been included as it is extensive.

10 indicators:

These indicators serve to evaluate the management of every objective. Several of these indicators are managed with reference to European indicators.

Annually the plan is evaluated by external consultants to monitor its evolution. Finally, at the end of its execution, the plan will be further evaluated by external consultants.

Jämtland County Council

In Jämtland there is a type of adult school (18+) called *Folk high schools*, which focus on people without qualifications from upper secondary school. Combined with studying other subjects, they can obtain qualifications that enable them to go on to higher education. The *Folk high schools* do not have a centrally established standard curriculum. Each school makes its own decisions regarding teaching plans, and they often offer a wide range of courses, from bible studies to mountaineering. The overall objective of the *Folk high schools* is to educate people in human rights and democracy, to give people a second chance through lifelong learning, work for cultural diversity and culture, sustainable development, and global equality. Another objective is to provide access to education for the disabled and the socially deprived.

4.2. Develop policies close to the citizens’ **life cycle**, accompanying them with training in the various transitions during their lifetime, at each phase of their lives, providing them the right, opportunity or duty to take advantage of appropriate opportunities. This is done by offering learning opportunities whose content and methods are specifically designed to respond to different individuals, phases and conditions. This policy guarantees continuity to the individual training demand and leads to adjusting the supply to the various professional and personal needs at different times in the citizens’ life.

4.2

Junta de Andalucía

- Making education and training accessible to all citizens throughout their lives and promoting basic skills and social inclusion where most needed: in prisons, social inclusion centres for youngsters; to reach social exclusion groups such as immigrants and people subject to addictions, low skilled, etc.
- Promoting access to learning through: the implementation of an efficient strategy of *quality services and resources* (access to the internet, personal computers, didactic resources and tools).
- Flexibility and variety in the offer: by means of the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Flexible modular pathways. Grants for those needing economical support.
- *Innovation in communication* (use of ICT to spread blended and e-learning, to reach isolated areas or as an alternative for those lacking time to go to adult centres) and *methodology* (learning by doing!). This has been reinforced with a recent policy measure (ICT School 2.0) through which all primary students and teachers in their last two school years and all secondary students and teachers will be provided with laptops, electronic blackboards and quick access to the "Internet" in the classrooms.

On the one hand, to avoid *Early school leavers* the Ministry of Education has implemented the Basic Vocational Qualification Programmes - *programas de cualificación profesional inicial* (P.C.P.I) to allow students with low performance to get a professional qualification of Level I, together with the opportunity to obtain and continue their training in vocational training Level II. Also direct access to lower level Vocational Training for adults with no certification after an upgrading test, has been implemented.

On the other hand, the e-learning programme for adults has been a great success as most adult centres have been equipped with Internet access and didactic resources located in a LSM (Learning System Management Moodle) for over 30,000 face to face course students; around 25,000 e-learning blended students preparing for the secondary and postsecondary education certificate, and around 5,000 e-learning between VET, secondary and postsecondary courses. To do this (to reach everybody everywhere) there has been a great effort to develop adapted material for the new technical tools and virtual classrooms.

Jämtland County Council

In order to provide training, education and careers guidance to adult learners in the Region, a network called *LärCentrum* has been formed. The aim is to make learning accessible and to provide a large number of educational opportunities. LärCentrum provides an opportunity for adults (18+) to study in a friendly and quiet environment. The centres, which are located in each of the eight municipalities of the Region, offer a wide range of courses, delivered through traditional teaching methods as well as blended learning or distance courses in order to suit the individual student's needs. LärCentrum also helps to evaluate students' competence and working experience through a governmental validation programme. LärCentrum has a large network within education and the business world and can guide students or students' employers to the right education to develop their professional skills.

Livorno Province

With respect to the increase of training demand, an important tool for the Province of Livorno to prompt all citizens to take one step ahead in their training, regardless of their level, has been the setting up of five Trio (Technology, Innovation, Orientation/Guidance) centres in the Province. From the 1st January 2009, in fact, the management of the TRIO network – the web distance learning system of the Tuscany Region that provides products and training services completely free, accessible and open to everyone - was transferred from the Region to the Provinces. Provincia di Livorno Sviluppo Srl manages the five

centres on behalf of the Province of Livorno (www.plis.it). In the Province of Livorno two of the five Trio centres have been constituted within the Provincial Administration offices. This new structure allows, for its proximity to Livorno Job Centre, a “just in time” service for its users. In particular, in this moment of “crisis” in the labour market the Trio network has become an important tool for people who benefit from “redundancy payments”, in order to reinforce their competences and to orientate them towards other sectors. The tutor helps users to choose the more suitable course for them and then they can have access to that on line course via a username and a password. Ad hoc programmes focused, above all, on information technology and Italian language will be provided.

4.3. Increasing the propensity for training through obligations or financial and material incentives, and by providing information and guidance services. This policy will increase the trend to invest in training, create synergy between public and private investment and make people and companies take responsibility for training.

4.3

Regione Toscana

The individual voucher is a tool aimed at implementing lifelong learning policies and reducing differences in terms of opportunities and growth in the labour market. It is a general tool applicable to all age groups. Its ability to increase the flexibility and open up access conditions to the different training opportunities supports the individualisation processes of the courses. The tool is split into different methods that include *Individual Learning Accounts (prepaid cards)*, which, on the one hand, enable the reduction of differences in terms of training opportunities and, on the other hand, the promotion of the creation of a training demand policy capable of stimulating individuals, especially the lesser motivated. Another method that includes the use of vouchers is provided by *training vouchers* promoting training courses for the employed from the point of view of continuous training. Another important method is represented by *mediation vouchers*. These vouchers were established as a measure aimed at supporting the involvement and constancy of women in the working world through tools capable of providing support to mediation between family and professional life. Other similar methodologies apply to postgraduate training and measures in the area of technological innovation.

Vidin Regional Government

Voucher system of training - From November, 2009 the Employment Agency has accepted applications from training institutions which want to run courses for professional qualifications and/or key competences, financed with vouchers under the “Human Resources Development” Operational programme. This is a voucher mechanism for payment of services connected with acquiring professional qualifications and key competences. It can be used either by unemployed or employed people. The distribution of the vouchers has already begun, with the greatest demand being for vouchers in languages and computer literacy.

Welsh Assembly Government

Promotional learning campaigns, such as Adult Learners’ Week, are used to increase the propensity for training and education. Such campaigns involve local delivery of ‘taster sessions’ and other events within the framework of a regional marketing and promotions strategy. The campaigns are primarily targeted as those who have missed out on previous educational opportunities and incorporate a number of themes such as Learning at Work day.