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SMOC-Soft Open Method of Coordination
from Prevalet

**Joint progress report of Regions on the implementation
of European Lifelong Learning Strategies
- Towards Multilevel Governance -**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seven regional European Governments have undertaken to refine a first draft of a *Joint Progress Report of Regions on Implementation of European Lifelong Learning Strategies* in the perspective of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Hence the proposal to European institutions and to the community of Regional Governments to permanently guarantee the availability of similar instruments supporting improvement of the quality and impact of regional policies on human resource development.

This is a service which certainly can be improved, aimed at demonstrating the usefulness and need to make available to Regional Governments in Europe an instrument that aids understanding and evaluating the educational conditions of the regional population when compared to other regions. Simultaneously this Report is useful to identify the strategies and policies that have produced the best results, and aimed at the likelihood of being transferred and/or adapted to other regional contexts.

The meaning behind this job lies in the fact that achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy's goals will be the result of the sum of what has been achieved in the various territorial communities, and not only by Member States. Pursuing a strategy of economic and social cohesion is useful for aiding balanced, harmonious and sustainable development. One territory's failure has repercussions on the chances for growth of the others. This consideration is further supported by the fact that the Regional and Local Governments – even the ones with limited powers – constitute the institutions from which the determination of conditions for implementing national and European strategies depends and expressing the willingness of the territories to commit themselves to development goals. In the countries where the Regional Governments have legislative and financial powers, the determination of strategies, policies and measures depends on them. If there are strategic goals to be achieved on at European level, regional Governments must necessarily participate directly in their implementation, using all the support instruments available to them.

The proposal from the regions, in addition to producing a Joint Progress Report of regions on the Implementation of European Lifelong Learning Strategies, also concerns the need to promote structured forms of interregional cooperation, inspired by a model of the Simplified Open Method of Coordination (hence the SMOC proposal) that would unify comparison of indicators and benchmarks on the analysis of policies and measures (www.mutual-learning.eu) to activate policy learning and policy transfer processes.

The Report shows how, over the decade, all Regional Governments have undertaken to adapt training systems to the demographic dynamics characterised by the general ageing population and by migratory phenomena. This has put policies before the task of increasing the effectiveness and quality of the training system in order to ensure an adequate competent supply in response to the requirements of regional economic development. Simultaneously, the Report also shows the need for urgent improvements in some fields, where the impact of policies is still too modest, and where there is a need to cope with the risk of stagnation (for example: lifelong learning policies and the reduction strategy for those Not in Education, Employment or Training -NEET).

Lastly, the comparison between regions with varying indexes for accessing education and training means that European strategies need to have their own adaptation in a regional context. This confirms the evaluation of the Committee of the Regions, according to which the territorial cohesion sphere of application must take into account three dimensions: a corrective one, aimed at “reducing existing inequalities”; a preventive one, aimed at making “more coherent the sector policies that have a territorial impact”; and an incentivating dimension, aimed at “improving territorial integration” and promotion (Committee of the Regions, 2009:24).

As far as **participation rates of 4-year-olds in education** are concerned, the growth trend in accessing services for infancy is generalised, even though evident, important performance differences remain. Progress during the decade shows that various types of regional policies are characterised by:

- maintenance of high standards of participation;
- rapid development of access (with a 2-3 percent increase per year) .

Current trends show the possibility of achieving European goals, and shifting attention to the efficiency and educational quality of services for infancy – in addition to maintenance policies.

As far as **pupils and students in upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education** are concerned, after 2005 there has been a general trend towards stagnation and a slight decrease in enrollment. Nevertheless this data must be examined along with the data regarding demographic change, enrollments at the tertiary level, and on the levels of employment of young people in the same age ranges. Depending on the regions, the following trends are recorded:

- rapid insertion on the job market for students who do not continue university studies;
- increasing and consistent transition towards university studies;
- orientation by young people towards post-secondary non-tertiary VET channels.

Concerning the **highest level of education attained: pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education**, presence of the low-skilled (population with highest level of education attained being pre-primary, primary and lower secondary) is still important in all regions. It never drops below 20% of the population over 15 years of age. In many cases the percentage is between 30% and 50% and in one case it is above 60%.

In absolute values and percentages, the presence of low-skilled labour is a problem that cannot be solved, for the following reasons:

- in the regions with more than 50% of low-skilled workers, the decrease is less than 2-3% per year, therefore it has a “natural” progress linked to demographic phenomena;
- otherwise, there are regions where the decrease is about 5%. These are regions where low-skilled workers are between 30% to 50%;
- in the regions where low-skilled workers are less than 30%, a stagnation trend is found, with slight shifts that are not always positive.

This shows that there are policies capable of reducing the number of low-skilled workers of up to 25% of the population, but the ongoing trends in the decade do not show a higher impact capability in any region.

Concerning the **number of students in tertiary education (ISCED levels 5 and 6) as a percentage of the population 20–24 years old**, data shows a high level of participation, clearly higher than the percentage of population aged 25-64 having completed tertiary education. This should produce a progressive increase of the percentage, on condition that students currently enrolled end their studies with a positive outcome. Regional policies have a common goal: to increase the relationships between the tertiary education institutions and the job market and regional economy. The aim is to ensure an adequate supply of competence and accompany economic development with the support of correlated research centres.

As far as **youth employment** is concerned, data shows how the economic crisis has produced a drop in young people’s employment in all regions, even though to different extents. The employment drop varies between 1% and 6%. This drop has had a greater effect in the regions with lower rates of young people’s employment.

Regional policies aim at reducing economic inactivity first of all in young people seeking employment and those who intend developing their possibilities for employment. Nevertheless, even as a consequence of the economic crisis, and its effects of young people’s employment, there has been greater attention to young people who give up looking for a job and do not participate in any training (NEET). The measures adopted by Regional Governments are aimed at two fundamental goals: foster the encounter between labour demand and supply, and employability. At the same time, in view of the risk of qualified young people being underemployed, measures are taken that encourage mobility.

As far as **participation in lifelong learning** is concerned, data shows considerable growth in the early years of the decade, curbed after 2005 by an appreciable slowdown.

The opposite trend characterises data on non participation that, after a decrease in the early years of the decade, once again increases after 2005. In spite of the differences, the data that unites the various

regions is the high number of people excluded, and if it were even 2 million citizens, it is in any case about half a million in the regions with best performance. This is found at the end of a decade that has seen all countries committed to elaborating national strategies and plans of action, as well as using important public, European and national resources.

0. FOREWORD

The European Commission¹ states that “to achieve transformational change, the Europe 2020 strategy will need more focus, clear goals and transparent benchmarks for assessing progress. This will require a strong governance framework that harnesses the instruments at its disposal to ensure timely and effective implementation”. It also states that “regional and local authorities should implement the partnership, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, contributing to the elaboration of national reform programmes as well as to its implementation” (European Commission, 2010: 29 and 31).

This will only be possible, as the Committee of Regions warns, within a framework of multilevel governance. “The European Union’s capacity to perform its role and achieve Community objectives depends not only on its institutional organisation but also and above all on its mode of governance. The legitimacy, efficiency and visibility of the way the Community operates depend on contributions from all the various players. They are guaranteed if **local and regional authorities are genuine “partners”** rather than mere “intermediaries”² (Committee of the Regions, 2009:8).

Cooperation between regions is fundamental for implementing the Community goal of territorial cohesion, hence for the future of common policies. As the Committee of Regions mentions, the sphere of application of territorial cohesion must take three dimensions into account: a corrective one, aimed at the “reduction of existing inequalities”; a preventive one, that aims at making more coherent the “sectional policies that have a territorial impact”; and a stimulating dimension, aimed at the “improvement of territorial integration” and the promotion of cooperation (Committee of the Regions, 2009:24).

Reinforcement of the quality and effectiveness of cooperation between regions is the premise for overcoming some of the limits of the Lisbon Strategy and **adopting a Community strategy for more decentralised growth and employment**, which is founded on the potentials of the regions and cities that, by virtue of their competencies, are the main promoters of innovation, research and education in Europe (Committee of the Regions, 2009:22).

These are the basic reasons why we are committed as Regional Governments associated with EARLALL in building Soft Open Method of Coordination models capable of guaranteeing quality to the policy learning and policy transfer processes between regions.

At the same time, with this first benchmarking exercise among several of the Regional Governments that we propose here, our aim is to point out to the European institutions that there is an urgency to provide Regional Governments with instruments for cooperation, currently only available to Member States.

This is why EARLALL wants to start working on a tool that would be the prelude to producing a **Joint Progress Report of Regions on the Implementation of European Lifelong Learning Strategies within the Framework of Europe 2020**. European institutions should seriously consider the need for providing the European Union with this new instrument to be used in the everyday processes of cooperation between regions.

Gianfranco Simoncini

EARLALL President
Regional Minister of Economic Activities, Employment and Training-Regione Toscana

¹ European Commission (2010), *Europe 2020-A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, Communication, Brussels, 3.3.2010, COM(2010), Bruxelles, http://europa.eu/press_room/pdf/complet_en_barroso___007_-_europe_2020_-_en_version.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

² Committee of the Regions (2009).

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to attempt to produce a first and limited Joint Report on the implementation of European Lifelong Learning Strategies within the SMOC process.

The implementation of European strategies in the field of social policies (education and labour), and the evaluation of their impact, must be measured on a regional and local level. At that level, according to respective Member States' dimension and organisation, it is possible to define territorial strategies to select and manage different policy measures. Moreover, a cohesive strategy must involve the regional and local level also in the field of lifelong learning and labour policies.

Benchmarking at the State level gives relevant orientation and evaluation elements for State strategies. In fields where Regional and Local Governments play a fundamental role, benchmarking and the processes and practices of improvement through policy learning and policy transfer have to be supported with ad-hoc European tools, like Joint Progress Reports.

At present this kind of support is not yet readily available: limited quantitative data is elaborated at the regional level. Regional Governments are not institutionally involved with the process of goal setting and results evaluation at the European level. That is why, through this partial and modest exercise involving just seven Regional Governments, we want to stress the need to encourage interregional cooperation and to support it with tools whose relevance is fundamental. Through this process greater legitimacy will be evident in the implementation of European strategies.

The **Regional Governments involved in this Joint Report** are: Severozapaden (Bulgaria), Syddanmark (Denmark), País Vasco (Spain), Toscana (Italy), Steiermark (Austria), Västsverige (Sweden), Wales (United Kingdom).

The Report is divided into four chapters including the following contents:

- The Introduction to the Report explaining the background and the rationale for it.
- The analysis of quantitative results obtained over the current decade in the participating regions. In this chapter only policy fields supported by historical statistical data provided by the Eurostat Database have been analysed. The aim of this chapter is to describe and evaluate the medium term trends and influencing factors. The evaluation has been undertaken by each Regional Government concerned. It also contains an analysis on the position of each region according to particular European Indicators:
 - Participation in education.
 - Participation of 4-years-olds in education at regional level.
 - Pupils and students in education.
 - Youth Employment.
 - Participation in lifelong learning.
- How to enhance the quality of interregional cooperation via the Soft Open Method of Coordination (SMOC).
- The Conclusions in terms of definition of some common points of view about the future efforts and the description of the policy learning and policy transfer processes undertaken by the Regional Governments about the experimented best practices and policy measures.

According to the data available on the Eurostat Database, the analysis refers to NUTS 2 level as it is considered the basic regions for the application of regional policies, consequently for Region Västra Götaland we make reference to Västsverige (NUTS 23, including also Hallands län) and for Vidin Region we make reference to Severozapaden Regions (NUTS 31, including also Montana, Vratsa, Pleven, Lovech).

To facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the data, the following Table provides data on the population levels in the seven regions over the last decade. It is noted that aside from the Severozapaden Regions, there is a general trend of steady population growth within the participating regions over the period. The

region of Southern Denmark was established the 1st of January 2007, which is the reason why there is no data from the previous years.

Tab.1. Population at 1st January 1999-2009

TIME	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO										
Severozapaden	916,054	929,872	943,664	957,947	974,704	991,165	1,007,734	1,024,611	1,067,180	1,081,257
Syddanmark	1,199,667	1,194,659	1,189,817	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Pais Vasco	2,136,061	2,138,739	2,124,235	2,113,052	2,103,441	2,094,909	2,087,972	2,082,258	2,076,441	2,070,279
Andalucía	8,150,467	8,046,131	7,917,397	7,794,121	7,670,365	7,552,978	7,452,598	7,360,469	7,303,603	7,241,668
Toscana	3,707,818	3,677,048	3,638,211	3,619,872	3,598,269	3,566,071	3,516,296	3,497,042	3,495,077	3,491,580
Steiermark	1,207,479	1,204,947	1,202,483	1,200,854	1,196,780	1,192,168	1,189,315	1,188,117	1,182,441	1,182,930
Västsverige	1,851,702	1,838,691	1,827,143	1,814,323	1,805,683	1,796,314	1,786,781	1,777,510	1,769,645	1,762,246
Wales	-	2,986,700	2,972,900	2,959,700	2,950,000	2,938,800	2,925,500	2,915,000	2,908,600	2,903,700

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat - Last update: 11-10-2010 [dem_r_d2jan]

2. RESULTS IN PARTICULAR POLICY AREAS

2.1. Participation in Education

2.1.1. Basic indicators

Tab.2. Number of students in all levels of education (ISCED 0-6) at regional level

	TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO										
Severozapaden		133,901	139,866	145,698	:	:	:	:	:	:
Syddanmark		303,411	124,082	122,238	:	:	:	:	:	:
Pais Vasco		423,232	418,750	416,096	414,120	405,630	397,203	400,315	409,192	417,935
Toscana		632,139	624,581	627,298	621,289	615,189	607,320	595,236	580,925	579,286
Steiermark		237,327	239,385	:	:	:	242,129	:	:	:
Västsverige		476,521	497,446	500,275	na	485,098	485,391	484,785	484,274	477,684
Wales		687,191	668,107	664,922	843,459	873,121	821,642	793,152	831,076	815,039

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat [educ_renrfrg1] Last update: 09-09-2010

Tab.3. Students in all levels of education (ISCED 0-6) - as a percentage of total population at regional level

	TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO										
Severozapaden		14.4	14.8	15.2	:	:	:	:	:	:
Syddanmark		25.4	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Pais Vasco		19.8	19.7	19.7	19.7	19.4	19.0	19.2	19.7	20.2
Toscana		17.2	17.2	17.3	17.3	17.3	17.3	17.0	16.6	16.6
Steiermark		19.7	19.9	:	:	:	20.3	:	:	:
Västsverige		25.9	27.2	27.6	Na	27.0	27.2	27.3	27.4	27.1
Wales		23.0	22.5	22.5	28.6	29.7	28.1	27.2	28.6	28.1

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat Last update: 01-06-2010

Table 2 describes the educational enrollment of regional populations, and their participation in lifelong learning. This reflects how education touches people throughout life in all regions.

Table 3 is related to the number of students in all levels of education as a percentage of the total population at regional level. This indicator reveals the number of individuals participating in education irrespective of the level in which they are enrolled.

The decade under consideration has seen all Regional Governments committed to adapting systems to the demographic dynamics characterised by the general ageing of the population and by migratory phenomena both inwards and outwards. This phenomenon has placed policies before the duty to intensify the effectiveness and quality of the training system in order to ensure an adequate supply of competence capable of guaranteeing the workforce turnover. This is why some regions are committed to reinforcing the measures of accessing training from pre-primary school to adult education (the Basque Country and Styria), the commitment to diversify training channels, reinforce the VET to a higher level (in Västra Götaland and in Tuscany), to promote locally coordinated interventions between various stakeholders and information and guidance services (South Denmark, Västra Götaland and Wales). All this has prompted a few regions to define strategic plans capable of ensuring coherence and perspective to the various sector interventions (this is the case of the *Skills That Work for Wales* plan).

Nevertheless, in some regions this has not prevented a slow but progressive increase of young people who are not in employment, education and training (NEET) as an effect of the economic crisis – which in some regions is 20%, depending on the age range being considered. This trend is not uniform, seeing that in South Denmark the increase of access to training corresponds to the increase of unemployment phenomena.

Therefore, the data – in absolute values: Table 2 – shows that, depending on the region, during the decade there has been contrasting trends of decrease, slight development or stability. The picture that emerges from the analysis of the percentage values accentuates the trend towards decrease or stagnation. In this context, growth of the competence supply appears to be entrusted mainly to the development of lifelong learning and the reduction of the various forms of exclusion from training.

As seen in Table 3, the regions considered show a different rate of participation in education:

between 14 and 18%:	2
between 19 and 22%:	2
between 23 and 26%:	3

This brings to mind the need to give rise, even at a European level, to a diversification of educational strategies depending on the clusters. At the same time it is also an evaluation of how much the current rates of participation are consistent with the prospects of regional growth.

2.1.2. Trends analysis and policy evaluation

SEVEROZAPADEN³

Contextual factors that caused variations

The Bulgarian education sector has undergone a serious and widespread reform process aimed at attaining coherence with educational systems of the European countries. The main concern of the Bulgarian education authorities is to ensure the adaptability of the education system towards new challenges, as well as to guarantee sustainable system development in compliance with the European standards and capable of providing valuable and competitive knowledge and skills. Within that framework, the quality of education and training is one of the main objectives, granting equal access for all children and students regardless of their gender, ethnicity or religious beliefs. The cost-efficiency of the educational processes is another aspect of the education system's development. In compliance with European priorities lifelong learning is in a process of development. A strategy for Lifelong Learning 2008-2013 was adopted. Thus conditions for great diversification of educational specialities have been created together with compatibility of educational programmes with customers' needs. A variety of forms of education has been offered to those wishing to continue their education. The mechanisms for vocational orientation have also been updated.

There is a constant decrease in the regional population for the period. The ongoing trend of decreasing birth rate, negative natural growth and increased external migration of the population in the region have impacted negatively on the educational system, the quality of human resources and the skills of the workforce. In many cases this has led to a reduction of the numbers of children covered by the educational system, reducing the number of groups in kindergarten, classes in elementary and secondary schools respectively, and a reduction of employment among teachers.

The number of educational institutions in Northwest Region at the end of 2009 is 387.

The increase of the number of schools from 261 during the year 2004 to 387 is mainly due to the accession of Pleven and Lovech districts to the Northwest Region. This benchmark ranks the region on the 4th place after the Southwest Region, the South Central and the Southeast Region; it reveals considerable potential for preparation of well educated and qualified staff, without however having a positive effect on the region's competitiveness due to the slow development tempo of the regional economy and the insufficiently flexible labour market. General education schools numbered 298, special schools - 15, vocational schools - 68 and universities - 1. During the period between 2007 – 2008 the number of general education schools in the Northwest Region decreased by 67, due to the optimization of the school network. The situation on the availability of sufficient universities and equivalent institutions was

³ This is the Northwest Planning Region in Bulgaria. For the purposes of regional planning the Law of Regional Development differentiates six planning regions in the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. According to the law "The planning regions are formed based on districts, depending on their geographical location, economic development, population and development perspectives". The planning regions are not administrative and territory units according to the Law of administrative territory system of the Republic of Bulgaria. In Bulgaria administrative and territory units are districts and municipalities that have territory, boundaries, population and administrative centre. Planning regions have only name and territorial range. Planning regions, as a second level of NUTS, are a main object for planning, programming and monitoring in accordance with Aim 1 of the EU Structure funds.

Sources used for the Severozapaden (Northwest Planning Region) analysis refer to:

- National system overviews on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms, Bulgaria 2010 Edition (Information provided by the Bulgarian Eurydice Unit, www.eurydice.org, accessed in November 2010).
- Structures of Education, Vocational training and Adult Education Systems in Europe, Bulgaria 2009/2010 (Eurydice experts at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science).
- The Education system in Bulgaria (Eurybase – Bulgaria (2006/2007)).

unfavourable - with only one institutional institution; the availability would guarantee the attraction and keeping the young and educated population and raising the qualifications of the workforce. The number of students in colleges and universities (and their branches) was 2,137 during the academic year 2008/2009. These educational institutions were located only in the three districts of the region – Pleven, Vratsa and Lovech. They are insufficient in number and deepen the negative trend in the educational system of the region for young people to migrate in order to gain better education in some of the country's biggest cities and subsequently establish themselves permanently there.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The last decade is a period of mass introduction of innovations based on national achievements and the experience of developed countries in the field of educational management and in the content, technologies and organisation of pupils' education. This results in increasing the quality of education. The amendments of the national education law, as well as the adoption and implementation of the national programme for school education and pre-school education and preparation for the period 2006 – 2015 also have positive effect. As well as the optimization of the school network, other measures include: the enrollment and retaining of all pupils in school is subject to regular and strict control, efforts are made at all administrative levels of the educational system; the improvement of the quality of pedagogical personnel in the education system and increased participation of schools in European projects; the active work of the local Labour Offices, which offer different ways for qualification and prequalification of people through lifelong learning. In addition, community centres are another type of institutions that works actively and implement activities, connected with raising the educational and skills level of the population through various forms of lifelong learning.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The measures mentioned above will continue to give positive effects, as well as the following:

- The process of ritualization of school life was and continues to be a very fruitful measure - the process involves the establishment of a system of symbols and rituals to create in students a sense of belonging to their school, thus increasing motivation to actively participate in various forms of school life and life outside the school;
- Prevention of drop-outs;
- Raising the literacy level;
- Increasing the conditions for access and participation in international educational programmes and improvement of mobility;
- Effective participation of Bulgaria in the process of European decision taking in the sphere of education, training and validation of the professional qualifications.

This benchmark can be improved through the following measures at the regional level.

- Development of inclusive education for children and pupils with special educational needs (SEN) through the establishment of accessible architecture and educational environment in school, in line with their specific needs.
- Provision of access to quality education of the children and pupils for whom the Bulgarian language is not native (children belonging to ethnic minorities, children of migrants and runaways).
- Support to the expression and development of gifted children and pupils.
- The engagement of the business sector for provision of apprenticeships and work experience for students.

SYDDANMARK⁴

Contextual factors that caused variations

The fact that the number of students more than doubled from 2007 to 2008, is due to the fact that the data from 2008 is the first regional data. The Region of Southern Denmark is a result of the structural reform in Denmark in 2007 where 273 municipalities were merged into 98, and 14 Counties were merged into 5 regions.

⁴ Danish contents are taken from www.uvm.dk, accessed in November 2010.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The implementation of the Youth Guidance Networks (UU-*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning*) has been a positive addition to the guidance system in order to secure that all young students when they leave primary school are signed up to either a VET course, or other form of upper secondary education.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The fact that the unemployment level is higher than two years ago will have a positive effect on the number of inhabitants participating in general and/or lifelong learning.

The further improvement of the UU system and collaboration between the UU and schools will also have a positive effect in the future. The South Danish Agreement of Education seeks to improve the collaboration between partners in the educational system, which again will have a positive effect on dropout levels, and thereby keep the students within the educational system.

The Danish educational system is very flexible and offers a lot of possibilities for education and lifelong learning.

In Denmark access to the ordinary educational system is free of charge, which is another fact one has to consider, when trying to explain the high participation among inhabitants in South Denmark.

PAÍS VASCO

Contextual factors that caused variations

Over recent decades, the evolution of mortality, birth rates and migration has altered the population's age structure, leading to an accelerated demographic aging process. The key factor has been the drastic drop in birth rate since the end of the 1970s, strengthened by older people living for longer, without forgetting the role of migration in the modulation of age-related structures.

Some of the most outstanding changes include a pronounced drop in the population under 15, with 310,000 less young people between 1975 and 2006, an equivalent to a 54% drop. The change in the population aged between 15 and 29 years old was less intense, but quantitatively very significant. The drop in both population groups was spectacular as together they represent 441,000 less people in 2006 compared to 1975.

As for the population aged between 30 and 64, this figure has increased by slightly more than a quarter of a million people, 33.2%. However, the most intense changes have taken place at the top of the pyramid with a 225,000 person increase in the contingent of people over 65 between 1975 and 2006, representing 18.6% of the population. This emphasises the strong increase in the very oldest group, which has increased by 427% for the population over 85.

In addition, the evolution of the elderly cohort has been characterised by two internal processes. On the one hand, "over-aging" of the elderly population as the very eldest people assume a greater role in this cohort. The weight of the population over 85 years old within the total of elderly people has doubled, representing 11.5% in 2006. On the other hand, "feminisation" of the elderly, as in 2006 for every 71 men over 65 there were 100 women; this ratio drops with age to levels of just 37 men for the over 85's. The drop in infant and youth population, the increase within adult groups and the spectacular increase of the elderly, in particular the over 85's, show the maturation and aging process of the Basque population. As a consequence, the education system has doubtlessly been one of the fields experiencing the greatest changes in the demographic dynamic over the last few decades.

In the next few years, in addition to undergoing a moderate recovery in the school age population, which began back in 2002, they will also have to face the fact that the trends and rates will be different in the different educational cycles as fluctuations in the birth rate move through the system. The pre-school population will increase up to a maximum in 2010 and then it will start to drop, first slowly and then gaining speed. The school age population for infants will follow a similar path although later, reaching a peak in 2013.

The primary cycle will increase its student numbers significantly between 2006 and 2020, around 28%, and then enter into a slight retreat.

Finally, the population whose age corresponds to compulsory secondary education will have a growing evolution of just under 65,000 people in 2006 and 88,000 in 2020, although this trend will slow down in later years giving us a glimpse of its most likely reduction beginning beyond the time frame of this projection.

Although the variation of the total number of inhabitants in the Basque Country in the 2003-2009 period is only an increase of 2.3%, in the 10-14 age ranges the variation is practically nil, from 15-19 the population decreases 0.09% in this period and for 20-24 the decrease is even greater (dropping 20%).

Taking into account that it is precisely these age ranges that contain the highest number of people undertaking some type of training, it should be concluded that this demographic factor is notably influencing the variations demonstrated by the Tables. They show that the total number of people in some kind of training process increased by 6.5% in the 2003-2009 period, although the percentage for the total population increased 0.8% in this same period.

The demographic drop in the 10-24 age ranges is compensated by the considerable increase in participation in training processes from the more adult population. So, during the 2003-2007 period the number of people in the active working population who have done some type of training activity, intended to improve their qualification, increased by 6.5%. In the same respect, student numbers at Adult Education Centres have increased by 31% in this period, highlighting consistent growth of approximately 5% for each school year⁵.

Policies and measures having positive effects

For the 0-3 age range, the Haurreskolak Consortium was set up in 2003, between the Basque Government Department of Education, Universities and Research and the Autonomous Community Municipalities, to manage nursery schools. This represented a new boost to increased schooling of children in this age range. On the other hand, measures were set up that have boosted and facilitated adult participation in training processes:

- Part time Vocational Training Offer cycles that make it possible for the adult population to take modules in Vocational Training cycles more flexibly, adapted to their availability so that they can conciliate training with their work and family.
- Courses to prepare for access to Training Cycles. These courses provide the population with the required training to pass these tests and thereby continue their training and improve their qualification.
- Devices to recognise skills acquired through work experience or through non-formal training. This recognition is used to stimulate the active population to continue its training and attain a greater level of professional qualifications.
- Network of learning mediation services. These learning mediation services provide information on a particular geographic area concerning the training offer that exists in this area, regardless of whether this is formal or informal, and guides people depending on their prior training, interests and expectations.
- Career Guidance services. These services, addressed mainly at the unemployed population or anyone with a high risk of losing their job, guide people on the training they should take to help them find work.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

All the measures mentioned in the previous section addressed at the adult population will continue to have a positive effect over the next few years. The lifelong guidance services will make the training offer more flexible so that the adult population can conciliate their work and home life with training. Moreover the recognition of skills acquired via informal training or via work experience are key aspects for the adult population to continue their training.

Necessary conditions

The schooling rate for the Basque Country reached 19%, in 2007/2008; this rate has been maintained since 2001. This implies that in the last eleven years the percentage of the population at school over the total population of the region of the Basque Country has dropped two points, starting from 21% in 1998. This effect is explained by the drop in population aged between 0 and 29 in this period.

By age groups, an increase in schooling rates can be seen over these years, particularly in the first cycle of infant education. We should highlight the steep rise in the ages between 0 and 1 that has multiplied by

⁵ Eustat-Basque Statistics Office (Demographic Indicators-School activity statistics), www.eustat.es/dioma_c/indice.html, accessed in November 2010.

19 and 14, respectively, reaching rates of 17.2% and 36.6%. Schooling at 2 years old has also followed the same path although more gently, doubling the number of children at school (91.3%) and reaching almost 100% schooling.

Between 3 and 18 years old, the rates remain very similar to eleven years ago, although it must be taken into account that we are talking about an age group where rates were already 100% a decade ago and now follow the same percentages with small variations.

It should be highlighted that from 19 years old, there has been an increase in the percentage of young people in education, particularly aged 20, 21 and 23 years old, although the differences are small.

In the 15-19 range, 83.8% of young people are in education and between 20-29 years old this figure is 22.2%.

If we compare the distribution of students by ages in 2007/2008 academic year with the 1996/1997 academic year, it is clear that there has been a drop in the number of people in education totalling 63,638 students due to the drop in population in certain ages for schooling, in this case, from nine years old. Until 1995 there was a drop in the number of births and from this year on, the trend bucked and numbers increased. This effect can be seen on the school pyramid where the drop or rise in the number of inscriptions is subject to the natural movement of population. So, for example, the proportion in the ages of 16 and 17 years old has dropped slightly compared to the 1995/1996 academic year, with a difference of 3 points.

Consequently it can be seen that in the 2007/2008 academic year, whilst the first years of school (infant and primary) is where there has been an increase in inscriptions, the opposite effect has occurred in the remaining age groups.

We should also mention that in the levels where schooling is obligatory, primary and compulsory secondary education (12-16 years old), 100% of children in the Basque Country are at school.

Except for what has been commented on earlier schooling, in general, there is not much difference between the pyramid eleven years ago and right now. If we analyse the data exhaustively, we can conclude that there is a greater proportion of students in the 18 to 27 age range than eleven years ago, particularly in the ages 20, 21 and 23 years old, with a positive difference of 5 points.

All the above seems to indicate that, on the one hand, the demographic increase in the ages for schooling and, on the other hand, the constantly increasing trend over the last few years for participation from the population aged between 25 and 64 in training activities, based on the constant boost provided by political measures aiming to reinforce lifelong learning, have contributed to an increase in the percentage of population signed up for one educational level or another.

TOSCANA⁶

Contextual factors that caused variations

The Eurostat Tables may be analysed in reference to the Tuscan situation only after having taken into consideration some factual data that distinguish the regional area.

The dynamics of the last decade saw a migratory flow from the large urban conurbations to smaller municipalities in the belt.

Ageing is a unique aspect of the Italian population and in Tuscany in particular.

The old age index (burden of the over 65's on children from 0 to 14 years) amounts to 190%, whereas the national average is 130%.

The Tuscan dependency index (population aged <15+>64 compared with the 15-64 population), amounting to 50.2%, is within the European average of 48.8% (Italy 48%), but the number of over 65's depending on the population at working age is 34%, whereas it is 28% in Italy. The population has a very low exchange capacity; the number of children aged between 0 and 14 in Tuscany is amongst the lowest in Europe, amounting to 11.7% (Italy 14.4%) compared with an average of the 25 countries of 17.1%.

Approximately 200,000 children are therefore needed in Tuscany to reach the average European figure.

Another feature and problem of the region is the low birth rate, which is one of the lowest in a country with some of the lowest birth rates in Europe: an average of 1.17 children per woman.

In the ten years that separate the 1991 and 2001 censuses of the population, the region lost 32,000 inhabitants, amounting to -1%.

⁶ Data and information on Tuscany are from IRPET (2010), *L'Istruzione in Toscana rapporto 2010*, Firenze-Luglio 2010, IRPET (2009), *Le Università per Adulti in Toscana*, Firenze-Ottobre 2009, IRPET (2010), *Il sistema universitario in Toscana*, Firenze-Marzo 2010.

Although the loss was not great, seen in its composition by age we can see how fast the ageing process has become. 180,000 children and young people under the age of 25 years were in fact lost and 96,000 people aged 65 years and over were gained. The old age index went from 158% to 192% and there now is approximately 2 elderly people for 1 child.

The working age population has reduced by 101,000 units (-4%) and has aged since the young people between 15 and 24 years has decreased by 153,000 units (-6%).

The migratory flows obviously play a real importance in the demographic dynamics of the region. In the last fifteen years the net migratory change was approximately 12,000 people per annum, which would have led to a population increase of about 4% in absence of a negative natural growth.

The resident foreign population saw its percentage grow very considerably, quadrupling its figure in the last fifteen years. Its incidence compared with the total population reached 3.5% of the overall population. Considering the residence permits is estimated to be 172,000, the number of foreigners regularly residing in the region amounts to 4.9% of the resident population, slightly higher than the Italian figure and almost equal to the European figure.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The time series of the students who attend state school in Tuscany highlights a growth of over 50,000 units in the last ten years, of which approximately a quarter can be attributed to infant school (25.4%), 30.5% to primary school, 13.9% to lower secondary school and the remaining 30.1% to upper secondary school. The increase in enrollments in infant school mainly depends on the entry into school of the cohorts of children with foreign citizenship (population factor). The number of primary school students follows the state of the overall school population and grows at a constant rate.

Population changes in particular have had an impact on the number of lower secondary school students. These changes determined a growth in enrollments greater than the total population growth until the 2003/2004 academic year, followed by a slight decrease and lastly a resumption of the enrollments in the last few years taken into consideration.

Overall, in the decade considered, the lower secondary school students grew by 8.9%.

In Tuscany, the incidence of foreign students in infant school and in the cycles of mandatory instruction hits 12%. In upper secondary school, there is a constant increase of foreign students, but the incidence of this student category (7%) is clearly lower than that of the previous cycles. It is in fact known that the secondary instruction differential of foreign students compared with their Italian peers is still vast and, although instruction is one of the most effective tools for complete social and economic integration, foreign students pay the price of the delay accumulated in their early school years (only 71.7% of students finish primary school at the regular age) and families often lacking the economic and cultural means required to encourage their child's educational process. In terms of the number of foreign students born in Italy, who in 2008 represented on average 35% of the total and 71.2% of the foreigners enrolled in infant school. As regards the students born abroad, for these students the problem of integration is considerably less, if not inexistent, since there are no longer the difficulties associated with language learning and insertion into the class in line with the registry age is more probable.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The regional policies that invested in the areas of integration and interculturalism had a positive effect as described above.

Improving access to instruction for foreign students, insisting on reduction policies of the effect of school dropout for the students of the upper secondary school cycle will have positive effects in the near future.

Necessary conditions

Through the implementation of integrated education, training and work policies, the Tuscan Regional Government has achieved discrete levels of involvement of the resident population, supporting the lifelong education processes, starting in early childhood, uniting social cohesion, human resource training, greater competitiveness of the regional system and a structured education system that is integrated with instruction and work.

In Tuscany, the number of classes in all the schooling cycles has increased by a few hundred units in the last decade, but this growth is clearly less than those attending school overall: the ten-year growth rate of

the classes is 7.5%, whereas those enrolled has increased by 13.5%, demonstrating the efficiency of the restrictive measure enforced by schools even in the presence of significant increases in enrollments. We can observe diversified trends by breaking down the dynamics for the scholastic cycle; in ten years the infant school sections have seen an overall increase of 20%, a trend in line with the strong increase in demand (+26%). As regards primary school, there was an increase in classes of 2.4% compared with the base year, whereas the students in the same period grew by 12.7%. In terms of lower and upper secondary school, the number of classes follows the same trend of enrollments. The regional administration has limited the effects of the governing restriction as regards starting up new classes, especially in relation to the infant school (which is not mandatory in Italy), replacing the government in covering all the enrollment requests made. Although the trend of the Regional Government is to maintain this position, it will however be difficult to comply with this need with the cuts in public spending decided by the government.

STEIERMARK

Contextual factors that caused variations

In relation to the national average in Austria and to other provinces in Austria the Styria region has some special features which are relevant for the educational issues being discussed.

In Styria over the last decade the most intensive decrease of numbers of students in relation to all other provinces in Austria happened. The figure for the less than twenty year old population decreased from 30,4% to 20,0% from 1981 to 2009.

This is relevant for all related statistical data, and is a great challenge for educational, social, employment and economic development and policies for the future⁷.

In Austria well elaborated statistics for the school system exist, which are also differentiated concerning provinces, school types, and for universities, more specified related to types of universities, study subjects etc. At the regional level there is no statistical database with such a level of detail for other areas of education and training like pre-school education, adult education etc. The last nationwide survey about adult education, based on microcensus, is from 2003. Further developments cannot be specified really in any detail based on statistic or research sources, but on qualitative and experience background.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The policies and measures in Styria must be specified to the various areas of educational activities:

- In very early childhood education (0 to 2) Styria is at the last position behind all other provinces (6,5% in Styria against 14% in Austrian average, Vienna 25,5%).
- In the age of kindergarten, age 3 to 5, Styria (behind Carinthia) is the province with the second lowest level of enrollment. Concerning these aspects, Styrian policy started an initiative to improve the enrollment in kindergarten in 2007/2008 by making access free of charge for the parents. In addition, a national initiative for the last kindergarten year was launched by law (free of charge, compulsory), the effects (in absolute numbers and in relation to other provinces and other European regions) should be measured in the next period.
- In school Styria participated in the development of the so called *Neue Mittelschule* to avoid early selection for students at age 10. First evaluation of effects and educational impacts will be available in the next two years.
- In the field of apprenticeships the initiative of the Styrian industry, *Industrietechniker*, was a pioneer activity in the area of dual education/apprenticeship, combined with high level and attractive additional educational offers, like "professional *Matura*" and further access to university/university of applied sciences.
- In the area of adult education in 2002 the Styrian network of adult education was established, with involvement of a high number of Styrian associations and institutions in the field of adult education (network/working group adult education), with high impact in several fields of adult education like base competencies, guidance and counselling, influence on national strategies and policies in adult education).
- In post-secondary and tertiary level the development of universities of applied sciences was

⁷ Statistik Austria, *Bildung in Zahlen*, Wien, www.statistik.at, accessed in November 2010.

an important part of the regional educational strategy, additional to the offers of the traditional universities. A special feature was the establishment of the pedagogical universities - based on national law -, Styria was very actively involved in this process.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

After the election of the Provincial Government in September 2010 a new programme for the next period 2010 to 2015 was developed.

In Chapter 4 of the provincial governmental programme – Education, Research, Science and Culture – there is a strong position for an offensive strategy in education in all areas and levels of education in the Styria region.

A regional education plan for Styria should be developed as a strategic framework for the coming years. Styria had a tradition of an innovative and pro-active province concerning education and lifelong learning policy for more than twenty years.

The province of Styria is now trying to re-activate this ambition, with incentives in several areas such as :

- free of charge elementary education for all in the age range from 4 to 6,
- so called *Neue Mittelschule* in several regions,
- innovations in dual education and apprenticeship, like *Industrietechniker*,
- initiatives in post-secondary and tertiary education, e.g joint studies between University and Pedagogical Colleges,
- adult education programmes, especially in guidance and counselling and basic competencies.

All of these ambitious programmes are supported by several transnational cooperation and comparisons. A core condition for effective and sustainable development in all these areas is a permanent input from outside – transnational cooperation, European projects and programmes, lifelong learning, research, European Social Fund, etc. Cooperation within SMOC is one of the approaches used as a consequence for international incentives for regional development and innovation.

VÄSTSVERIGE⁸

Swedish birth rates fell after the economic crisis in the early 1990s and reached an all-time low of 1.5 children per woman at the end of the 1990s. In recent years, however, the birth rate has increased significantly and exceeded 1.9 children per woman in 2008, well above the European average. Life expectancy has risen to 78.7 years for men and 82.9 for women. Much of Sweden´s and Europe´s population growth in the coming decades will consist of people above the age of 65. In Sweden, it is estimated that the number of persons aged 65 or over will have risen from 1.5 million in 2005 to 2.2 million in 2025.

The demographic challenge facing Sweden is becoming one of the most worrisome, and expensive, challenges of our time. Demographic projections show that the number of older people will grow faster than younger ones. This will put enormous pressure on governments, and will have implications for vocational education and training as relatively fewer people enter the labour force while an increasing number leave. This may lead to skills shortages which will make it especially important to develop Vocational Education and Training (VET) options that can respond to labour markets needs. Sweden is projected to have one of the lower old-age dependency ratios in Europe (about five percentage points lower than the EU-27 average by 2040) in the coming decades. This is largely the result of two factors: a relatively high birth rate, in the European context; and a relatively high rate of gross and net immigration, which adds younger than average people to the population base in Sweden. However, even Sweden faces serious challenges financing the welfare state and ensuring adequate skilled workers in the coming decades. The role of VET will be critical in ensuring that Sweden and Europe remain competitive in the context of an ageing society. In concrete terms, this means ensuring that the relatively smaller working age population is effectively trained to contribute to increased productivity and economic development⁹. Västsverige (West Sweden) represents approximately 20% of the Swedish population and has a similar

⁸ Data and information on Västra Götaland are from www.grkom.se/grutbildning/gymnasieskolan/smocs/foopen/methodofcoordination.4.1b1c276c128b01717008000159.html, accessed in November 2010. Sweden is the fourth largest country in Western Europe with an area of approximately 450,000 square kilometres (km²) which stretches over 1,500 kilometres from north to south. In 2008 the population was just over 9.25 million. The country is sparsely populated in the North with only three inhabitants per km². Over 90% of the population lives in the southern half of the country, many of whom in or near the three major urban centres: Stockholm (1.8 million inhabitants), Gothenburg (800,000) and Malmö (500,000). On 1 July 2009 the Language Act (*Språklag*) designated Swedish as the 'main' language in Sweden but there are also five minority languages: Finnish, all Sami dialects, Torne Valley Finnish (*Meänkieli*), Romani and Yiddish.

⁹ Cedefop (2009), *Vocational education and training in Sweden*, Luxembourg, www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5198_en.pdf, accessed in October 2010.

situation as described above. The data concerning Västsverige will have to be the same as for the State due to the fact that a formal regional level for education and training from pre-school to adult education at upper secondary level does not exist. Power is divided between the State level and the local level. However there is voluntary regional cooperation in many fields as described below.

Västsverige consists of two regions: *Halland Region* with 6 municipalities and *Region Västra Götaland* with 49 municipalities. The County Västra Götaland has 1.5 million people of 130 nationalities. With 17% of the Swedish population it is one of the largest regions in the country. Region Västra Götaland has an elected Regional Council, authorised to levy council taxes, with members chosen in public elections. The region is primarily responsible for healthcare, which takes up 90% of the budget. When Region Västra Götaland was formed in 1999, it was also given responsibility for regional growth and development issues that had earlier been controlled by the state government through the county administrative boards. This means, among other things, greater influence over regional social issues, for example infrastructure and the environment. Together with universities, university colleges and other education providers, Region Västra Götaland analyses and adapts tertiary education to the needs of working life. Another important area of focus is to reduce the differences in the level of educational attainment. Region Västra Götaland also has a certain responsibility at post-secondary vocational level and at tertiary level, runs seven rural studies colleges and seven *folk high schools*. The region's development, growth objectives and measures are structured and financed through a regional growth programme (RTP).

Västra Götaland has 49 Local Authorities. They provide the major part of all public service in their areas. They cooperate in four associations of Local Authorities. The Göteborg Regional Association of Local Authorities (GR) with 13 member municipalities is the largest association and most of the measures highlighted in this Report are chosen from their activities.

Contextual factors that caused variations

Over 98% of compulsory school leavers proceed to the three-year upper secondary school, which offers both vocationally-oriented (IVET) and academic programmes. Municipalities are obliged under the Education Act to offer young people (typically between the ages of 15 and 20) who have completed compulsory school, upper secondary school education. To be admitted to a State, or specially designed programme students must have passed Swedish, English and Mathematics at compulsory school or demonstrate equivalent knowledge. The municipality must provide a broad range of education and try to match the number of places in different programmes with student choice. If the programme of choice is not available in a student's home municipality they have the right to apply to another municipality. If the number of applicants in a programme is higher than the number of places available, selection is on the basis of final grades from compulsory school.

Completion of both theoretical/academic and vocationally-oriented programmes includes common core curricula that provide adequate credits to aid entrance to university. Moreover, academic and IVET programmes share several common core courses and are both categorised as ISCED 3A. In this regard, the system is flexible, with IVET completers having options ranging from direct labour market entry to post-secondary VET to higher education. Upper secondary programmes that are primarily vocationally-oriented must give broad basic education within the vocational field, as well as providing the foundation for further studies (all upper secondary programmes can lead to higher education). Vocationally oriented programmes must offer at least 15 weeks of work-based training during the three years of upper secondary school.

The Education Act also extends the right of education to adults. This can be provided through municipal adult education (*Komvux*) or in adult education for adults with learning disabilities (*Särvux*).

Policies and measures having positive effects

Between 1997 and 2002, a major programme, the AEI-Adult Education Initiative (*Kunskapslyftet*), was established to stimulate lifelong learning by earmarking extra funding for municipalities to offer hundreds of thousands of additional municipal adult education places, primarily for those without a complete upper secondary education. Following this major investment in adult education, the policy emphasis shifted to the need to reform upper secondary education, including upper secondary IVET upon which municipal adult IVET is based. In the meantime, in 2009, the Government has channelled extra funding to adult IVET

through vocationally-oriented adult education (*YrkesVux*). This initiative has been largely developed in response to the economic crisis. It earmarks an additional 115 million Euros to provide IVET places for an additional 21,000 adults under the municipal adult education framework between 2009-2011¹⁰. Higher vocational education is the largest form of purely vocational post-secondary training in Sweden with approximately 35,000 students in 2008. This type of training was first piloted in 1996 and made permanent in 2002. It is designed to provide training to meet labour market demand for specialist know-how in various sectors. Programmes are designed in consultation with employers and delivered by various education and training providers. Programmes can vary between one and three years. At least one third of this training should be workplace-based but the new Agency for Higher Vocational Education is establishing new guidelines to ensure that higher vocational education meets quality measures and better reflects actual labour market skill needs.

There was a major expansion in higher education in Sweden during the 1990's and the early 2000's. The number of university students rose from 51,000 to 83,000 per academic year. This means that the share of beginner students aged 25 or less at the Swedish higher education institutions rose from 20% to over 40%. In 2008 there were over 90,000 students at the universities and other institutions of higher education in Västra Götaland.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

In December 2009 Region Västra Götaland together with the other self governing bodies in Sweden were assigned the task by the Government to establish a platform for cooperation within the areas of supply and planning of skills and knowledge for the future. The Government has also given the assignment to several different agencies to cooperate more closely within the area of provision of skills and competencies to better meet the need for competencies asked for. This platform is supposed to work as a support and a tool for municipalities and other providers of education and training, so that they can offer together the best education and training supply for adults. It should also facilitate the planning of different measures through creating better opportunities for matching the needs on the labour market. The platform will also be able to offer prognoses for future needs of the labour market as well as possibilities for a closer cooperation between suppliers of education and training and representatives of different sectors on the labour market.

The country has a tradition of publicly-funded lifelong learning, and Sweden is now stressing the importance of opening the VET door to adults. The country is providing additional public funds for adult learning geared towards vocationally-oriented training to counteract the impact of the crisis. One of the more prominent measures is *Yrkesvux*. New measures have also introduced the higher vocational pathways and additional places at universities, which are of great importance to Västra Götaland.

WALES¹¹

The population of Wales¹² is continuously changing in terms of age structure, ethnic make up and its mobility. The impact of these changes varies throughout Wales and has implications for the planning and provision of public services in Wales, most notably education. In 2009, Wales's population stood at just under 3 million. Natural change in Wales was positive for the fourth successive year, with 3,300 more births than deaths. 10% of births were to mothers born outside the UK in 2009, an increase on the proportion in 1998 when only 5% were to mothers born outside the UK. This in part reflects the fact that in 2008, 16.4 thousand people migrated into Wales from overseas (while 15.9 thousand people migrated from Wales to overseas destinations). The population of Wales is projected to increase by 8% from 2008 to 3.2 million in 2023.

¹⁰ Förordning om statsbidrag för yrkesinriktad gymnasial vuxenutbildning, (SFS 2009:43), www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/20090043.htm, accessed in November 2010.

¹¹ In addition to the sources mentioned texts from Wales refer to the following sources accessed in November 2010: WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2007), *One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgovernment/strategy/publications/onewales/?lang=en>. Statistics for Wales, <http://stats.wales.gov.uk/index.htm>. Daugherty Review (2004), *Learning Pathways Through Statutory Assessment: Key Stages 2 and 3: Final Report of the Daugherty Assessment Review Group*, Cardiff: WAG-Welsh Assembly Government, <http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/educationandskills/2004/4024591/?lang=en> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daugherty_Report. WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2007), *Promise and Performance (Web review) including WAG response*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/webreview/?lang=en>. WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2009), 14-19 *Learning Pathways*, http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/policy_strategy_and_planning/learningpathways1419/?lang=en. WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2009), *Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009*, <http://cymru.gov.uk/legislation/programme/assemblymeasures/learningskills/?sessionid=p1Q9JdcQf8cBBQ5q1VJKBJLpTJZRTmyZv2nbGD7L21Sh9d7cC311590164483/?lang=en> and www.assembly.wales.org/bus-home/bus-legislation/bus-leg-measures/business-legislation-measures-ls.htm. National Assembly For Wales (2005), *Circular 51/04: Skills and Employment Action Plan for Wales 2005*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/circulars/401051/?lang=en>.

¹² WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (27/10/2010), *Statistics for Wales. First Release-Wales's population 2010, SDR 172/2010*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/population2010/101027/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

From mid-2001 to mid-2009, Wales experienced a 3.1% population growth. Across Europe population change from 2001 to 2009 has ranged from a 14.2% increase in Cyprus to a decrease of 6.7% Bulgaria, this places Wales roughly in the middle. The UK as a whole experienced a 4.5% population growth during this period¹³.

Population migration, its effects on birth rates and numbers of young people of school age present particular challenges for educational planning, as does the number of adults of working age seeking to access some form of lifelong learning to enhance employability. The main changes in the structure and distribution of the population since mid-2001 shows an overall fall in the number of children aged 0-15 as a proportion of the total population a decrease from 20.2% to 18.3%. However, 2009 mid-year population estimates noted that there were roughly the same number of children in Wales as as previous year (18.3% compared to 18.5%), which is no doubt a result of the positive growth due to natural change over the last 4 years and immigrant families. Wales has seen, however, a shift in school age population from 7 local authority areas, and growth in the areas of greater economic activity.

The population of Wales is projected to increase to 3.14 million by 2018 (5% increase) and 3.35 million by 2033 (12% increase). Although more births than deaths are projected throughout most of the projection period, net inward migration is the main reason for projected population growth.

The number of children is projected to decrease slightly during the first five years of the projection period, with around 1% less children in 2013 than in 2008. This is because the projected decrease in the number of older children is greater than the increase in the number of young children during the next few years.

The number of pensioners is projected to increase during most of the projection period despite the change to state pension age. It is projected that there will be 185,000 (29%) more pensioners in 2033 than in 2008. The population of Wales will become gradually older with the median age of the population rising from 41.1 years in 2008 to 44.2 years in 2033¹⁴.

Contextual factors that caused variations

Skills levels/attainments and work-based learning are a major policy focus in Wales; however, the continued challenge of improving performance in these areas is attributable to a large extent to the structure of the Welsh economy and Welsh businesses.

In 2007, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) provisional data, headline gross value added (GVA) in Wales was £44,333m (circ. €53,000m), making the Welsh economy the tenth largest of the UK's twelve regions (counting Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland alongside the nine English Government Office Regions)¹⁵. The modern Welsh economy is dominated by the service sector. In 2000, services contributed 66% to GVA, the manufacturing sector contributed 32%, while agriculture, forestry and fishing contributed 1.5%¹⁶.

Wales is rather unusual however, in having a low proportion of higher quality jobs in business and financial services. This is a proximate cause of Wales's relatively poor overall economic performance, and may reflect the lack of a really large city. Within manufacturing, the largest trend declines have been in basic/fabricated metals and textiles/clothing. The largest increases have been seen in the preparation of food products and beverages (though electronics did expand significantly before the world-wide downturn in electronics and ICT post 2000). In terms of size-structure, it appears that the UK-wide trend towards smaller businesses observed in the 1980s was arrested, and perhaps even reversed in the 1990s. This appears to have been driven by consolidation in the services sector, rather than by any major changes in manufacturing (WAG, 2010:9-10)¹⁷.

The economic crisis beginning in 2008 was incisive for the Welsh economy. However, structural challenges also influence levels of employment and skills. Among those is the change towards a service-based economy following the large-scale loss of employment in primary industries such as mining and steel production in the wake of the early 1980s recession: between 1979 and 1982, Wales lost 130,000 jobs¹⁸ and

¹³ This compares NUTS1 and NUTS2 figures. Tools such as SMOC enables comparison at Regional level.

¹⁴ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2009), *Statistics for Wales. 2008-Based National Population Projections for Wales*, SB 60/2009, <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2009/091021sb602009en.pdf?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

¹⁵ Regional Gross Value Added (GVA), by UK country (component, UK regions).

¹⁶ Eurostat: Wales – Economy, http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/regportraits/info/data/en/ukl_eco.htm, accessed in October 2010.

¹⁷ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Economic Research Advisory Panel-Economic Futures For Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/econoresearch/completed/futures/?sessionid=kQ6QLyHCf2VFQ23KT2T4rmh2fg7Hyv2vS8wRsv4TDyyh61P1ZFh81960802?lang=en>, accessed in October 2010.

¹⁸ Jenkins, P. (1992), *A History of Modern Wales, 1536-1990*. Harlow: Longman.

the employment rate fell to 62%. Recovery started late in Wales, leaving a legacy of high unemployment amongst older men, especially in the Valleys¹⁹ and the rise of service-based employment mainly among women workers. The trend of declining primary industries and increasing service-based economic activity continues to date.

Policies and measures having positive effects

Participation in the EU Lifelong Learning Programme and drawdown of structural funds such as the European Social Fund (ESF) have enabled added value to the education sector in Wales, and have supported the implementation of Welsh Assembly Government strategies and policies with respect to education and skills.

Wales still has a lower employment rate and higher proportion of adults without qualifications, than the UK average. 10% of young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET)²⁰. Basic skills deficiencies are still a major cause for concern²¹. Too many schools, colleges and universities plan and deliver in isolation, leading to duplication and gaps in provision. As a consequence, access to high quality education and training is inconsistent and too few learning providers take account of the demands of business and industry and the diverse range of learner needs.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Key strategies and policies for education and skills development in Wales include the Economic Renewal Programme²² and Skills That Work for Wales²³. Both support measures to broaden and deepen the skills base in Wales. The Economic Renewal Programme highlights that education and skills at all levels are vital for economic growth and prosperity, and their contribution to competitiveness, business productivity and individual social mobility. Developing the skills base is seen as a shared responsibility for Regional Governments, learning providers, employers and individuals; emphasising the need for strong regional level collaboration between social partners. For economic renewal, the emphasis is on:

- a responsive partnership with business on skills provision that targets,
- investment explicitly on post recession economic requirements,
- support young people to succeed and be ready for the world of work,
- increasing efforts to help those who are disengaged, reducing economic inactivity and worklessness.

This is supported by a comprehensive set of policies addressing various areas within the education and skills sector, such as essential skills (formerly 'basic skills'), work-based learning, further and higher education, schools and pre-school education.

Skills That Work for Wales is the regional skills and employment strategy. It includes action across the spectrum of learning: the early years, schools, further and higher education, workplace training and lifelong learning. There is an extensive range of policies for children and young people, including Flying Start, the Foundation Phase, revisions to the school curriculum, flexible 14-19 Learning Pathways and the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Necessary conditions

As noted earlier in this Report, the volume of children undertaking schooling in Wales has steadily declined over the period²⁴. Compulsory education represents the largest single population cohort in education, therefore this decline has an impact on the percentage of the population engaged in learning. Again the more recent impact of the economic downturn has seen increased demand for training from a larger unemployed group, from young people seeking to stay on in education, and as a consequence

¹⁹ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government-Department for Work and Pensions (2007) *Wales-Towards Full Employment*, www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wales-towards-full-employment.pdf, accessed in October 2010.

²⁰ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Statistics for Wales. Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), Year to 31 December 2009*, SB59/2010, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/post16education2010/1007281/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

²¹ The National Assembly for Wales (2001), *The Basic Skills Strategy for Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/Nationalbasicskillsstrategywales/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

²² WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Economic Renewal: A New Direction*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/businessandconomy/help/economicrenewal/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

²³ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government-Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008), *Skills That Work for Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/skillsthatworkforwales/?sessionid=B1pvMgMDQB2GYHw4ynk9YrJd5nQdn220vSgvJvnhLq7KsvGGtMIB1765542023?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

²⁴ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2009), *Long term population trends: Wales and its Spatial Plan areas*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/populationspatial09/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

of specific measures targeting the reduction of those young people not in education, employment or training. Pressures on regional funding as a direct consequence of State budget decisions, is also placing a particular challenge on the funding for university places, with the increase in demand now likely to outstrip the availability of places through Government funding. At the time of writing, the latest statistics on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) produced by the Regional Government were released (13 October 2010) according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority²⁵. Statistics on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) include data for Wales for the period up to the year ending 31 March 2010.

The definitive source for estimates of the proportion of young people who are NEET in Wales is the annual Statistical First Release (SFR). This bulletin provides users with more timely, but less statistically robust, statistics. The statistics included in this bulletin are taken from the following sources:

- Statistical First Release, *Participation of young people in education and the labour market* using education data sources and the Annual Population Survey (APS);
- Annual Population Survey (ONS); and
- Careers Wales Pupil Destinations from Schools in Wales survey.

Most recent results from these sources²⁶:

- *SFR basis* - As at end 2009(p), 12.0% of 16-18 year olds were NEET (14,000) compared with 12.5% (15,000) in 2008 and 11.8% (14,000) in 2007;
- *APS basis* - For the year ending Quarter 1 2010, 12.6% of 16-18 year olds were NEET compared with 12.3% for the year ending Quarter 1 2009;
- *Pupil Destinations basis* - As at Oct 2009, 5.7% of Year 11 leavers were NEET compared with 7.1% in 2008.

2.2. Participation rates of 4-years-olds in education at regional level

2.2.1. Basic indicators

Tab.4. Participation rates of 4-years-olds in education by NUTS 2 regions

	TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO										
Severozapaden		71.9	70.7	68.1	:	:	:	:	:	:
Syddanmark		94.8	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
País Vasco		100.0	100.0	99.7	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Toscana		97.9	98.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	:
Steiermark		80.6	77.7	:	:	:	80.6	:	:	:
Västsverige		91.8	90.4	89.5	:	87.1	81.6	75.6	82.5	69.1
Wales		100.0	96.5	96.1	95.5	100.0	100.0	100.0	97.2	100.0

: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat Last update: 01-06-2010.

Participation in early childhood education at regional level by measuring the percentage of four-year-olds who are in either pre-primary or primary education. The European Benchmark for 2020 is 95%.

Interventions on the subject show an increasing impact in all the regions. The growth trend in accessing services for infancy is generalised, even though there are still obvious, important differences in performances. In countries such as Sweden, this type of intervention has increased access tenfold in 25 years.

The progress during the decade shows the existence of various types of policies characterised by:

- maintenance of high standards of participation;
- rapid development of access (with a two to three percent increase per year).

Current trends show the possibility of achieving European goals and move attention to the efficiency and educational quality of services for infancy – as well as to maintenance policies.

²⁵ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Statistics for Wales. Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), (Year to 31 March 2010)*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/post16education2010/101013/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

²⁶ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Statistics for Wales. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) Year to 30 September 2009, SB 27/2010*, <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2010/100421sb272010en.pdf>, accessed in November 2010.

This type of policy is correlated everywhere to the measures that aid women's access to the job market, to the forecast of the development of basic competencies in children, and to the prevention of scholastic failure and criminality (see for example the Flying Start programme in Wales, aimed particularly at disadvantaged communities).

In the regions where the European benchmark has been reached, attention moves progressively towards the 0-3 year target (Basque Country, Tuscany) or towards maintaining the positive results already obtained (i.e. Västra Götaland, South Denmark).

Policies supporting intervention sustainability and quality are characterised by the following measures:

- Creation of consortiums and public/private partnerships (the Haurreskolak Consortium centres network in the Basque Country or the Flying Start programme in Wales that combines the voluntary, private and statutory sectors to offer preventative interventions);
- Differentiation of activated local services (childcare in Sweden is organised with pre-schools, meaning day nurseries, family day-care homes run by municipal childminders, open pre-schools and leisure time centres that are a sort of "extra curricular club");
- Definition of quality standards which all services must comply with (Tuscany and other regions);
- Integration of the various services (in Wales the Flying Start programme works by bringing together education, childcare, health and social services and combines the voluntary, private and statutory sectors).

2.2.2. Trends analysis and policy evaluation

SEVEROZAPADEN

Pre-primary education is for children from 2 to 6/7 years of age. Kindergarten attendance is optional and depends on the parental choice. The participation rate of the 4 year olds from the region in the educational system for the last few years is about 70%. According to the amendments to the Public Education Act (2002 and 2003), in principle it is compulsory for children of 6 to 7 years of age to attend a preparatory group at the kindergarten or a preparatory class at school. There is a trend towards gradual reduction of the children's age, covered by compulsory pre-primary education and preparation of the five year olds. There is a proposal for a legislative change – the pre-primary education for the five years old to be compulsory. This is an investment in the early children development and will lead to the creation of more workplaces. Most of the municipalities however are not in position to meet this challenge – they do not possess the necessary material base. So the change is being postponed. The inclusion of the 4-year-olds in the educational system will not be a reality in the current and the next year, as there is a need of preparation and public and parliamentary discussions. The realistic time for preparation limit is one or two years.

The National Programme for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education (2006 – 2015) pays special attention to the system of pre-primary education. One of the main trends outlined in this document is the one towards establishing a closer relation between teaching and educating kids at kindergarten and preparatory groups and the requirements of school education. It also mentions the fact that a child's education starts at the kindergarten. This is the institution in which a child is placed in a new, structured social and sometimes multicultural environment. It is within this environment that a child develops his/her communication skills, displays his/her inclination to acquiring others' behavioural models, forms his/her future ideas of good and bad.

There is a need of improvement of the offering of pre-primary education and enlargement of the access to it; the introduction of foreign language learning in the compulsory curriculum has a good impact.

SYDDANMARK

In Denmark young children start in pre-primary school at the age of 6, and in the kindergarten at the age of approximately four years of age. Some children do not attend kindergarten for different reasons, and thus it is unrealistic to reach a higher level than the current at 94,8 %.

PAÍS VASCO

When comparing with OECD countries, it can be seen that the Basque Country has very high schooling rates in the age ranges that correspond to the infant education level.

One outstanding aspect in terms of behaviour twelve years ago is that nowadays children go to school earlier. The causes can be summarised in two phenomena: an increase in the birth rate and greater demand for this educational level. If it is compared with data from the 1996/1997 academic year, it can be seen that school children aged 0 to 3 years old were practically unschooled; in fact, the ages of 0 and 1 were just 1.5% of the total population and at 2 years old, 4 out of every 10 children went to school. As a contrast nowadays, there has been a considerable increase in the schooling rates at these ages with 17.2%, 36.6% and 91.8%, respectively. The measures implemented through the Haurreskolak Consortium centres network lead us to believe that these percentages for ages 0 to 2 years old will continue to increase year by year²⁷.

TOSCANA

The investments in early childhood services of the Tuscan Regional Government not only permitted the Regional Government to obtain an excellent percentage of involvement of small recipients compared with the percentage hoped for by Europe 2020, but at the same time allowed families, mothers in particular, to be re-integrated into the working world.

STEIERMARK

Among the Austrian provinces Styria was the pioneer for free of charge elementary education (province legal Act from 2008). Until now valid documentation about the concrete effects concerning enrollment and participation is not available, but it could be expected, that there is a positive effect on participation, especially for children with migration background or special social conditions.

Due to the current budget situation, this programme is under debate and it is not clear how it could be financed by the province in the future.

VÄSTSVERIGE

Sweden is one of the countries in the European Union that has reached the Barcelona targets, in both the lower age group up to three years old and the second group with children from three years up to seven years that is the mandatory school age in Sweden.

The vast majority of families with children have access to and uses pre-schooling - about 90% of all 1-5 year olds spend parts of their day there. The development and renewal of pre-school is an important political area at both the national and local level. Since 1970 when the major expansion was initiated, the number of places in pre-school and school-age child care has increased more than tenfold from 70,000 to over 750,000. One of the foundation stones in the politics of the Swedish pre-school is that it must be possible to combine work and family life. It is also important to be able to provide child care which is flexible and enables parents to choose the form which is most suitable for them and their children. The national goal is that the pre-school should further develop its quality so that children who go there turn into secure individuals with a good foundation for their future schooling. Childcare in Sweden is organised with pre-schools that is to say day nurseries, family daycare homes run by municipal child minders, open pre-schools and leisure time centres (a sort of "out-of-school club"). All pre-school establishments also have to be assessed by the Government and meet certain standards. However, while most pre-school childcare services in other countries, for example in the UK are provided by the private sector, Swedish nurseries are financed partly by central Government grants, partly by tax revenue and partly by parental fees. Four and five-year-olds in Sweden are offered at least three free hours a day during school term (Ministry of Education and Research, 2007).

WALES

Participation rates in Wales are high. One programme which has achieved notable success is Flying Start²⁸. This is targeted at 0-3 year olds in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales and aims to create positive outcomes in the medium and long term. It is a prescriptive programme, based on international evidence. What it means in practice is free quality part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds, enhanced health visiting service, access to parenting programmes, and access to language and play sessions.

²⁷ Eustat-Basque Statistics Office (School activity statistics), www.eustat.es/idioma_c/indice.html, accessed in November 2010.

²⁸ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/parenting/help/flyingstart/?jsessionid=dX2XMZyFT86LcHMrgfJccxSv0sy7Ls4Jf1G7lw3JNWLny62XtkKl-42672990?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

These are universally available to all children aged 0-3 and their families in the areas in which it runs, and make significant savings in the delivery of learning through:

- earlier identification of needs,
- the avoidance of reception into the care system, and
- the avoidance of other crisis remedial systems such as youth offending teams or substance misuse services.

In the longer term, the programme aims to improve skills levels, reduce the rates of criminal behaviour, truancy and drug use, foster higher employment, increased earnings and better qualifications at the end of schooling. It works by bringing together education, childcare, health and social services and combines the voluntary, private and statutory sectors to offer preventative interventions that influence child outcomes. The scheme builds on and complements existing valuable work done under the Sure Start theme of the Cymorth grant scheme. Regional Government funding also provides for continuing capital investment within Flying Start to make sure that facilities support the high quality required, and that the childcare settings needed are within the disadvantaged areas targeted. In addition, and delivered across Wales, the Foundation Phase²⁹ is a new approach to learning for children from 3-7 years of age. It combines Early Years Education (for 3 to 5-year-olds) and Key Stage 1 (5 to 7-year-olds) of the National Curriculum in Wales³⁰. The Foundation Phase is based on the principle that early years' provision should offer a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It will bring more consistency and continuity to children's education at such an all-important period in their development. The Foundation Phase places great emphasis on children learning by doing. Young children are given more opportunities to gain first hand experiences through play and active involvement rather than by completing exercises in books. They are given time to develop their speaking and listening skills and to become confident in their reading and writing abilities. Mathematics is more practical so that children can see how problems are solved and how important mathematics is in their everyday lives. There is more emphasis on children understanding how things work and on finding different ways to solve problems. The curriculum focuses on experiential learning, active involvement and developing each child's:

- Skills and understanding.
- Personal, social, emotional, physical and intellectual well being so as to develop the whole child.
- Positive attitudes to learning so that they enjoy it and want to continue.
- Self-esteem and self-confidence to experiment, investigate, learn new things and form new relationships.
- Creative, expressive and observational skills to encourage their development as individuals with different ways of responding to experiences.
- Activities in the outdoors where they have first-hand experience of solving real-life problems and learn about conservation and sustainability.

2.3. Pupils and Students in education

2.3.1. Pupils and students in upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

a. Basic indicators

Tab.5 . Pupils and Students in upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3-4) - as a percentage of the population aged 15-24 years at regional level

	TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO										
Severozapaden		36.8	38.6	40.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
Syddanmark		44.8	45.0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
País Vasco		26.3	26.9	26.6	26.2	24.1	23.3	23.0	23.9	24.9
Toscana		48.1	47.9	.	48.2	45.0	45.4	43.4	40.4	39.7
Steiermark		44.5	44.7	47.2	45.2	44.3	43.2	43.4	.	.
Västsverige		46.0	48.9	50.2	49.9	49.2	49.1	54.9	57.2	57.5
Wales		42.1	44.9	43.6	87.6	94.5	98.2	92.5	92.6	87.0

: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat Last update: 01-06-2010.

²⁹ http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/earlyyearshome/foundation_phase/?lang=en, accessed in November 2010.

³⁰ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

Percentage of students enrolled in upper secondary education (ISCED 3 level) and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED level 4) as a percentage of the population aged 15–24 in the region. Eurostat data shows variations over the decade due to the change of gathering statistical data and to – in some regions – the introduction of new regulations regarding the lengthening of the study period. After 2005, we find a trend to stagnation and a slight decrease in enrollment everywhere. This element must be examined along with the data relative to demographic trends, to tertiary level enrollments and to the employment levels of young people in the same age ranges (see the following paragraphs).

Depending on the regions, the following trends are recorded:

- Rapid insertion on the job market for those who do not continue university studies (the case of South Denmark);
- Considerable transition towards university (in the Basque Country this phenomenon concerns about 65% of students);
- Young people oriented towards new post-secondary non-tertiary VET channels.

The tendency to increase the number of participants through policies intensifying the relation between school and companies is exemplified in Sweden by creating new channels such as the *Yrkesvux* (the adult VET initiative), the new *Yrkeshögskola* (*Higher Vocational Education*) and the upper secondary school reform that opens specific paths aimed at preparation for entering the job market.

b. Trends analysis and policy evaluation

SEVEROZAPADEN

In recent years, a number of changes have been made in the sphere of upper secondary education. Among the most significant are the changes in educational content –State Educational Requirements, new syllabi for the secondary education level, and new curricula for all subjects have been developed and put into practice. Changes have also been made in the assessment of students' achievements, connected with the wider application of test assessment, higher consistency and measuring the entrance and exit level in mastering the educational content, regulating the compulsory character of state matriculation examinations. In accordance with the global and European requirements the instruction in foreign languages and computers is applied more widely than before. Efforts are made to raise the quality of the secondary education, its general accessibility, for durability and applicability of the knowledge and skills, transparency in grading and ensuring independent evaluation of the students' results.

In the field of the upper secondary vocational education changes are also under way – in 2003 a new list of the professions for the vocational education and framework programme for acquiring vocational qualification were confirmed; a major priority is binding vocational training with labour market requirements.

The changes in the structure of education are closely related to certain alterations in the aims of upper secondary education, which, in fact, will start being achieved during the school years to come. The major trend is connected to granting bigger personal choice of the type and level of education so that it corresponds to the personal aims of a student more fully; improving one's chance of social realisation through the acquisition of more comprehensive computer and foreign language instruction as well as through increasing the opportunities to get vocational training; supporting the labour market realisation of students who do not continue their education to the second upper secondary stage, etc.

SYDDANMARK

In South Denmark and in Denmark in general, the average participation in upper secondary education is normally very high. Approximately 98% of the students will, after they finish primary school, attend an upper secondary education or a VET programme. Those who attend VET programme will often finish their education within four years and thus at the age of 21 be a part of the workforce.

Of those between aged 16-19 the percentage of students enrolled in upper secondary education and post-secondary non-tertiary education is fairly close to 90%.

Of those aged from 20-24 the percentage decreases a lot, which can be explained by two factors:

1. As noted, people who have attended VET programmes will often be a part of the workforce.
2. Those who finish their upper secondary education will often attend further education at university or other institutions which provide tertiary education.

PAÍS VASCO

Students aged 16 years old finishing compulsory secondary education choosing to take *Bachillerato* (upper secondary level, geared to those progressing to university studies) represent a percentage of around 75% of the students that take ISCED 3-4 level studies.

On the other hand, the gross rate of *Bachillerato* graduates in the 2006-2007 academic year was 65.4%. Both sets of data indicate that the majority of students choose to go for tertiary studies. This trend has been constantly growing over the last decade and all indicators suggest that the trend will be maintained in the short term.

This implies that the rate of young people from 15 to 24 in post-secondary non-tertiary level studies is the lowest among the regions participating in the SMOC process and also among neighbouring countries³¹.

TOSCANA

In the last few years, the education levels of the population have seen a significant increase in Tuscany, as in the rest of Italy. The improvement in the quality of family life, the widespread awareness of the economic benefits of a qualification (greater ability to earn, find work and development on the social scale) and the gaining of knowledge required by an increasingly complicated and constantly changing society have in fact encouraged investments in the educational process and have therefore determined an increase in the average level of schooling. The policy to overcome drop-out, the range of training integrated with the working world, the professional qualification recognition system and, last but not least, the mobility of students have ensured that the Tuscan Regional Government achieved discrete levels of involvement of the 15-24 year old population.

STEIERMARK

In Austria a strong distinction exists concerning educational benchmarks between upper secondary and post-secondary or tertiary level. This is also relevant for the description of the provincial Styrian situation. At the upper secondary level there is a high enrollment of the population, about 95% and more (OECD, 2010³²) with the special aspect, that near 80% of the students are in a VET education programme, half and half full-time school or apprenticeship.

In post-secondary or tertiary programmes Austria – and Styria - has, compared with the EU average, a quote under the EU average, this is challenging for future developments, although Styria has, apart from the capital Vienna, the highest number of universities of all Austrian provinces.

But, in this context it is necessary to reflect on the special Austrian education situation, with the status of the graduates of so called *Höhere Technische Lehranstalt* (HTL)³³ as an intermediate status between secondary and post-secondary and tertiary level, highly appreciated by industry and labour market, but not comparable with European or OECD classifications /formal: ISCED 4A, in practice etc³⁴.

VÄSTSVERIGE

The above facts only show the situation up till 2008 when unemployment among young people was fairly low in Västsverige during the last years of the Table. The numbers for 2009 and 2010 would show a different picture as the Swedish economy, like most open, export-dependent economies, was seriously impacted by the onset of global economic crisis in the latter part of 2008. For example, by February 2010 the unemployment rate had doubled since the autumn of 2008. As part of a national response to the economic crisis, the Government appointed regional coordinators in every county (*län*) to coordinate public resources and to report on the development and actions proposed or undertaken in each region to a national coordination group consisting of all relevant State Secretaries.

Overall, Sweden responded rapidly to the economic crisis by introducing measures to ensure that all people including those recently displaced from the labour market, have the opportunity to participate in education and training. In this regard, measures have been introduced by agencies under both the

³¹ Report annually provided by the Department of Education, Universities and Research-School Inspection Service. School results and made available at www.hezkuntza.ejgv.euskadi.net/143-inspcont/es/contenidos/informacion/resultado_inspeccion_educacion/es_escolar/resultado_escolar.html.

³² OECD (2010), *Education at a Glance-OECD Indicators*, Paris Cedex, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/39/45926093.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

³³ Upper secondary technical and vocational colleges (HTL) is part of the upper secondary school system in Austria.

³⁴ Schneeberger, A. (2010), *Bildung 2020: EU-Benchmarks und reale Trends als Herausforderungen*, www.pifffikus.at/eb/Textversion_Referat_Schneeberger_Bregenz%2023.09.2010.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

Ministry of Education and Research (e.g. Swedish National Agency for Education) and under the Ministry of Employment (e.g. the Public Employment Service). The major initiatives under the Ministry of Education and Research have been:

- **Yrkesvux (the adult VET initiative)**

A special initiative for VET for adults was introduced for the period 2009-2011, creating over 20,000 additional VET spaces for adults in municipal adult education. Over SEK 2,4 billion (€250 million) of supplementary state grants have been earmarked to municipalities to provide more VET for adults within the public education and training system between 2009 and 2011.

- **Yrkeshögskola (Higher Vocational Education)**

Supplementary state grants have been earmarked to support for more study places within higher vocational education, both in the short- and long-term.

- **A new upper secondary school from 2011**

The Government 2010 wants to reform upper secondary schools because upper secondary education faces several major challenges. One of these challenges is that far too many pupils are dropping out, or finishing their studies without achieving pass grades. Another problem is that local scope to design programmes has sometimes been used by those responsible for schools to lower requirements. In addition, the present upper secondary school system does not prepare pupils sufficiently well, either for further studies or for working life. The new upper secondary school will begin to apply to pupils starting in autumn 2011.

The share of independent upper secondary schools was 2008 about 44% of all upper secondary schools in Sweden and the number has increased by 71% over the past five years. These schools are open to students all over the country, whereas municipally run schools normally used to recruit pupils from the municipality. This has put a challenge to municipally run schools during the last 10 years.

Background to SMOC measure

In 1998 the first steps towards closer cooperation between the municipalities in the Göteborg region were taken ('Göteborgsregionen – GR' is an association of thirteen member municipalities in the west of Sweden. GR is one of four associations within the Region Västra Götaland).

This was done through a cooperation agreement which covered a few very specific study pathways in the region. The normal case in those days was that a student of 16 years of age was sent to the closest upper secondary school. The only exception was if the study path at the state level was not offered in that school. In that case the student could choose to go to another school nearby.

At this time in Sweden there were hardly any privately run schools. In the Göteborg region there were only three schools, which had existed for a long period of time. There were new regulations introduced and all privately run schools were opened to students all over the country. Regional politicians realised that competition was unfair and wanted to give the same possibilities to all schools.

After a pilot project during three years all study pathways were opened to all students in the region and the willingness to choose another school increased.

The result was also that some schools lost quite a few students to other schools and competition started. In the cooperation agreement certain rules were stated whereby the ways of cooperation were described. All new pathways had to go through a regional checklist and also regional discussions between local administration and representatives of local politicians before they were approved. The administration concerning the application process was handed over to regional administration which also became responsible for this task.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The education act steers the upper secondary schools in Sweden but the responsibility of quality assurance and provision of upper secondary education lies on local authorities and private mandators.

The appropriate regulation as to this measure can be found in the ordinances where it is stated that each municipality should provide a wide range of study pathways either on their own or through cooperation between other municipalities.

At state level the authority in charge with inspecting local providers is *Statens Skolinspektion*.

There are no direct steering documents for the regional level of upper secondary school in Sweden.

The work done e.g. in the Göteborg region builds on voluntary cooperation between municipalities and is in this case steered by political decisions recommending the member municipalities to act in certain ways. The regional Steering Committee *Förbundsstyrelsen* is the highest level but there are also special political steering groups for different tasks such as education and training *Utbildningsgruppen* or labour market *GRs arbetsmarknadspolitiker*. The regional level works through many networks where the members are represented and form the majority of the participants.

Each member municipality is responsible for offering a wide variety of study pathways with good quality. The aim is to increase quality within upper secondary schools through regional competition and cooperation. The direct beneficiaries are students at upper secondary schools in the Göteborg region.

The *indirect beneficiaries* are:

- The GR region that can attract relevant competence through an attractive education and training system of good quality.
- Businesses that can find relevant competence within the region.
- Academies that can recruit new students that are well prepared for further studies.

Main *features* of this measure are:

- An open system for upper secondary schools without any borders (financial, geographical or social).
- A free choice for students at lower secondary school level when they choose the programme and the place for their studies at upper secondary school.
- A wide range of study paths.
- A good match between the choice of each student and the study places offered in the region.
- Good quality in upper secondary schools that can match the competition with privately run schools.
- Few dropouts at upper secondary schools.
- High rate of eligibility to academic studies.
- Good match between VET and labour market needs.
- A better result than the two other greater city areas in Sweden (Stockholm and Malmö areas).
- A cost effective system with good use of the available resources.
- A positive working climate with many networks working on constant school development programmes in close cooperation within the region.

30 local upper secondary schools run by municipalities provide many different study programmes.

They do so in sharp competition with 48 privately run upper secondary schools. The municipally run schools provide education and training for approximately 60% of the total population aged 16-19 years (21,000 students). Privately run upper secondary schools provide for approximately 40% of students (14,000 students). The total amount of study pathways offered is about 700. This means that the same programme run at 10 different schools makes up 10 pathways.

All upper secondary schools are financed by state grants allocated through the municipalities.

The Göteborg region is well known all over Sweden for this intense cooperation between municipalities and for the positive results concerning e.g. upper secondary school level.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Due to demographic reasons with a decline in the number of students aged 16-19, sharper and more aggressive competition between providers and a new national curriculum for upper secondary school level as from the autumn of 2011 the above mentioned measures will be intensified at a regional level.

Some examples of new measures are: closer cooperation between all providers concerning different pathways/programmes, closer cooperation between private providers and municipal providers, closer cooperation with industry, more intense guidance and counselling and closer cooperation between upper secondary vocational schools and providers of VET for adults.

WALES

In Wales, National Vocational Qualifications Level 3, Advanced ('A') Levels (upper secondary level), Modern Apprenticeships, Work-based Qualifications (WBQ), and Access to Higher Education Qualifications and Courses correspond to ISCED3, whilst Certificates of Higher Education (CHE), Higher National Certificates (HNC), and Modern Skills Diplomas (MSD) correspond to ISCED4³⁵. The significant drop in the statistic from 2005 to 2006 applies across all UK regions, allowing the conclusion that it is most likely the result of a change in reporting parameters (possibly the reporting of Higher National Diplomas-HND, Higher National Certificates-HNCs, Intermediate and Foundation Degrees under ISCED5 instead of ISCED4); however, at the time of writing confirmation was not available from UK statisticians.^{36 37}

In Wales, the proportion of students in further education (ISCED3 and ISCED4) as a proportion of the higher education student population has increased significantly between 1996 and 2005 (by 33%³⁸). Enrollments in agriculture and biological sciences were strongly represented, whilst engineering subjects were weaker. Considering the economic structure and regional differences within Wales, this is unsurprising – large areas of mid- and North Wales are dominated by agriculture and related economic activities. Universities such as Bangor, Aberystwyth and Swansea dedicate much of their research and teaching efforts to biological sciences. Engineering and related subjects are offered mainly by institutions in the South, with a large proportion of manufacturing and engineering companies based there. The relative closeness of Liverpool and Manchester institutions with a strong STEM teaching and research background may contribute to the relative weakness of enrollments in these subjects in some areas of Wales; however, the available data does not allow a firm conclusion.

In the late 1990s, two university mergers occurred, followed by the University Wales College of Medicine merged with Cardiff University in 2004/2005, and the merger of the Welsh College of Horticulture with Glyndŵr University. The Regional Government's Transformation Agenda has encouraged further mergers in various constellations since 2009, with the aim to create stronger, more strategic institutions, improve efficiency, reduce costs and offer students and employers a learning and research environment that links the requirements of the labour market, world-class research, and the transfer of skills into businesses. From 2000 to 2006 the income of the further education and higher education sectors increased by approximately 45% overall, with a significant increase in tuition fees, mainly through the recruitment of non-EU international students.

The change in UK Government in 2010 has resulted in a UK budget featuring cuts to a variety of public spending areas, including education. These cuts in funding at the UK level in turn affect the overall level of funding provided to the Welsh Government. The UK Government's budget cuts included an increase of the maximum ceiling for higher education tuition fees from around £3,000 (circ. €3,500) to £9,000 (circ. €10,700) per annum³⁹ as of the academic year 2012/2013.

Welsh Ministers in exercising powers to apportion the reduced level of funding in Wales for devolved issues decided that students ordinarily resident in Wales and irrespective of their place of study within the UK will not have to pay extra fees. The increase in fees for Welsh domiciled students, no matter where they study in the UK, will be paid by the Regional Government. Means tested Assembly Learning Grants of up to £5,000 (circ. €5,900) will be available to eligible students to help pay for studies⁴⁰. This is intended to support the current positive trend in university enrollments in Wales, and of students from Wales wishing to study at university elsewhere in the UK.

³⁵ Higher Education Funding Council for Wales-HEFCW (2003), *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales – Learning and Progression Routes*, www.cqfw.net accessed in November 2010.

³⁶ Higher education students are those students on courses that are of a standard that is higher than the Advanced Level of the General Certificate of Education, the Higher Grade of the Scottish Certificate of Education, GNVQ/NVQ level 3 or the BTEC or SCOTVEC National Certificate/Diploma." HESA (2009), *Higher Education Student Enrollments and Qualifications obtained at Higher Education Institutions in the United Kingdom for the Academic Year 2007/2008*, SFR 130, www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/1356/161/, accessed in November 2010.

³⁷ Department for Education-DfES (2009), *Participation Rates in Higher Education: Academic Years 1999/2000-2007/08 (Provisional)*, www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/S000839/index.shtml, accessed in November 2010.

³⁸ Ramsden, B. (2007), *Patterns of higher education institutions in the UK – Seventh report*, Universities UK, and Ramsden, B. (2008), *Patterns of higher education institutions in the UK – Eighth report*, Universities UK.

³⁹ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) (2010), *Reform for higher education and student finance*, www.bis.gov.uk/news/topstories/2010/Nov/student-finance, accessed in November 2010.

⁴⁰ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government press release (2010), *Wales unveils future of fees*, <http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/educationandskills/2010/101130fees/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

2.3.2. Highest level of education attained: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education

a. Basic indicators

Tab.6. Population aged 15 or over (1000) and highest level of education attained: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education - levels 0-2 (ISCED 1997)

	TIME									
GEO	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	
Severozapaden	293.6	310.6	327.0	347.0	362.0	371.6	:	:	:	:
Syddanmark	307.8	329.6	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Pais Vasco	852.4	866.4	872.4	888.5	950.0	981.8	990.8	990.6	1,007.7	
Toscana	1,849.0	1,877.5	1,838.0	1,878.8	1,891.2	1,902.0	1,991.4	2,028.9	1,349.4	
Steiermark	302.2	314.8	300.5	294.5	296.8	312.8	321.1	321.2	344.0	
Västsverige	307.7	301.8	323.4	319.2	302.8	314.3	320.1	328.1	387.1	
Wales	617.9	531.3	546.5	565.8	546.3	544.7	593.1	638.0	355.4	

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat [lfst_r_ifsd2pedu] Last update: 27-09-2010, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/print.do?print=true>

Tab.7. Population aged 15 or over (1000)

	TIME									
GEO	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	
Severozapaden	807.5	816.9	827.3	839.0	850.0	860.4	:	:	:	:
Syddanmark	972.6	964.9	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
Pais Vasco	1,850.6	1,849.7	1,842.8	1,833.7	1,828.5	1,821.1	1,818.5	1,815.9	1,808.2	
Toscana	3,205.9	3,178.9	3,163.6	3,143.7	3,109.9	3,101.7	3,101.2	3,096.8	3,086.4	
Steiermark	1,019.8	1,014.0	1,008.1	1,002.8	993.0	989.3	974.2	989.3	987.9	
Västsverige	1,373.5	1,360.5	1,345.0	1,319.0	1,273.6	1,267.0	1,262.7	1,268.9	1,258.8	
Wales	2,424.0	2,410.7	2,367.4	2,359.4	2,349.5	2,341.1	2,328.8	2,315.5	2,304.4	

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat [lfst_r_ifsd2pedu] Last update: 09-09-2010.

The “low skilled” (population with their highest level of education being pre-primary, primary and lower secondary) are still present in all regions. It never drops below 20% of the population over 15 years of age. In many cases the percentage is between 30% and 50%, and in one case it exceeds 60%.

For absolute values as well as percentages, the presence of the low-skilled is important and is a problem that cannot be considered on its way to being solved for the following reasons:

- In the regions with low-skilled rates greater than 50%, the decrease is less than 2-3% per year and therefore has a “natural” progression linked to demographic phenomena;
- On the other hand, there are regions in which the decrease is about 5%. These are regions where the low-skilled are somewhere between 30% and 50%;
- In the regions with low-skilled rates below 30%, a trend for stagnation is found, with slight changes, not always favourable.

This shows that there are policies capable of reducing the number of low-skilled workers up to 25% of the population, but the trends enacted over the decade do not show any capability of greater impact in any region.

Policies are directed mainly at reducing the number of dropouts. They are based on measures, such as:

- Diversification of paths (which in Wales led to the adoption of the School Effectiveness Framework *Professional Learning Community* (PLC) approach, in Vidin led to activating the *Second Chance Schools*, in the Basque Country to *Curricular Diversification Programmes*, in addition to activating Complementary school programmes and specific educational reinforcement projects);
- Implementation of special support interventions during transition from school to other careers (an example in Styria is the *Berufsfindungsbegleiter* and the vocational educational training orientation and career guidance);
- The requirement for schools to recognise the right for extra support (implemented in Sweden as of 2011) to students who do not achieve the required standards.

b. Trends analysis and policy evaluation

SEVEROZAPADEN

Contextual factors that caused variations

The transition period has had a very unfavorable impact on encompassing and keeping children at school. The reasons for this are complex and difficult to surmount. Contemporary primary school endeavours to be as close to children's lives as possible, to help them learn, to what their desire and interest to live actively, and to understand and solve independently the problems they face. The whole educational and instructive activity has been reviewed and restructured to serve this purpose. A priority in the recent reforms concerning basic education was the development of State Educational Requirements for the study content and the respective syllabi. The 2002/2003 academic year saw the beginning of their stage-by-stage implementation from grade 1 to grade 9.

A number of questions, related to basic education (comprising primary –from the 1st through to the 4th grade and lower secondary – from the 5th through to 8th grade) are discussed in the National Programme for Development of School Education and Pre-school Upbringing and Education. One of the most important questions is the change in the structure of education according to which the duration of basic education is planned to be shortened by a year and the pupils are to get their basic education certificates after completing 7th grade. Another important issue is related to the optimization of the school network, which will predominantly affect *nachalni* (primary) and *osnovni* (basic) schools located in small settlements. In relation to this, a number of measures have been planned in order to make the process of this optimization smoother and to prevent it from bringing about restricted access to education due to the distant location of schools in some regions of the country.

Policies and measures having positive effects

Some of the gravest issues concerning basic education have been singled out and the possible approaches to solving them have been discussed. One of these problems is the increasing number of pupils of compulsory schooling age who are not included in the system of education or drop out of it. The policy of decreasing the number of those who are left out and those who drop out of school includes a wide range of measures, aimed at neutralizing the influence of various negative factors which lead to children's dropping out of school. With a view to the efficient implementation of these measures the development of a system of data collection, evaluation, control and analysis of the children subject to compulsory schooling according to grades, levels and stages started. Together with the measures for keeping children of compulsory schooling age at school, a system of measures for the re-integration of children who have already dropped out of school was developed. This system includes adaptations of the syllabuses, alternative forms of education, starting Second Chance pilot schools. A mechanism of informing parents about their children's absences and late-comings on a daily basis is also envisaged, including by means of ICT and the national educational portal.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

- Ritualisation of school life. It is related to the development of a system of symbols and rituals, and in the long run, traditions, which will nurture pupils' sense of belonging to their school, which will, in turn, enhance their motivation to participate actively in various forms of school and out-of-school life.
- Development of out-of-class and out-of-school activity. The good traditions in these spheres were abandoned during the 1990s and are now being very slowly revived, mainly because of the lack of support from the state and municipalities.
- The preservation of the traditional Bulgarian education system with intensive foreign language learning which gives very good results.
- Measures for providing access of students with different abilities, needs and interests to find their place in the educational system.
- Measures for motivation of students to stay longer in the system school education.
- Enhancing the prestige and social status of the teacher.

SYDDANMARK

Policies and measures having positive effects

A new law by the Government has encouraged students to apply for universities and other higher education. The new law multiplies the grades from the gymnasium in the first years after high school, which makes access to higher education easier. Furthermore the economic crisis has forced lots of young people from the labour market to the educational system. In 2009 and 2010 the higher education institutions in Southern Denmark recorded the highest intake of students ever, which over time eventually will result in a labour force with a higher level of skills than today.

PAÍS VASCO

Contextual factors that caused variations

The possible factors that influence the demonstrated variations are demographic (acute decrease in the population between 10-24 years old), on the one hand, and on the other, the greater level of qualification among the Basque population, as mentioned above.

Policies and measures having positive effects

Some of the measures set up by the Department of Education, Universities and Research to prevent students leaving the education system early without having achieved secondary education targets are:

- *Curricular Diversification Programmes*, that are aimed at compulsory secondary education students, over 15 and under 18 years old that, after a prior psycho-pedagogic evaluation, according to the teaching staff can only obtain the general skills in this stage by means of specific programmes. These programmes are directed towards getting the compulsory secondary education leaving certificate. Students spend at least 18 hours on the combination of linguistic-social and scientific-technological fields, including areas determined by the centre. The remaining areas are taken in ordinary groups (in any case a minimum of three areas) or in specific groups. Each field is given by a single teacher. One of the teachers from the field assumes individual tutoring of this student, to which they dedicate at least two hours a week.

- *Complementary school programmes*, that are aimed at students under 16 and over 14 years old, with serious problems in adapting to school and for whom other ordinary and extraordinary care measures from the school have not been sufficient. Its purpose is to encourage personal and social adjustment, as well as make progress in line with the basic objectives of compulsory secondary education. Manual and pre-work activities that might be included do not aim to provide professional initiation (for which there are other programmes) but attempt to motivate and provide a learning situation for educational contents. These are programmes that are developed outside the ordinary school context individually, applicable once other measures within the school have been exhausted. They are temporary programmes within the school year and should be requested once again if they are required to continue the following year.

- *Specific educational reinforcement programmes*, whose aims include to offer socially disadvantaged students or anyone who have taken compulsory secondary education without acquiring the skills from the previous stage an appropriate and good quality educational response that makes it easier for them to achieve the compulsory learning targets in their ordinary school environment, in order to guarantee educational equality. Furthermore these programmes aim to provide students in situations of non adaptation to school with reception and adaptation processes that make it possible to find the right response for their needs within the education system.

- *Intercultural programmes and programmes to include recently arrived students.*

TOSCANA

Contextual factors that caused variations

The dynamics over time show a general increase in the students who attain their secondary school leaving certificate, a growth that has nevertheless lessened in the last few years also due to the burden of immigrants on this indicator. Tuscany (77%) has figures slightly above the national average (75.8%). Again as regards upper secondary school, the type of school where students enrol deserves further reflection, since this decision entails significant effects in terms of the probability of continuing studies or finding a suitable occupation after the leaving certificate. In the last ten years in Tuscany enrollments in secondary schools have increased, at the expense of a weak yet constant reduction of the number of students in technical colleges.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The policies of Tuscany have been aimed at planning a more balanced distribution of the types of institutes and courses of study on a local level to meet the needs of the users and working world, eliminating useless duplications of training courses.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Differentiating (that is decentralising) could prove to be very useful as it would enable the capability of the different areas to be put to the test as regards exercising the responsibility in the management of the resources given and to the State the possibility of effectively evaluating efficiency in the management. Also because the traditional bureaucratic structure of the scholastic administration is now inadequate to sustain the challenges set by the complicated processes of autonomous reform that have been outlined. The two important lots of regional decentralisation therefore comply with the planning of the training on offer, which involves the management of personnel and the definition of the essential performance levels.

STEIERMARK

Contextual factors that caused variations

According to the European benchmarks – completing upper secondary, reducing early school leaving etc. – the number of people aged 15 and older with not more than lower secondary education level could have decreased by about 13% within the last 10 years in Styria. This development is based on efforts both in full time school education – especially upper secondary vocational school – and apprenticeship/dual system education. The Styria region used national policy approaches – especially the so called “Education guarantee until the age of 18” – to implement new initiatives like production schools etc.

Policies and measures having positive effects

In Styria some initiatives tried to improve the situation concerning the number of people completing upper secondary, early school leaving etc.

- Development and implementation of innovative projects and measures to support young people at the points of transition from initial education to further education and training, also with resources from European Social Fund (ESF), supported by Provincial Government resources of education, economics and social affairs. The *Berufsfindungsbegleiter* is a European and OECD wide recognised approach for a process oriented, individualised service with significant effects in improving the transition quote at the interfaces between initial education, the end of compulsory education and further education and training, especially in the area of apprenticeship/dual education at upper secondary level.
- A taskforce at provincial level “Vocational Educational Training Orientation – Career Guidance” developed a strategic concept for improving the support for young people at all relevant transition points between school, further education and world of work. First steps of realisation of the results of the taskforce work was the establishment of a “Career Guidance Co-ordinator” at Provincial Government administration level, next steps will follow.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Based on the new provincial governmental programme the Styria province will reflect good practice from the past, improve and extend successful initiatives and will set new initiatives in specific areas especially at the interfaces between initial education and working life, at the age 15/16.

VÄSTSVRIGE

Contextual factors that caused variations

Sweden still has a lower percentage of young people aged 18-24 with lower secondary education compared to EU27. This is due to strong political interest in and commitment to lifelong learning in Sweden. Almost 100% of all young people aged 15-16 finish the compulsory school/lower secondary school. About 10% of these do not fulfil the eligibility for upper secondary school (Pass in Swedish, English and Mathematics), but there are measures to include these students in individual pathways.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

In the new School Act which will be applied as from 1 July 2011 the right of the student to extra support is more clearly stated, which might decrease the numbers of students who do not meet the new entry requirements of the reformed upper secondary school.

WALES

Contextual factors that caused variations

One of the main tools to deliver strategic skills and education in Wales is the European Social Fund. Wales has benefited from previous rounds of the ESF Programme, and continues to utilise the ESF to support the implementation of regional policies.

The 2007-2013 ESF Operational Programmes for Wales are distinct from those of the UK as a Member State and of other Devolved Administrations within the UK, and have been specifically developed in alignment with the Regional Government's strategic priorities⁴¹. They are being delivered through a strategic and collaborative approach which, in contrast with previous programming rounds, aims for fewer but larger strategic projects with greater impact. Regional Government departments have a strong role in:

- setting the policy direction of the programmes;
- leading a number of strategic projects; and
- facilitating collaborative working on project development and delivery amongst external stakeholder organisations.

The Welsh Assembly Government's Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) is the lead policy department for 6 of the 7 ESF Strategic Frameworks, covering 5 ESF Priorities (and 7 Themes) in total across both Convergence and Competitiveness Programmes. EU funds available are matchfunded by Regional domestic budgets⁴².

Policies and measures having positive effects

Based on the success of the first funding round, the current ESF programmes for Wales – Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE) – were developed in line with Regional Government objectives⁴³. Strategic Frameworks provide the necessary direction and include:

- ESF Convergence Priority 1: Supplying young people with the skills needed for learning and future employment
 - Theme 1: Tackling under achievement
 - Theme 2: Raising skills and aspirations
- ESF Convergence Priority 2: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
 - Theme 1: Helping people into sustainable employment
 - Theme 2: Helping people to remain in work
- ESF Convergence Priority 3: Improving skills levels and the adaptability of the workforce
 - Theme 1: Raising the skills base of the workforce and supporting progression in employment through basic and intermediate level skills
 - Theme 2: Skills for the knowledge economy; higher level skills and systems for workforce development
 - Theme 3: Promoting gender equality in employment
- ESF Competitiveness Priority 1: Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity
- ESF Competitiveness Priority 2: Raising skills levels and adaptability of the workforce.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

There is a strong focus on linking practical delivery with policy that is based on strategic direction and evidence. The range of agreed approaches and strategies across the breadth of education provision is now established, with increasing emphasis on effective delivery. For schools this involved a developing bottom-up approach to enhancing learning effectiveness, with a clear view to individual learner attainment through the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF)⁴⁴. Activity is broad-ranging but includes the use of

⁴¹ European Commission Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities European Social Fund-United Kingdom (2010), *Regional Profiles – Wales*, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/members/gb_en.htm, accessed in November 2010.

⁴² See footnote 41.

⁴³ WEFO-Welsh European Funding Office, <http://wefo.wales.gov.uk/programmes/?jsessionid=FvTpM5CJnySdqHjTlKGIvNmnqTLZHnD699shYGwRwGvIC12bzI1437466650?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

⁴⁴ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government- Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (2008), *School Effectiveness Framework Building effective learning communities together*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/schooleffectivenessframework/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

Professional Learning Community (PLC)⁴⁵ approaches to tackling under-achievement within schools. Through PLCs, groups of practitioners with an interest in improving specific areas of learning delivery come together within a controlled framework to analyse delivery, undertake data benchmarking, research applied methodology / pedagogy and test the resulting enhanced delivery. PLCs have been developed at various levels: within individual schools, local areas, and pan-Wales. This PLC approach is also now being piloted internationally, with groups of teachers in British Columbia, Canada. The principal focus for PLC work through the SEF is on improved literacy, improved numeracy, and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. Further to this, there are efforts to strengthen and streamline the qualification framework used in Wales, and to link it with European qualification standards to support learner (and later labour force) mobility. The Welsh Assembly Government introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate⁴⁶ to transform learning for young people in Wales. It gives broader experiences than traditional learning programmes, to suit the diverse needs of young people. It can be studied in English or Welsh, or a combination of the two languages. In addition, a new suite of skills qualifications which will replace the current key skills of Communication, Application of Number and Information and Communication Technology, and the basic skills of Adult Literacy, Adult Numeracy and Skills for Life ICT. This new suite of skills qualifications has been implemented from the 1st of September 2010⁴⁷.

2.3.3. Students in tertiary education

a. Basic indicators

Tab.8. Students in tertiary education (ISCED 5-6) - as a percentage of the population aged 20-24 years at regional level

TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO									
Severozapaden	4.3	4.0	3.7	:	:	:	:	:	:
Syddanmark	56.8	58.9	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
País Vasco	69.8	68.7	68.6	68.4	66.1	64.3	62.0	61.0	59.2
Toscana	88.8	90.5	89.2	87.6	87.5	85.6	78.5	72.1	67.4
Steiermark	60.0	58.5	57.4	53.6	53.8	53.0	54.7	:	:
Västsverige	66.3	67.6	70.6	70.9	73.4	73.2	67.1	62.1	57.3
Wales	50.2	53.8	55.0	56.8	58.6	65.6	62.3	53.7	58.5

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat [lfst_r_lfsd2pedu] Last update: 09-09-2010.

Number of students in tertiary education (ISCED levels 5 and 6) as a percentage of the population aged 20–24 years old in the region. The student population is related to the population in the relevant age group in order to see the relative size of the student population at regional level.

Tab.9. Highest level of education attained by the population aged 15 and over: Tertiary education - levels 5-6 (ISCED 1997) at NUTS levels 1 and 2 (1000)

TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO									
Severozapaden	105.7	106.5	114.2	113.0	116.3	120.6	:	:	:
Syddanmark	198.1	183.4	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
País Vasco	618.2	620.0	605.2	591.9	532.5	511.9	490.3	481.8	467.5
Toscana	366.2	351.0	340.3	308.1	272.8	260.4	235.7	220.9	158.5
Steiermark	125.6	126.7	126.6	128.8	127.2	117.7	109.1	101.0	91.4
Västsverige	337.2	331.8	318.2	296.7	289.6	275.2	270.9	265.0	324.0
Wales	522.8	455.2	427.6	427.6	427.8	414.2	385.1	370.6	369.6

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat [lfst_r_lfsd2pedu] Last update: 09-09-2010.

⁴⁵ www.sefwales.co.uk/sef-p2-home/sef-p2-about-sef/sef-p2-about-sef-sef-and-las/sef-plcs.htm, accessed in November 2010.

⁴⁶ www.wbq.org.uk/home, accessed in November 2010.

⁴⁷ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Essential Skills Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/qualificationsinwales/qualificationtypesinwales/essentialskillswales/introsesw/?lang=en&ts=1>, accessed in November 2010.

Tab. 10. Percentage of the population aged 25-64 having completed tertiary education

	TIME	2009	2008	2007
GEO				
Severozapaden		17,1	17,4	17,4
Syddanmark		27,7	28,4	26,9
Pais Vasco		43,6	42,2	42,5
Toscana		14,8	15,5	14,7
Steiermark		16,6	15,7	16,1
Västsverige		31,8 (p)	31,0 (p)	31,2
Wales		32,7	29,6	a

a: West Wales and the Valleys 25,6; East Wales 32,9

p: provisional data

Source of Data: Eurostat [lfst_r_lfsd2pedu] Last update: 09-09-2010.

Data regarding the number of students in tertiary education (ISCED levels 5 and 6) as a percentage of the population aged 20–24 years old in the region, shows a high level of participation, clearly superior to the percentage of the population aged 25-64 having completed tertiary education. This should produce a progressive increase of the percentage, on condition that those currently enrolled pass their exams.

With respect to other indicators taken into consideration, this is the only one where over the decade there have been positive trends in all the regions, including those concerned by heavy migration and by brain drain. Yet it should be noted that the most significant growth was in the first part of the decade, whereas the later years were characterised by a substantial hold, with slight drops or slight improvement.

Nevertheless the differences between clusters of regions are significant. The ones we considered record the percentages of population aged 25-64 having completed tertiary education and focus at about 30%, or around 15%. Hence there are differences of more than 100%.

Regional policies have a common goal: increase the relationships between the tertiary education institutions and the job market and regional economy. The aim is to guarantee an adequate competence supply, and also accompany economic development with the support of research centres. In the regions that still do not have an adequate tertiary education structure, the aim is to encourage development (see the Danube Regions Strategy and the commitment for establishing a technical university in Vidin). Where Regional Governments have greater powers, policies aim at intervening on a wide range of factors (in addition to Styria, see the example of the Basque Country where the strategic objective of the University Plan is specified in nine fields of action including: teaching innovation; internationalisation of universities; modernisation of university services; quality systems; university-company-society relationships; research; the Basque language; a stable financing framework for the university of the Basque Country/*Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*; stable framework of relationships with private universities in the Basque University System). In the case of Wales, the goal of a closer link with the regional growth strategies is being pursued through the measures aiming at the Credit and Qualifications Framework (CQF for Wales), designated on the basis of a shared responsibility for investment between individuals, employers and Government and through the creation of a coherent system of providers, including higher as well as further education institutions, where funding methods support delivery.

b. Trends analysis and policy evaluation

SEVEROZAPADEN

Contextual factors that caused variations

The current challenges before the higher education system are connected with the necessity to establish market orientation, predominant participation of the users in determining the future development of the system, the application of mechanisms (both legislative and practical) for the establishment of the lifelong learning concept and ensuring the unhindered mobility of young people. The main topic of ongoing debates is the establishment of an efficient connection between tertiary education and the labour market. A large part of the employers declare that there is a lack of specialists with the qualifications necessary for the immediate performance of labour duties in a highly technological environment. There is also a deficiency of adequately prepared employees in the sphere of services, tourism, information technologies and natural sciences. There is a severe deficiency of qualified foreign language teachers within the system

of school education. A serious issue connected with the labour market is the lack of opportunity for practical skills acquisition through the programmes in tertiary education.

A main goal of higher education within the lifelong learning concept is the provision of a wider access to higher education and the creation of equal opportunities for all citizens to participate in higher school programmes. With the beginning of the transition period all barriers on access to higher education were removed. The Higher Education Act does not allow privileges or restrictions connected with age, race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, social background, political views and religion. In addition, the Act regulates alleviations for admitting groups at risk of social isolation- people with disabilities, mothers with children etc., including financial and social support for disadvantaged students. EU citizens apply and are educated under the same terms and procedure as Bulgarian citizens.

The situation on the availability of universities and equivalent institutions of higher education in the region is unfavourable with only one educational institution that would ensure the attraction and retention of young and educated population groups and training of the workforce. The total number of students in colleges and universities (or their affiliates) has 2,137 units in the 2008/2009 academic year. These schools are located only in three districts in the region (*Pleven, Vratsa, Lovech*). They are insufficient and this deepens on the negative trend in the educational system of the area.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The new Bulgarian University has a local centre in Vidin for distance and continuing education. At the local centre, one can obtain information on the training at the university, and if studying in a distance learning programme, there you can enrol for the semester and receive your training materials.

For years the local authorities have been fighting for accreditation of a large technical university in the town of Vidin. During the year 2010 a project for Danube Regions Strategy was adopted in Brussels. 80% of the regions, constituting the Northwest Region fall within this Strategy. The establishment of a Technical University of Vidin is set as one of the priorities in this Strategy. The envisaged specialities are in line with the demands of the regional labour market. The existence of a university will attract more young people to Vidin and will have positive impact on the local society.

SYDDANMARK

Contextual factors that caused variations

The latest extrapolation from the Ministry of Education expects that 45% of a year group will complete some kind of further education on tertiary level. Thus it is no surprise that 56% of the 20-24 year olds participate in tertiary education – the interesting parameter will be the completion rate.

As noted above, the intake of students at university and other further institutions within the field of further education was record-breaking in 2009 as well as in 2010. This was in part due to three structural factors:

- A new law by the Government has encouraged students to apply for universities and other higher education. The new law multiplies the grades from the gymnasium in the first years after high school, which makes access to higher education easier.
- Furthermore has the economic crisis forced lots of young people from the labour market to the educational system.
- In 2005 a new structure was introduced at the upper secondary level. The new structure introduced a new set of study programmes at the gymnasiums, which were not 100% coordinated with the demands Universities. For example if you want to study political science you need mathematics at a certain level, which is not automatically part of the social study programme at the gymnasium. Thus a lot of students had to complete single courses before they could begin a tertiary education.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

In 2009 and 2010 higher education in Southern Denmark recorded the highest intake of students ever, which over time eventually will result in a labour force with a higher level of skills than today.

This coupled with the fact that the demands from private companies to the labour market will eventually lead to a better educated workforce, since a lot of those who have lost their jobs in the last years have entered different kinds of education – either at the university or other levels of education.

In Denmark the national ambition within the field of tertiary education is that 50% of a year group complete a tertiary education within 25 years after completing elementary school. As noted above, 45%

of a year group in 2008 is expected complete tertiary education. The explanation of the fact that only 27% to 28% of the population aged 25 – 64 have completed tertiary education must be found in the historical structure of the labour market. In the 1960s and 1970s Denmark still had a lot of classic industrial production. In the industrial production you were often not required to have an education. Thus more people elected either to work as unskilled or as a skilled worker instead of participating tertiary education. In the globalized world higher education is a necessity, and thus it is positive that Denmark and South Denmark is edging closer to the goal of 50%.

In the 1960s and 1970s not all students were eligible to receive educational grants from the national state, which made it economically difficult for some to complete tertiary education. Today almost everybody is eligible for educational grants.

PAÍS VASCO

Contextual factors that caused variations

Students aged 16 years old finishing compulsory secondary education choosing to take *Bachillerato* represent a percentage of around 75% of the students that take ISCED 3-4 level studies. On the other hand, the gross rate of *Bachillerato* graduates in the 2006-2007 academic year was 65.4%. That shows that the majority of students choose to go for tertiary studies. This trend has been constantly growing over the last decade and all indicators suggest that the trend will be maintained in the short term⁴⁸.

Secondary students' academic results have been improving to the extent that the number of people that gain the certificate corresponding to these studies has increased by two points (2% more) in this period. There are consequently more people taking tertiary studies.

On the other hand, there is a wide offer of tertiary level studies in the three capitals of the three Basque Provinces, geographically close together, and with good public transport between them, in addition to other university campuses located in other smaller cities. There are 56 university centres depending on the University of the Basque Country (with a campus in the three provincial capitals), *Deusto University* (with a campus in Bilbao and San Sebastián), *Mondragón Unibertsitatea* (with two campuses, one in Mondragón and another in Goierri, both in Gipuzkoa) and the National Distance Learning University.

Finally, it should be highlighted that RTD spending in this Basque Country has increased by 80% between 2003 and 2008, rising from 1.42% of GDP in 2003 to 1.85% in 2008. Research personnel have also increased from 7.8% of employed population in 2003 to 9.4% in 2008.

Policies and measures having positive effects

- Economic funding or grants for university students. General grants for language courses abroad, for Erasmus students and other university mobility and international programmes, academic excellence grants for high performance students.
- Funding for specialisation studies abroad.
- Funding for training and advanced courses for research personnel.
- Euskadi research prizes.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The 2007-2010 University Plan was drawn up by the Department of Education, Universities and Research, with contributions from the three Basque System Universities, with consultancy and contributions from members of the Public University Teaching Coordination Council and the Basque Universities Council, with a favourable report from the Basque Government Delegate Commission for Planning and Economic Matters on 12th July 2007, and after a new round of contributions by the main educational agents in the Basque University System it was approved by the Government Council on 4th December 2007. The Basque Parliament, in a session held on 13th March 2008, has also added to the Plan contents with different resolutions.

The strategic objective of this University Plan is European convergence specified in nine fields of action:

- Teaching innovation.
- Internationalisation of the universities.
- Modernisation of university services.

⁴⁸ See footnote 31.

- Quality systems.
- University-company-society relations.
- Research.
- Basque language.
- Stable financing framework for the University of the Basque Country/*Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*.
- Stable framework of relationships with private universities in the Basque University System.

Necessary conditions

The figure corresponding to 2008 for the percentage of population between 25 and 34 in the Basque Country that has completed tertiary level studies is 57.7%. This data implies that over the next few years, the relative indicator for the age range corresponding to 25 to 64 will grow.

On the other hand, the gross rate of population that graduated from higher studies in the 2006-2007 academic year is 32.8% for studies corresponding to ISCED 5B, 23.8% for studies corresponding to ISCED 5A and 26.5% for studies corresponding to ISCED 6.

Having also seen the evolution of people taking studies at this level and the progressive demographic increase in the population aged between 25 and 34, along with indicators given in the previous paragraphs, it is foreseeable that this indicator will grow in the mid-term.

TOSCANA

Contextual factors that caused variations

The support of the Tuscan Regional Government to integrated courses between universities and the working world played a fundamental role in involving students in post-graduate activities, as well as the financial support through also granting study grants for enrolling on Master's and PhD courses⁴⁹.

The alignment of tertiary instruction process is problematic due to the low productivity of the university system. In Tuscany, for every 10 students enrolled there are 4 who are behind with their studies; out of 100 registered students, there are 18 who drop out in the first year and another 7 who are inactive, that is they remain in the university system, but do not even gain a credit; 25 students out of 100 instead leave before the second year; only 14 students out of 100 graduate within the expected time scale, in the first level and barely 6 out of 100 in the second level. Here training vouchers are relevant.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

A new system of regulations and measures is required that modify the incentives to learn and teach, review the allocation mechanisms of professors and teachers, adequately compensate merit, introduce a better and constant evaluation, strengthen the autonomy and duties of the schools and universities, direct the students' choices according to their abilities and skills needed for the world of work and companies. They are ambitious measures, without which, however, a raising of our levels of instruction and the attainment of objectives defined on a European level is unthinkable.

Necessary conditions

The number of graduates compared with the total population over the age of six is now almost seven times that observed slightly less than 40 years ago. In 1971 it was no more than 2%; in 2008 it amounted to 11%; those with secondary school leaving certificates are almost five times more, going from 7% to 31%; those with a middle school leaving certificate have doubled, growing from 14% to 29% in the same period; and, lastly, those without any educational qualification have reduced by three-quarters and were approximately 7% of the Tuscan population in 2008. However, there are still many students who do not complete their university studies. Future investments therefore need to be made in winning policies such as those listed in the previous paragraph, especially if the general objective of a "*knowledge-based, highly competitive society*" is to be met.

⁴⁹ This is for activities addressed to post-diploma and post-degree students who have access to them although they are not from Tuscany Region. It is nevertheless important that they attend these activities in one of the Universities around Tuscany.

STEIERMARK

Contextual factors that caused variations

Several criteria influenced trends in tertiary education in the last 10 years in Styria, also caused by developments at state level. For example:

- Development and establishment of universities for applied sciences since the mid 1990's.
- The new legal regulations for universities by the National University Act in 2002.
- Development and establishment of pedagogical universities by the National Act in 2005.
- Several regulations for access in special study subjects (especially medicine) limited places for studies in several study subjects.

All these regulations had influence and impact for the provincial development in Styria. Styria is the province in Austria with the highest number of universities/universities of applied sciences behind the capital Vienna. The enrollment of students in tertiary education in Styria is close to the Austrian average.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The Styria province has a particular approach to improve activities and dimensions of research and development at tertiary level and in the private sector in several core areas concerning to the Styrian core competencies in economics and science. The province Styria has noted as a visible effect of this approach, the highest level of expenditure for research and development of GDP related to all other provinces in Austria. However, this is not directly correlated to the number of students and persons with an academic degree. In these aspects Styria is close to or a little bit behind the Austrian average.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Related to the new Provincial governmental programme for education the strategies and policies concerning the tertiary level should be defined – concerning the state tertiary education policies – as one of the most important issues the improvement of creating synergies between tertiary education institutions to each other, and with enterprises and economics in the region – and on a state and international levels – in general.

The most important issues in Styria concerning the addressed issues are:

- To improve preparation and guidance at secondary level for education choices for post secondary and tertiary level.
- To support cooperation and coordination at three axes:
 - > horizontal - between institutions and organisations at post secondary level,
 - > vertical – between secondary and post secondary/tertiary level institutions, especially at the interfaces and transition points, and
 - > cross-sectoral, between education institutions and industry, labour market, etc.

The new governmental programme gives a good background for activities in these directions.

VÄSTSVRIGE

Contextual factors that caused variations

In 1977, the Swedish system was transformed from a binary system of higher education to a formally unitary one comprising academic, vocational and longer and shorter professional programmes. In the later part of the 20th and early 21st century higher education has expanded significantly and new institutions have been founded throughout Sweden. The last 20 years have seen a large increase in the number of students as well. In Sweden, state agencies take on many of the tasks that in many other countries rest with central Government ministries. Swedish ministries are mainly responsible for determining policy while major reviews and analyses, as well as a number of other tasks, are generally undertaken by the agencies under the authority of the ministries.

State higher education institutions are formally Government agencies subject to the Government. They are part of the public, central Government administration, in terms of both organisation and function, but with additional sector-specific legislation aiming, among other things, to preserve academic freedom. Higher education in Sweden, apart from doctoral studies, is almost exclusively state financed.

All higher education institutions have the same national role and the same right to apply for research funding. In addition to this, all the higher education institutions play an important role in their regions and many of them consider it necessary to be regional, national and international actors, even though

the weight given to these different roles may vary at the different institutions. There is therefore a distinct regional dimension to higher education in Sweden. There has been a significant expansion of study places outside the traditional university regions. Higher education is also ascribed a significant role in the development of Swedish society in a range of respects, by local, regional and national authorities as well as by local business communities⁵⁰.

The Table shows that the number of students increased during the years 2003 and 2004, which might be the result of the initiative of the former Government concerning the "knowledge lift" (*kunskapslyftet*), where extra funding for 100,000 places in adult education (1997-2002) made it possible for adults to study courses that made them meet the requirements for higher education. The decline in numbers in 2008 might be explained by the fact that the labour market was working very well during that year.

Sweden spends a higher proportion of its GDP on education, at secondary level of education, than the EU Average (2,7% compared to EU27 2.2%). In the early 1970s the proportion of the population with higher education (ISCED 5-6) was less than 10%. Sweden now has relatively high levels of educational attainment compared with the OECD average but lags behind leading countries such as Canada. In Västra Götaland, 22% of the population aged 25-64 years has at least three years of post secondary education, about the same as the national level. Relative to other Member States, Sweden has amongst the highest proportions of population with higher education. In terms of the labour market, it is expected that demand for those with only compulsory school education will fall by half by 2020. Compared to the rest of Europe, Västra Götaland tops the ranking when it comes to trade and industry's investment in research and development. In order for Västra Götaland to continue to be attractive for research and development, it is important that its universities and other institutions of higher education maintain a high international standard. Good cooperation between companies and institutions of higher education is important. Region Västra Götaland stimulates research and development cooperation between companies and institutions of higher education in areas that are important to Västra Götaland's growth and development. There are over 90,000 students at the universities and other institutions of higher education in Västra Götaland. In addition to six universities/university colleges, there are 20 *folk high* schools and over 200 advanced vocational training courses. As responsible for regional development and growth, Region Västra Götaland has adopted a vision of obtaining "a leading position in competence and knowledge development". Two essential elements of the vision are: every second adult should have some form of higher education; differences in education levels in different parts of the region should be evened out. Another regional priority, stated in the regional growth programme (RTP) is to encourage young persons to study technics, natural sciences and mathematics.

Policies and measures having positive effects

To even out the participation in higher education between different parts of the region, Region Västra Götaland has supported the establishment of learning centres for distance learning and flexible learning. There is a learning centre in nearly every municipality in Västsverige that enables, for example, persons living far away from a university to participate in higher education on distance based platforms.

To encourage young people to study technical subjects, natural sciences and mathematics, Region Västra Götaland gives yearly contributions to the six Science Discovery Centres in the region. Support has also been given to a student organisation, *Intize*, that organises students in mathematics at Chalmers University of Technology being tutors for pupils and students in upper secondary education aiming at encouraging them to continue studying mathematics at a technical college/university.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Due to demographic reasons with a decline in the number of students aged 16-19, sharper and more aggressive competition between providers and a new national curriculum for upper secondary school level as from the autumn of 2011 the above mentioned measures will be intensified.

State grants have been set aside for 10,000 extra study places at universities and higher education institutions during 2010 and 2011.

During the study year 2008/2009 24,300 foreign students started studying at Swedish universities, an increase by 12% compared to the year before. The total number of foreign students was 36,600, which is

⁵⁰ Högskoleverket (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education) (June 29, 2006), OECD *Thematic Review of Tertiary Education-Country Background Report for Sweden*, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/20/29/37524407.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

three times as many as ten years ago. National as well as regional goals have for many years stated that at least 50% of students who finish upper secondary school should continue to tertiary level. With the revision of the upper secondary school system in 2011 the goal of the Government is to put more focus on VET and that VET students should be able to go on studying at higher vocational education rather than at university. All students at VET programmes are guaranteed the right to take general entrance courses to university but it is no longer obligatory.

WALES

Contextual factors that caused variations

Educational attainment of the 25-64 year old population^{51 52}

- In comparison with other OECD countries, Wales ranked in the middle in terms of persons qualified to degree (tertiary) level but had a relatively longer tail of persons with low or no qualifications⁵³.
- The proportions of the adult population having achieved a high educational attainment ranged from 48% in Canada to 11% in Turkey. In Wales 28% had achieved high qualifications, ranking them in the middle of the OECD countries and amongst a group with similar rates. This reflects Wales' position in 2005.
- A third of the Welsh population had obtained at most low qualifications. The percentage ranked relatively highly within OECD countries, although amongst a group of several other countries with similar percentages.

Population having completed tertiary education, by age group⁵⁴

- In general the proportions of the population that had completed tertiary education varied by a far greater degree throughout the OECD countries than those that had completed secondary education, and were significantly lower.
- The proportion with tertiary qualifications in Wales was lower than the UK but similar to the OECD average with 28% of its adult population having obtained tertiary qualifications.
- The proportions of 25-34 and 45-54 year olds attaining tertiary education were similar to the OECD averages.
- Younger people in Wales were more likely to be qualified to this level than previous cohorts. However several countries that ranked below Wales for the 45-54 age group - such as Ireland, Spain and Korea - had significantly higher proportions of young people with tertiary qualifications compared with Wales. This suggests expansion in recent years of their tertiary sector.

While the participation rates of young people in tertiary education are interesting in terms of identifying issues regarding access to higher learning, it is perhaps more relevant to consider the percentage completion rates for those passing through universities and other forms of further learning. The challenge in Wales at present is to balance the availability of declining funding as a result of Member State budget cuts against the still increasing demands on university places by the student cohort. This could result in a higher percentage of degrees being completed, as universities increase entrance requirements and seek to accept the better able learners. Disadvantaged groups need to be supported to ensure equitable access to further learning, including universities.

Wales has seen steady and sustained growth in performance when considering higher level attainment in tertiary education over the period. There has been notable emphasis on the value of higher education across the UK in recent years, and similarly in Wales, with sufficient access to university being a continual issue on the political agenda⁵⁵.

Through the leadership of higher education providers, higher education already makes a substantial contribution to economy and society⁵⁶. In audits by the UK Quality Assurance Agency⁵⁷, Welsh Universities

⁵¹ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *International Comparisons of Education Indicators-February 2010*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/articles/comparisoneducation/?lang=en&ts=1>, accessed in November 2010.

⁵² The attainment levels of the adult population have been analysed by considering the percentage of adults having reached low, medium and high levels of attainment defined as follows: Low attainment refers to primary, lower secondary and 'short' upper-secondary education (i.e. achieving less than the equivalent to 5 A*-C at GCSE); Medium attainment refers to 'long' upper secondary education (i.e. at or above 5 A*-C GCSE or equivalent); High attainment refers to tertiary education.

⁵³ However, this compares NUTS2 and NUTS1 levels. As before, this highlights the importance of improving the ability to draw regional comparisons, in particular with respect to economic and structural factors that may influence these figures.

⁵⁴ See footnote 51.

⁵⁵ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2009), *For Our Future The 21st Century Higher Education Strategy and Plan for Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/091125hedocen.pdf>, accessed in November 2010.

⁵⁶ National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Learning Committee (2009), *The Economic Contribution of Higher Education in Wales*.

⁵⁷ www.qaa.ac.uk/, accessed in November 2010.

have consistently demonstrated quality in teaching and learning. The UK National Student Survey⁵⁸ suggests that, overall, students in Wales are more satisfied with their courses. Wales also has a good reputation for attracting students from non traditional backgrounds including those from low participation neighbourhoods, state schools and those with disabilities.

Policies and measures having positive effects

Regional strategies and policy takes into account that the breadth and depth of impact of higher education on life goes far beyond higher education institutions and those who work, learn and research in them. Communities, businesses, employers, and regions can be transformed by an effective higher education system. Similarly, strengthening higher education complements Wales' broader skills strategy, Skills That Work for Wales, and other actions aimed at enriching the lives and education of young people: the 14-19 framework, the Transformation agenda⁵⁹, and the Children and Young People's Partnership⁶⁰ approach. Importantly, it follows, and aligns with, the Economic Renewal Programme (2010) for Wales. The two pillars of social justice and supporting a buoyant economy form the basis of refreshed regional policy on higher education.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The expectation is to see greater scope for learning in progressive steps, supported by the credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW). Accreditation of prior learning and of learning in credited modules will be improved along with acceptance of shared responsibility for investment between individuals, employers and Government. Many more people will be able to achieve higher level skills by following learning pathways that are designed and delivered collaboratively. Work-based learning will be strengthened through partnership between employers and providers over the shaping and delivery of learning and qualifications, including Foundation Degrees⁶¹ and bespoke learning opportunities. It is expected that higher education will provide learners not only with academic knowledge but also with employability skills allowing graduates to compete successfully in the economic environment of the future. These skills – underpinned by high-quality workplacements for students – include the ability to work in teams, communicate, be flexible, innovative, and able to lead. The national further and higher education system for Wales will continue to evolve: different providers have different strengths but need to work together to complement each other. The aim is to create a coherent system of providers, including higher as well as further education institutions, where funding methodologies will support delivery. This will help strengthen the overall quality of further and higher education, improving participation, workforce development, and research and innovation. As part of the region's aim to see greater diversity and flexibility in programme design and delivery, Foundation Degrees in Wales can be delivered by higher or further education institutions as of 2010. Foundation Degrees are employment-focussed and can provide the means to meet skills deficits at levels 4 and 5 if employers see them as relevant. As a 'bridge' between traditional further and higher education, Foundation Degrees offer credit for learners wanting to progress to an articulated⁶² degree programme⁶³. The initiative, supported with £16 million (circ. €19m) ESF funding, will include approaches which promote partnerships between higher education, further education, and employers at regional and state level.

Necessary conditions

Over the short period of available data Wales is showing reasonable levels of growth in attainment. However, challenges do exist within these overall figures when considering activity in the more economically depressed areas of Wales, such as West Wales and the valleys (25.6). The Welsh Assembly Government appreciates the link between poverty and educational achievement. To address this, a number of successful education policies and initiatives have been driven by the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to alleviate child poverty. It has also been acknowledged that young people who have disengaged from

⁵⁸ Higher Education Funding Council for Wales-HEFCW (2010), *Press release-Welsh Higher Education satisfies students (18/08/2010)*, www.hefcw.ac.uk/news/press_releases/press_releases.aspx, accessed in November 2010.

⁵⁹ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2008), *Enterprise and Learning Committee: Inquiry into the Transformation Agenda*, <http://wales.gov.uk/publications/accessinfo/dnnewhomepage/education/2010/entlecom/jsessionid=RDLJ5bnSqMG1xGj88TBBwyTJtyz93fqhZNNzqZRkQJhvJDRLPmt-897520699?lang=cy>, accessed in November 2010.

⁶⁰ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2000), *Children and Young People: A Framework for Partnership*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/childframeworkpartnership?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

⁶¹ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Foundation Degree Awarding Powers for Further Education Institutions in Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/foundationdegree/?skip=1&lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

⁶² Articulated – i.e. offering a progression to a variety of qualifications.

⁶³ QAA-Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2002), *Foundation Degree: qualification benchmark (final draft)*, www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationdegree/benchmark/foundation_statement.asp, accessed in November 2010.

school, played truant, have low basic skills levels or achieved no or low qualifications are at greatest risk of a damaging period spent NEET. This suggests that measures to make learning environments more attractive, to increase attendance, to improve literacy and numeracy and to boost attainment are likely to have the biggest long-term effect in preventing young people falling into the NEET category. Therefore, the Welsh Assembly Government is investing heavily in preventative work (such as the Flying Start and Foundation Phase programmes, supported by the Parenting Action Plan, RAISE initiative, the *National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales*⁶⁴ and the *Childcare Strategy for Wales*⁶⁵). These form a comprehensive suite of programmes helping to improve the long-term chances for some of the most disadvantaged⁶⁶.

2.4 Youth Employment

a. Basic indicators

Tab.11. Employment rates from 15 to 24 years, NUTS levels 2

	TIME	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO											
Severozapaden		22.2	23.1	20.2	18.5	17.4	19.2	18.3	.	.	.
Syddanmark		63.2	64.8	64.4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pais Vasco		26.9	31.8	32.2	33.0	33.2	30.0	30.3	29.8	30.5	28.2
Toscana		25.5	28.7	28.3	29.6	28.1	30.4	32.3	31.6	32.2	35.4
Steiermark		55.4	56.4	55.3	54.0	56.9	54.3	50.3	50.7	52.1	50.5
Västsverige		38.6	42.5	44.4	.	.	42.6	43.4	45.0	45.1	43.2
Wales		45.9	51.8	52.9	53.8	51.9	56.0	53.6	49.8	53.3	52.8

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat (lfst_r_lfe2emp) Last update: 27-09-2010.

Tab.12. Employment Between 25 and 34 year, NUTS levels 2

	TIME	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO											
Severozapaden		69.5	73.0	74.0	68.1	61.5	61.6	60.0	.	.	.
Syddanmark		82.4	85.4	85.4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Pais Vasco		78.3	84.2	83.4	82.1	80.1	79.2	79.6	77.3	77.9	75.2
Toscana		76.9	78.0	78.3	78.6	77.3	79.0	75.7	75.0	75.6	74.0
Steiermark		84.3	84.2	82.4	81.6	82.6	84.0	83.4	83.7	82.4	82.4
Västsverige		80.5	85.1	84.3	.	.	80.5	82.2	81.7	83.3	79.1
Wales		79.0	79.9	79.7	78.5	79.7	77.6	78.9	76.1	75.4	77.5

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat (lfst_r_lfe2emp) Last update: 27-09-2010.

Employed persons are all persons aged 15 and over who during the reference week worked at least one hour for pay or profit, or were temporarily absent from such work. Family workers are included.

Employment rate represents employed persons as a percentage of the population living in private households. The data on youth employment is the result of job demand expressed by the regional economic system and the index of the rate of transition of young people to adult life. This data should be read in relation to the characteristics of the regional economic system (the regional economies taken into consideration differ due to the weight of the manufacturing sector, services, etc.) and in the context of qualifications, demographics and overall population employment levels. As emerges from the confrontation of the two Tables, the economic crisis has produced the drop in youth employment in all regions, even though in differing dimensions. The employment drop varies between 1% and 6%. This drop has a greater impact in the regions with lower rates of youth employment. As far as young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are concerned, the regions are distributed in three groups according to the rate of employment:

- between 22 and 27%;
- between 38 and 45%;
- above 50%.

Concerning young people between the ages of 25 and 34, the regions are distributed over two groups, depending on whether the employment rate is:

⁶⁴ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2001), *The National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/Nationalbasicskillsstrategywales?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

⁶⁵ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2005), *The Childcare Strategy for Wales – Childcare for Children*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/Thechildcaresstrategyforwales?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

⁶⁶ Welsh Assembly Government (2008), *Delivering Skills that Work for Wales Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2008/skillsthatworkforwales?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

- between 69 and 79%;
- above 79%.

As can be seen, the differences are considerable and in some cases the data seems to be influenced by job and training policy measures. Regional policies aim at reducing economic inactivity, first of all for young people seeking employment and for those who want to expand their possibilities for employment. Notwithstanding, even consequent to the economic crisis and its effects on youth employment, attention has been reinforced towards young people who give up looking for work and do not participate in any training activity (NEET). Regional Governments, such as Wales, have started up special programmes for this group of young people.

The measures adopted aim at two fundamental goals: aid the encounter between demand and supply of work and employment. At the same time, faced with the risk of qualified young people being underemployed, measures encouraging mobility are adopted.

In particular, in addition to reinforcing local services for employment, the measures adopted concern:

- Development of apprenticeship (Styria's *Berufsfindungsbegleiter* implemented a high impact policy, for creating new jobs for apprentices).
- The promotion of targeted training courses (i.e. the PLQ- Principal Learning Qualifications model in Wales) or the promotion of new training channels (i.e. *Yrkesvux* in Västra Götaland or *IFTS* in Tuscany).
- Integrate, at the strategic and operational levels, employment and skill support with other services, particularly health, transport and childcare (Wales).
- Granting financing for maintaining and creating new job places (i.e. the Basque Country where different types of funding have been established for people and companies):
 - Funding for people belonging to collectives with difficulties in accessing the job market;
 - Funding for renewing the workforce in cooperatives;
 - Funding for distributing work time;
 - Funding for local employment and training projects;
 - Measures to conciliate work and home life;
 - Measures to support employment and relief contracts.

b. Trends analysis and policy evaluation

SEVEROZAPADEN

Contextual factors that caused variations

The main reasons for the relatively high youth unemployment are the low education levels and the lack of job and training among the majority of unemployed young people. There is high unemployment among women under 29 years, as employers are unwilling to hire young women because may absent for longer periods due to maternity and child care. Other reasons for youth unemployment in Vidin are related to the discrepancy between the number of graduates from schools in certain subjects and the real labour market demand, the lack of service and traditions in self-employment.

We can make the following generalisations and conclusions for the development of the labour market in Vidin for recent years based on data and analysis of the Employment Agency:

- The labour market is unbalanced – both a high unemployment rate and a shortage of skilled labour force.
- Traditionally, the share of low-skilled and low-educated unemployed people is the highest in the educational structure of unemployment.
- The majority of the graduates remain permanently unemployed due to the low mobility of the workforce with higher education (especially in remote rural areas).
- Low education and lack of qualification among the majority of unemployed young people.
- Requirements of the employers to hire people with certain work experience.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The regional Labour Offices offer programmes and measures for acquiring knowledge and skills directed towards the needs of employers, which aim to facilitate the transition from school to working life, and for the acquisition of work experience, providing subsidised employment and others.

In 2007, the national programme “Start of the Career” included unemployed young people aged under 29 who had no work experience and have completed their higher education during the previous or current year. The employers are: ministries, agencies, regional and municipal administrations. There are currently two workplaces in Vidin Regional Administration under this programme, out of 53 workplaces for the Nordwest Severozapaden region.

Another successful ongoing measure (“From school to the sector of tourism”), launched in June 2010, is to create conditions for professional development of graduate professionals in order to meet the growing needs of Bulgarian tourism by professionally trained staff, reducing youth unemployment and increasing the efficiency of the education system. It is envisaged that the project should consult and motivate employees to apprenticeship 300 unemployed young people registered in the Labour Offices in the regions: *Dobrich, Varna, Ruse, Shumen, Vidin, Montana, Targovishte, Silistra*.

Job fairs continue to be a successful form of labour mediation. Example for a good practice - 38 employers announced 136 job vacancies in Youth Job Fair, held in Vidin on the 23rd of September, 2010. Owners and representatives of enterprises and companies in the construction, garment, food processing, agriculture, health and services sectors headed proposals to the unemployed youths within the region. During the event, experts acquainted Vidin youth with the opportunities offered by the European employment services network.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The sustainable use of the programmes and measures of the National Employment Agency and its local branches aimed at:

- Enhancement of access of young people to the labour market.
- Promotion of business start-up incentives.

SYDDANMARK

Policies and measures having positive effects

The most important factor is that up until 2008 economic growth rates were very high and, the overall unemployment rates were very low. As a result 18-25 years olds with VET education and unskilled workers had no problems getting a job.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

It is an extreme challenge for unskilled workers aged between 18–34 because the lost jobs are lost forever. The most important thing is to secure that more people complete a upper secondary education or VET. The UU system, the youth package from the national Ministry of Education will probably have a positive effect. All young students from year 7 must have an “education plan” (a plan which can be edited depending on the wishes of the young persons). But it is a tool the UU can use in order to guide the young student to the most relevant education – after they complete primary school.

PAÍS VASCO

Contextual factors that caused variations

The recovery of economic growth from 1995 onwards allowed the Basque Country to enter a new phase of uninterrupted employment growth along with a gradual reduction of unemployment, so that the employment rate is better than the EU average, close to the Lisbon target for 2010. In this last decade, the employment rate over the population aged over 16 years old grew continually and increased more than 10%, rising from 40.2% in 1995 (the same value as the employment rate in 1985) to 51.7% in 2005.

In the same way as the European Union, employment creation has been greater among women. It should be highlighted that in the last five years, female employment in the CAPV (Autonomous Community of the Basque Country) has risen way beyond the EU average bringing it closer to equal employment levels between men and women. Also in the same way as the EU, the employment sector experiencing the most growth is that of workers aged between 55 and 64 years old. It began to grow significantly from 2002 and it is expected to show accelerated growth in the next few years.

Youth employment is increasingly less. The lack of generational relief and delays in joining the job market have caused the number of working people under 25 to drop sharply over the last few years. In Europe the number of young workers has also dropped although more gently.

Part time work, desired by some and criticised by others, is gaining weight among Basque workers. It has grown from 9.3% in 2001 to 13.7% in 2006, although it is still 5 points below the European average. It is foreseeable that this will continue to increase in the future and although to date it has demonstrated its efficacy to make progress in the quantitative aspect of employment, it must prove its worth to also move forwards qualitatively, so it is important that its development is voluntary, not merely imposed by the needs of the productive system.

Economies that have a more qualified workforce have an undeniable advantage when adapting to new forms of production. Labour participation from qualified workers is progressively increasing whilst there is less and less room for anyone without qualifications. In the CAPV the percentage of people with university studies is high, with few differences between men and women. This surplus of university training has been achieved in the Basque Country to the detriment of secondary studies.⁶⁷

Policies and measures having positive effects

Measures were regulated intended to improve employability and promote job placement, articulating the actions laid down in the Employment Plan 2003-2006, and inspired by the following intervention principles established in this Plan:

- Personalisation of the employment policy.
- Job guidance as an axis for the actions to revolve around.
- Unified access to the services.
- Integration of the measures.
- Prioritisation of preventive measures.
- Adaptation to the needs of the different collectives and accessibility so that there are no barriers of any type (physics, communication, etc.) that prevent anyone from participating, in equal conditions, in the employment resources on offer.
- Promoting breaking down inequalities between men and women.
- Adaptation to the local environment.
- Coordination with other public agents and conjunction of inter-institutional efforts.
- Homogeneity and equality in developing the interventions.
- Integration of the employment policy and business policy.
- Promoting stable, good quality employment.

In this framework, different types of funding have been established for people and companies:

- Funding to take on people belonging to collectives with difficulties to access the job market.
- Funding for renewing workforce in cooperative companies.
- Funding to distribute work time.
- Funding for employment-training projects locally.
- Measures to conciliate work and home life.
- Measure to support employment - relief contracts.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The active employment policies have been recently transferred to the Basque Country so that from 2011 new targets will have to be defined and new lines for action for these policies.

TOSCANA

Contextual factors that caused variations

The increase of the average number of years spent in education is a phenomenon that can be ascribed at least in part to the characteristics of the labour market as such a higher study qualification determines a greater yield in terms of remuneration and the quality of the occupation. For females in particular a higher level of education may, of course, result in an advantage compared with their peers, but also in a "weak" labour market where, when the offer exceeds the demand, males more easily find a job compared with their peers with school leaving certificate.

Another structural defect of Tuscany economic system consists of the detachment and lack of communication between the university system and production system, which also remains after the

⁶⁷ Lanbide-Employment Service of the Autonomous Basque Community Government (2007), *Employment in Euskadi*, www.euskosare.org, accessed in November 2010.

recent reform of the university system and which is made clear in the so-called “brain drain”, that is in the achievement of one’s professional goals outside the region⁶⁸, but also in giving up the “drain” and in “under-employment” in jobs and roles not in line with the level and type of studies done. The difficulties for educated young people to find a job suited to their educational pathway causes a mismatch between job supply and demand, or rather a clash between the skills required by businesses and those acquired by young people.

Problems associated with precarious contracts have been added in recent years to the issues related to finding work – from which unemployment and under-employment originate – i.e. the duration, but also the conditions, which often entail a lack of protection and safeguard in case of illness and maternity and very low pension contributions.

Policies and measures having positive effects

IFTS (one-year higher technical training instruction), training modules, university courses structured in accordance with the labour market, incentives to businesses.

STEIERMARK

Contextual factors that caused variations

Concerning youth employment, Austria is constantly one of the best performing countries in Europe, the Styria region is currently around the Austrian average. During the period 2005 to 2008 youth unemployment decreased from 6,162 to 5,049⁶⁹. A special feature is the relation from applicants for apprenticeship in the age of 15/16, related to the number of offered apprenticeship places in companies. According to this term until early 2000 in Styria the gap between the number of applicants and the number of apprenticeship places was twice to three times higher than in the Austrian average, this relationship has normalized according to the Austrian average in the last years, caused by innovative initiatives (like the *Berufsfindungsbegleiter*).

Policies and measures having positive effects

The main influence of this development was caused by

- Regional initiatives for additional offers for education and training for young employment who can not find a placement in apprenticeship.
- Especially effective were measures and projects (*Berufsfindungsbegleiter*) which supported and optimized the matching process at the transition phase between initial education system and further education and training system – schools and enterprises - especially apprenticeship dual education system, involving strongly companies and entrepreneurs.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Based on the experiences of the last few years, success factors and obstacles for the new governmental programme and the strategic plan for the next five year period should be analysed. The programme will describe the concrete steps, strategies and services to improve the situation of youth employment. New initiatives as there are “green jobs”, production schools, etc. should give additional positive effects in this area.

VÄSTSVÉRIGE

Contextual factors that caused variations

In terms of economic structure, employment in manufacturing industries is projected to continue to decline, following its long-term downward trend. Sweden can, however, expect large variations among different sectors and along with economic cycles. For example, employment in the construction industry increased with the start of a housing construction boom in 2003 but fell rapidly after the onset of the economic crisis from the autumn of 2008. Over the longer term, the number employed in agriculture and forestry is expected to fall by 50% by 2020. The number employed in the private service sector is projected to increase from 1.5 million in 2000 to 1.7 million in 2020. In public education, health and social

⁶⁸ Mainly in the northern regions, but also abroad.

⁶⁹ Data is taken from the Public Employment Service in Styria.

services sectors (childcare, schools, health and medical care, care of the elderly, etc.), employment growth is generally expected to follow changes in demand. Elderly care, in particular, will require a large increase in personnel in the coming years. Overall, employment in the public sector is projected to increase by 270,000 between 2000 and 2020, at which point 1.54 million individuals should be employed in this sector. The labour market in Sweden is different for men and women. For example, over 31% of women are employed by municipalities, which have responsibility for the delivery of education, social welfare, care of the elderly, etc., compared with only 7.5% of men. In contrast, the private sector is male-dominated. A comparatively high proportion of people aged 15 to 65 are in the workforce and employed. In fact, in 2008 Sweden had the third highest employment rate in Europe after Denmark and the Netherlands, largely due to the high proportion of women in employment where Sweden trailed only Denmark among the 27 Member States.

Many countries in Europe experience high unemployment rates among young people but Sweden lags behind many of the Member States. The Government has introduced a number of measures designed to reduce youth unemployment. The reform was implemented on 1 January 2009.

Policies and measures having positive effects

Under the Ministry of Employment, the Public Employment Service offers basic or supplementary vocational training to unemployed jobseekers. The training is delivered by subcontractors such as training companies, municipalities or organisations. From 2008 until 2010 the average number of people per month training in the labour market was increased from an average of 2,500 places to approximately 8,100 places.

Overall, there are numerous forms of state through fee-free training, universal student financial, labour market policy etc. to support young people and adults who wish to remain in or enter education and training. In a comparative perspective, it may be said that recent Swedish reforms emphasise VET for adults.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The country is providing additional public funds for adult learning geared towards vocationally-oriented training to counteract the impact of the crisis. One of the more prominent measures is Adult Vocational Education (*Yrkesvux*). This measure is expected to have positive effects on the national and regional labour market in the near future.

In Västra Götaland regional stake-holders are planning for many new study pathways that are of particular importance for the regional labour market. Funding from the ESF is also of great importance to achieve similar goals and there are several examples like the measure West Growth (*Väst Kraft*) managed by the Göteborg region.

Other measures to better match the supply of education and training with the needs on the labour market are '*Teknikcollege*' and '*Vård-och omsorgscollege*', covering all levels from upper secondary school to higher vocational education within the fields of technical and health care sectors. The new apprenticeship system as part of the upper secondary level education and training for both young people and adults might increase the employability within the above mentioned age groups.

WALES

Contextual factors that caused variations

In order to ascertain employment trends, it is recommended that the figures should be set in context as follows:

- The share of the respective age group of the overall population.
- A breakdown by skills level/s.
- A comparison with the employment and skills levels of older workers.
- An analysis of employment levels by age, skills level and sector of employment.

However, some limited observations can be described as follows. While there was steady and sustained decrease in youth employment over the period, there was a dip in levels in 2002 and 2005 for age group 15-24, and in 2004 and 2006 for age group 25-34. Another slight dip can be seen in 2008 for the younger group; however, the older group has seen an increase in employment levels in the same year.

Without the context of qualifications, demographics and overall population employment levels, it is not possible to safely ascertain causes and effects.

Looking ahead, due to the pressures of the economic crisis it is expected that there would be additional pressure on youth employment figures from 2008 onwards. In the context of skills and employment, increases in youth unemployment present challenges to Government to support the employability of young people that are affected by this.

*Delivering Skills That Work for Wales: A Labour Market Framework*⁷⁰ is a joint approach between the Welsh Assembly Government and the UK Department for Work and Pensions, as workforce development is a competency of the Regional Government whilst employment policy is not devolved, i.e. remains with the Member State Government. However, both Government Departments share the ambition to improve employment opportunities in Wales, and to better integrate employment, skills and other programmes. The framework sets out the core principles of how this will take be taken forward, and it focuses on the following key conclusions:

- To create more jobs at all levels but particularly at higher wage levels;
- Economic inactivity remains a major issue – a renewed effort is needed to develop an overall approach which uses best practice, is attuned to the needs of local labour markets and provides individuals and employers with a coherent service that meets their individual needs and achieves sustained employment;
- To continue efforts to raise skills, particularly at the lower skills levels, in order to support improvements to the employment rate and to incomes;
- To integrate, at the strategic and operational levels, employment and skills support with other services, particularly health, transport and childcare; and
- To integrate activities more effectively to target the key bottlenecks, apply the lessons of what works, improve the offer to individuals and employers, and simplify it where possible.

Policies and measures having positive effects

Principal Learning Qualifications⁷¹ provide an introduction to different work sectors and learning through a combination of theoretical, practical and work-related activities. They equip learners with sector knowledge, practical and transferable skills that industry, training, further and higher education want. Principal Learning Qualifications are now available as options within the Welsh Baccalaureate. Available in 14 different lines of learning, they must be accompanied by the Project Qualification⁷².

At least half of the learner's time must involve applying knowledge and skills through tasks that are related to work in that sector (applied learning). Principal Learning Qualifications are available at 3 levels and offer opportunities to work with employers, helping to make the learning experience realistic and practical. Businesses can get involved in a number of different ways, for example by:

- Providing work experience opportunities.
- Setting design projects.
- Giving student talks.
- Acting as mentors.
- Hosting workplace visits.
- Contributing to learning materials.

A number of measures aims to improve the basic/essential skills of working age adults. The aim is to deliver measures in a complementary, value-added way, closing gaps whilst avoiding duplication. Measures range from targeting groups with special needs through appropriately tailored provisions (via ESF-funded projects) to the collaboration of Job Centre Plus in Wales with Basic Skills Cymru to support jobseekers with basic skills needs.

*Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Wales*⁷³ is a themed paper, with associated action plan, which sets out the agenda for the future of young people

⁷⁰ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2010), *Delivering Skills That Work for Wales: A Labour Market Framework*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/labourmarketframework/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

⁷¹ Careers Wales, www.careerswales.com/year9/server.php?show=nav.5681, accessed in November 2010.

⁷² Careers Wales, www.careerswales.com/year9/server.php?show=nav.5680, accessed in November 2010.

⁷³ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2009), *Reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childreanyoungpeople/publications/reducingneets/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

who are NEET. It is part of a series of papers which address skills issues identified in *Skills That Work for Wales*. NEET is a complex issue, therefore support takes many forms, ranging from signposting and advice, to practical learning, work-based learning and support in finding jobs. Services include the provision of in depth careers guidance, careers information and advice to people of all ages through Careers Wales (www.careerswales.com). Targeted services are funded via the core contract to young people who are unemployed or NEET include:

- **Education Gateway services** - a programme for pre 16 young people including mentoring support with school non attenders and those in danger of disengaging.
- **Careers Guidance services.**
- **Referral and Placing Services /Government Youth Guarantee.**
- **Youth Gateway** offers additional support to NEET young people through a programme of initial assessment, motivation and ongoing mentoring support. In 2008-2009 85% of clients surveyed achieved positive outcomes within four months of entering Youth Gateway provision (In 2007 the figure was 79% and in 2008 it was 83%).

One important development has been the RAISE programme (*Raise Attainment and Individual Standards in Education*)⁷⁴. Over the three-year period from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009, the Welsh Assembly Government provided an annual grant of £16.25m (circ.€18,70m), of which most was paid directly to schools with 20% or more pupils entitled to free school meals as long as they had 50 or more pupils of statutory school age. In 2009, the Welsh Assembly Government RAISE grant reduced to around €7 million and a different approach has been adopted. Groups of schools, together with their local authority or authorities, sought funding for projects that explore key issues from the early evaluations of the RAISE programme. RAISE has been able to mitigate some of the negative impact of poverty on pupils, especially those activities that are transferable to other schools, with an emphasis on strong leadership for education staff, and extracurricular activities for pupils⁷⁵.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Economic Renewal: a new direction⁷⁶ sets out the role the Welsh Assembly Government, as a Regional Government can play in creating conditions that enable the private sector to grow, with the aim of making Wales "one of the best places in the world to live and to work".

This new approach sets out a clear defined role for a Regional Government. It recognises that a holistic Government approach is required to maximise the impact of progressive policies. This approach aims to encourage entrepreneurship rather than directly deliver support to individual businesses. It outlines five priorities including:

- Investing in high-quality and sustainable infrastructure.
- Making Wales a more attractive place to do business.
- Broadening and deepening the skills base.
- Encouraging innovation.
- Targeting the business support offered.

2.5. Participation in lifelong learning

a. Basic indicators

The proportion of persons aged 25 to 64 receiving some form of lifelong learning in the four weeks preceding the labour force survey.

"Lifelong learning' means all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective". The European Benchmark for 2020 is 15%.

⁷⁴ Estyn-Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (2007), *The Impact of RAISE funding. An interim report*, www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/The_impact_of_RAISE_funding_an_interim_report_July_2007.pdf, and Estyn (2008), *The Impact of RAISE-Evaluation of the impact of RAISE funding on schools'effectiveness in tackling the link between socio-economic disadvantage and underachievement. An interim report after the first 18 months*, www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/the_impact_of_raise.pdf, and Estyn (2009), *The Impact of RAISE 2008-2009. Evaluation of the impact of RAISE funding on raising the levels of performance of disadvantaged pupils*, www.estyn.gov.uk/thematicreports/Impact_of_RAISE_2008-2009.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

⁷⁵ Estyn (2010), *Tackling child poverty and disadvantage in schools*, www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports/Tackling_child_poverty_and_disadvantage_in_schools_January_2010.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

⁷⁶ See also Section 2.1. of this Report (Participation in Education).

Tab.13. Lifelong learning - participation of adults aged 25-64 in education and training, at NUTS level 2 (1000)

13.1. LLL: Participation in lifelong learning

	TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO										
Severozapaden		2.5	1.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	3.6			
Syddanmark		179.1	172.4							
Pais Vasco		170.3	166.9	155.6	157.1	80.5	75.4	73.6	58.4	52.5
Toscana		139.0	129.4	141.9	137.6	124.6	107.3	97.2	100.2	77.6
Steiermark		77.1	82.1	83.1	80.3	76.1	48.0	9.0	9.9	21.9
Västsverige		234.8	184.3	183.8	195.9	278.3	256.2	151.9	140.5	178.2
Wales		292.5	281.5	277.4	285.3	220.1	297.9	281.1	248.2	244.7

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat [lfst_r_ffsd2p11] Last update: 27-09-2010.

13.2. Participation of adults aged 25-64 in education and training, at NUTS levels 1 and 2 (1000) (rom 2008) (trng_lfse_04)

	TIME	2009	2008	BMK 2020 15%
GEO				
Severozapaden		: (u)	: (u)	
Syddanmark		29.3	28.3	
Pais Vasco		13.3	13.5	
Toscana		6.8	6.8	
Steiermar		13.5	11.7	
Västsverige		24.9 (p)	24.5 (b)	
Wales		19.0	19.2	

u: unreliable data

b: break in series

p: provisional value

Source Eurostat [trng_lfse_04] Last update: 16-09-2010.

13.3. LLL: No participation in lifelong learning

	TIME	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
GEO										
Severozapaden		486.3	487.7	494.4	516.1	525.2	528.6			
Syddanmark		453.1	460.1							
Pais Vasco		1,091.0	1,093.0	1,095.8	1,084.3	1,149.4	1,142.7	1,132.4	1,132.9	1,125.2
Toscana		1,896.4	1,896.3	1,873.2	1,852.9	1,860.7	1,895.6	1,906.5	1,897.7	1,413.3
Steiermark		583.3	575.6	573.4	576.3	578.9	608.9	152.3	154.7	305.7
Västsverige		721.7	752.1	771.0	733.0	580.1	541.4	706.9	705.4	610.1
Wales		1,229.1	1,229.4	823.4	799.3	801.2	957.3	1,145.5	1,182.1	1,184.0

Na: Not available

Source of Data: Eurostat Last update: 27-09-2010.

Data on participation in lifelong learning emphasizes the major differences between the regions with respect to all the indicators considered so far. Here the relationship between the worst and best performances is from 7 to 30.

Data on participation shows considerable growth during the first years of the decade, then sensibly declining after 2005.

The opposite trend characterises the data on non-participation that, after a decrease in the early years of the decade, again increases after 2005. In spite of the differences, the data that unites the various regions is made up of the high number of the population who are excluded, as much as 2 million citizens, though only about half a million in the regions with best performance. This is found at the end of a decade that has seen all countries committed to elaborating national strategies and plans of action, as well as using important public, European and national resources.

The trend towards stagnation, however, has varying meanings depending on the levels of participation. In this sense we can introduce a distinction between regions that enact maintenance and improvement policies and regions committed to development policies (those with participation standards lower than the European benchmark for 2020).

In the first case, new policies are implemented inside contexts in which there are already companies inclined towards investing in lifelong learning of the operators, active labour market policies founded on training, structured adult education systems, locally based and flexible. In these regions policies are directed at reinforcing bonds with labour policies and with regional development plans (South Denmark and Västra Götaland). In the Wales Regional Government Workforce Development Programme (WDP), focus is on the demand side of the labour market – i.e., to engage employers and support them to develop their workforce. WDP support includes the provision of:

- Advice, guidance and information regarding workforce development.
- Access to a wide range of mainstream skills and training programmes, initiatives and services.
- Discretionary funding to support the implementation of training that is not easily delivered by mainstream programmes.

In the second case, Regional Governments often assume functions to compensate deficiencies in national policies, introducing innovative types of interventions that have guaranteed considerable results (see for example the case of Tuscany based on using the European Social Fund). In this cluster organic interventions are also registered – a legislative type – centred on several main policies such as the recognition of professional skills acquired through work experience or by non formal training lines, lifelong information and guidance and the promotion of local partnership networks among the various stakeholders (see especially the Basque Country and Styria).

b. Trends analysis and policy evaluation

SEVEROZAPADEN

Contextual factors that caused variations

The socio-economic situation in Bulgaria for the past decade has been characterised by destabilization of the labour market, an increase of unemployment, especially in certain regions of the country, decline of some professions and a considerable growth of the requirements to employees' level of education and qualification. It sets as a priority task the necessity for renovation and considerable changes in the system of adult education.

Outside the system of adult education, systems for qualification of the employees within different branches of economics have been built. They encompass the separate professional groups and are related to improvement and development in the respective vocational field.

The following strategic documents have been adopted in compliance with the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning:

- National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2008-2013).
- National Continuing Vocational Training Strategy (2005-2010).
- Updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2008-2015).

To implement the Government's strategic priority for "Improvement of the access to lifelong learning" an Action Plan 2010-2011 was drafted to put into practice the national lifelong learning strategy. It outlines the following measures:

- Introduction of two-year compulsory pre-primary education;
- Development of a system of study and forecasts of the demands for workforce with certain qualification.
- Development of a public-private partnership model in the field of vocational education and training.
- Development of a system of validation of the outcome of non-formal training and informal learning.

On a local level, the Labour Offices are the ones with regard to adult training and continuing professional training. In recent years they have started to concentrate on individual services for the unemployed and to facilitate integration on the labour market. This includes mediation services for finding a job, informing, consulting and orientation of individuals to find the best employment programme and to offer training on the labour market.

Policies and measures having positive effects

Operational programme human resources development (2007-2013), co-financed by the ESF and the state budget, offers possibilities for adult training – literacy courses, acquiring of key competencies and professional qualification. The programme supports the raising of employment rate through offering more flexible work possibilities; promotion of entrepreneurship; provision of social and economic integration for disadvantaged groups on the labour market (low-educated, Roma population, long-term unemployed, etc.)

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

The positive effect will be the implementation of the measures envisaged in the above-mentioned Action Plan 2010-2011, which will put into practice the Lifelong Learning Strategy, as well as the following measures for the improvement of the indicator:

- Promotion and development of the non-formal and formal lifelong learning.
- Provision and maintenance of the quality of the non-formal and formal lifelong learning.
- Introduction of training vouchers for employed and unemployed persons for raising their professional qualification.
- Enlargement of the possibilities for learning in clubs, libraries, communities centres, youth information centres, regional and local public centres.
- Development of diverse learning forms – distant learning, e-learning, combined learning.

Necessary conditions

One of the specific goals of the Vidin Regional Development Strategy is: “Raising the quality of the human resources and public services, and stimulation of lifelong learning”. The strategy also says: “The promotion of lifelong learning will lead to creation of a system for professional orientation and career development, development of vocational education and training”. This is a possibility for adult literacy education and for young people who have dropped out of the educational process through the development forms of distance learning.

The improvement of the human capital is a precondition for attracting investments and generating higher added value in the economy. The state and local authorities have an important role for the creation of attractive environment for the development of business and public services. Activities directed towards improvement of the human resources will be supported. It should be noted that a big share of the regional workplaces are for low-qualified workers, with very low productivity. In this context the low-skilled workers can lose their jobs easily, while their low qualification will be a barrier for the new labour market demands. Operational programmes *Human resources* and *Administrative capacity* offer excellent conditions for raising the quality of human resources and public services.

SYDDANMARK

Policies and measures having positive effects

The fact that companies, instead of making their employees unemployed, can send them to undertake 14 weeks of free education has been very beneficial in the last two years.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

In the future it is important that more people attend lifelong learning courses since a lot of unskilled jobs in industry have moved to Eastern Europe and Asia. The Danish Government has specific funds, which the municipalities can apply for in case of a sudden loss of a large number of jobs within the municipality. The funds shall be used to offer the unemployed workers immediate education.

The structure of the Adult Education System, the assessment of prior learning skills etc. is a major factor in the Danish lifelong learning system.

In Denmark the lifelong learning educational system is very flexible, highly extended and well coordinated. In Denmark you have the AMU system (*Arbejdsmarkedetsuddannelser*, labour market education). The AMU education is financed by a specific tax called “labour market contribution”. AMU courses are thus almost free of charge – often you and/or employer are required to pay a small fee.

If you participate in a course and as a result cannot work in that period you are often eligible for SVU (*Statens Voksenuddannelsesstøtte*, state adult education grants).

The foundation for a continued high level of participation in lifelong learning in South Denmark is in place. And the level of participation in lifelong learning in 2011 will be probably very high because of the economic crisis.

PAÍS VASCO

Contextual factors that caused variations

As shown in the previous section, on the one hand, the population aged over 30 increased by just over 105,000 people, 7.3%, in the 2003-2008 period. Another influential factor is the increase in immigrant population that can be seen in a growing increase in immigrant students in Adult Education Centres, so that from 2003/2004 to 2009/2010, these student numbers rose from 3,078 to 7,300 (137% more).

On the other hand, the level of qualification among population over 60 years old in the Basque Country has undergone an increase in the 2001/2006 period so that people with secondary studies have grown by 75% and with tertiary studies by 34.52%. These highly qualified people, once retired, wish to continue their training processes, through studies at the Mature University, Experience Schools, etc.

Also, the level of qualifications among the active population has increased, as compiled in the "Active Population Qualification Survey 2007" carried out by the Basque Government Department of Employment and Social Affairs: "The recent evolution demonstrates the trend towards greater qualification of the Basque active population. In this respect, between 1995 and 2007 the volume of population with secondary and tertiary studies has increased substantially, by 33.1 and 60.2% respectively" (*Gobierno Vasco-Departamento de Justicia, Empleo y Seguridad Social-Dirección de Estudios y Régimen Jurídico, 2007:7*)⁷⁷. This better qualified active population is more open to continuous training and demands more training opportunities that make it possible for them to update and improve their qualification, in relation to their job, as demonstrated in the study "Lifelong Learning in the Basque Country Autonomous Community – 2008" carried out by the Basque Government Sociological Prospecting Office⁷⁸.

Policies and measures having positive effects

In addition to the measures aimed at adults given in Section 2.1 of this Report, the following should be highlighted:

- Continuous training actions aimed at the working active population. These training actions, both offer and demand, have been managed within the framework of the Basque Continual Training Foundation - HOBETUZ⁷⁹. This Foundation is three-party, participated in by social parties (business and trade union organisations) and the Basque Government. Among these actions, companies' training plans respond to their workers' training needs so that they can respond to the business strategies undertaken.
- Mature University and Experience Schools.
- Connection between Adult Education Centres and the training needs in their surrounding area.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

- The agreed boost to training for employment, both from the active working and unemployed population, combined with lifelong guidance services.
- Promotion of lifelong learning and boost for the recognition of professional skills acquired via informal lines or through work experience.

The Basque Government is working on drawing up a law on lifelong learning. One of its targets is to coordinate the efforts of all public administrations and private entities that promote actions in relation to lifelong learning, so that the demand for continuous and sustainable lifelong learning might grow from Basque citizens.

To achieve this, two key axes will be reinforced that can contribute to the increase in this demand. This involves recognition of professional skills acquired through work experience or by non formal training and on the other, lifelong information and guidance.

⁷⁷ Gobierno Vasco-Departamento de Justicia, Empleo y Seguridad Social-Dirección de Estudios y Régimen Jurídico (2007), *Encuesta de Cualificación de la Población Activa-Informe Detallado de Resultados*, www.eustat.es/elementos/ele0005200/i_Encuesta_de_calificacion_de_la_poblacion_activa_informe_detallado_de_resultados_2007_inf0005285_c.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

⁷⁸ Gobierno Vasco-Presidencia Dirección de Estudios y Régimen Jurídico Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica (2008), *El Aprendizaje Permanente en la CAPV*, www.lehendakaritza.ejgv.euskadi.net/contenidos/informe_estudio/o_08tef4_etengabeko_ikaskuntza/es_08tef4ei/adjuntos/08tef4_etengabeko_ikaskuntza.pdf, accessed in October 2010.

www.hobetus.com, accessed in November 2010.

The Basque Government is also going to give a new boost to active employment policies in which training and guidance are also going to be key elements.

Having seen the evolution of this indicator over the last decade, as a consequence of the commitment sustained from the public administrations (Government, Local Governments and town councils) to training, along with the renewed boosts that must be generated both by the lifelong learning law and the active employment policies, it is foreseeable that by 2020, the target of 15% given in ET-2020 might have been achieved.

TOSCANA

Contextual factors that caused variations

Italy is notable for a low number of adults attending training, as well as a low percentage of businesses that offer training activities. With reference to the percentage of the population at active age involved in instruction and training courses, Tuscany reaches 6.8%, a percentage slightly higher than the national average of 6.3%. There are two main reasons behind this disappointing performance: the economic and social differences that still exist between different areas and the predominance of small businesses in regional production, meaning that it may prove too costly for them to systematically invest in training, especially where there is a lack of adequate public support. There is also the fact that the specialization of the regional economy is clearly aimed at more traditional sectors, which have a low requirement of highly-qualified human resources.

Policies and measures having positive effects

With reference to the measures implemented and aimed at increasing the adult involvement with continuous learning and strengthening the skills of adults and the elderly, we must list the most relevant:

- The European Social Fund (ESF). The European planning, with particular regard to the 2000-2006 ESF and the new 2007-2013 ESF, sets out that the measures financed by the ESF are directed at the following amongst other things: promoting continuous training policies; promoting and supporting the development of a competent, skilled and adaptable workforce; and promoting the strengthening of human potential in the fields of research, science and technology.
- The Law 236/1993⁸⁰, which has long since been the main financing channel of continuous training in Italy and Tuscany, together with the ESF dedicated measures. The strategic lines that have inspired these measures have evolved over time: from the first circulars, which provided the financing of company training measures and system measures for the most part, resulting in the latest implementative decrees on the introduction of training plans agreed between the social parties.
- The Law 53/2000⁸¹, which contains provisions for the right to training, establishes leave for training; this also includes that aimed at the involvement in training activities other than those implemented or financed by the employer and leave for continuous training allocated to workers, whether employed or not, to increase knowledge and professional skills. The training may be in line with an independent decision made by the worker, having been arranged by the company through training plans agreed with the social parties.

In addition to training courses in the workplace and about work provided for by regional calls for tenders, study circles should be emphasised in terms of the educational initiatives specifically aimed at adults. The Study Circle is a tool used in the field of continuous education aimed at small groups of people who meet freely with the non-mandatory presence of a tutor and/or one or more experts for a short-term period with the purpose of creating activities of a cultural and training nature based on choosing a theme, problem or a common objective.

The Tuscan Regional Government was the first to implement this educational method in Italy, inserting it into the regulatory and political stream of continuous training, later enabled by the issuing of the Regional Law 32/2002⁸².

⁸⁰ Law 19 July 1993, n. 236 "Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 20 maggio 1993, n. 148, recante interventi urgenti a sostegno dell'occupazione", www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/26773255-D31D-47F7-90A5-19DE78317001/0/008_Legge_236_93.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

⁸¹ Law 8 March 2000, n. 53 "Disposizioni per il sostegno della maternità e della paternità; per il diritto alla cura e alla formazione e per il coordinamento dei tempi delle città", *GU* n. 60 del 13-3-2000, www.parlamento.it, accessed in November 2010.

⁸² Regional Law 26 July 2002, n.32 "Testo unico della normativa della Regione Toscana in materia di educazione, istruzione, orientamento, formazione professionale e lavoro", *BURL* n. 23, 1st Part dated from 05.08.2002, www.regione.toscana.it/regione/multimedia/RT/documents/1199457609578_legge-2002-00032.pdf, accessed in October 2010.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Policies for the future: increase the training demand to achieve the attainment objectives of equal opportunities to access all forms of instruction and the raising of the instruction and training levels ratified on a European level through new tools and training methods, such as study circles.

Increase the involvement in training through a training plan consisting of one or more training projects aimed at the adjustment and development of the skills of workers, in line with the strategies and needs of the companies associated with them. All this therefore highlights the need to find forms of education for adults that not only help to strengthen and increase the level of instruction and skills of those who already have an educational portfolio, but in particular help those who are unable to identify their own educational growth pathway that may provide tools to fully exercise their rights of citizenship.

The Tuscan Regional Government is working on the lifelong learning policies to improve the levels of involvement of the resident population. The process that has been implemented in sharing the Lisbon objectives has already brought an improvement, but data is still much below the European expectations. The supporting measures implemented by the Regional Government have been turned into a regional council document on the implementation of adult educational directives shared with the implementing subjects of the regional policies at local level, i.e. the provinces and municipalities. The general objectives of these policies concentrate on the development of basic skills of adults, measures for foreign citizens and raising adult education levels aimed at developing basic skills to encourage potential employment and the work culture and educational measures to encourage the insertion of immigrants into the working world and education, as well as reinforcing the formal secondary education of adults through attaining leaving certificates. In particular, the Tuscan Regional Government aims to work towards implementing what is set out in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council on key competencies for lifelong learning⁸³, i.e. ensuring that “adults are able to develop and update their key competencies throughout their lives, and that there is a particular focus on target groups identified as priorities in the national, regional and/or local contexts, such as individuals needing to update their skills” (European Parliament and Council, 2006:11) and that “coherence of adult education and training provision for individual citizens is achieved through close links with employment policy and social policy, cultural policy, innovation policy and other policies” (European Parliament and Council, 2006:11-12).

STEIERMARK

Contextual factors that caused variations

For the Styria region the regional database is, as for all provinces in Austria, not highly valid. The last national survey on adult education based on microcensus, is dated from 2003 and is not detailed at regional and provincial levels⁸⁴.

It could be estimated, that the Styrian situation is near to the state average. In 2003 the participation of adults in lifelong learning (concerning the EU-benchmark) was 12.5%, so Austria – and Styria – reached the benchmark.

Policies and measures having positive effects

In Styria in 2002 the regional adult education network was established, involving a large number of adult education institutions and organisations (network/working group) with active initiatives to improve the information, situation of adults concerning adult education opportunities, awareness building, marketing and concrete client orientated activities, especially in the field of basic competencies, guidance and counselling, including ICT information systems for adult education, distance counselling etc.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Based on the new regional governmental programme concerning education and training, a new strategic plan for educational policy at regional level for the next five years will be developed. Results, recognitions and recommendations based on cooperation and communication, study visits etc. within SMOC are a strong background that will be implemented and integrated in this education plan. In addition to the results of a former strategic adult education concept (PERLS – perspectives for adult education in the

⁸³ European Parliament and Council (2006), *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning*, 2006/962/EC, L394/10, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF>, accessed in October 2010.

⁸⁴ Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur-Statistik Austria (2003), *Lebenslanges Lernen-Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus, and Statistik Austria (2003), Standard-Dokumentation Metainformationen (Definitionen, Erläuterungen, Methoden, Qualität) zur Mikrozensusbefragung Juni 2003 zum Thema Lebenslanges Lernen*, available at www.statistik.at, accessed in October 2010.

region Styria, a project responded by the adult education network, by order of the Styrian Government, education resort, in cooperation with the University Klagenfurt/Carinthia) will be a base for the future programme of education, especially adult education, in Styria.

Necessary conditions

It is highly relevant, that the lifelong learning aspect concerning adult education, related to both employed and unemployed people (including the needs and demands of older people) becomes a strategic and operative central role within a regional education development policy and strategy. It is the case that sometimes – concerning formal competencies – school issues have priority in relation to the more holistic perspective of a lifelong learning approach. This must be a clear focus in any further regional development strategy.

VÄSTSVENRIKE

One way of addressing an ageing population is through immigration. Today, approximately 17% of Sweden's inhabitants are of foreign extraction, in the sense that they were either born outside the country or both parents were born abroad. Almost 100,000 people immigrated to Sweden in 2007, including almost 16,000 returning Sweden. The largest source countries of immigrants, by citizenship, in 2007 were as follows: Iraq, 15,200; Poland, 7,525; Denmark, 5,097; Somalia, 3,781; Germany, 3,614; Romania, 2,587; Finland, 2,561; Thailand, 2,548; and Norway, 2,395. This high immigration rate in recent years has underscored the importance of measures to ensure a smooth transition to Swedish society. Education and training are especially important for many immigrants. Municipalities are required by law to offer Swedish language training for immigrants free of charge. After gaining initial knowledge in Swedish, many immigrants enrol in upper secondary vocationally-oriented courses through the municipal adult education framework. There are also many initial vocational programmes for adults specially targeted at immigrants that combine vocational education with Swedish language training relevant for their intended occupation.

Contextual factors that caused variations

Goals and objectives for adult learning in Sweden. According to a Decision in the Swedish Parliament 18 May 2001 concerning Adult education and training today and in the future (2001/01:72) the following goals and aims were decided at a state level⁸⁵.

Every adult shall have the opportunity to extend his/her knowledge and competencies with the aim of enhancing personal development, democracy, equality, economic growth and degree of employment as well as a fair distribution.

Strategy

- Pedagogy and forms of work should be developed to meet the changing and increasing need of the individual to learn in a knowledge based society.
- Learning and search for knowledge for each individual should be supported by counselling, based on recognition of actual, already gained knowledge.
- Adapted learning environment as well as teaching, guidance and internet based education and training should be provided to an extent that as much as possible meets the varying need and ability to learn of each individual.
- Economic support should be offered with the aim of stimulating the participation of adults in education, training and measures aimed at increasing competence.
- Society, employers and each individual are equally responsible for the provision of general and specific education and training to meet the needs of different individuals and groups.
- All formal and non-formal learning that is supported by society should include a democratic perspective and respect for the value of each individual.
- A basic consensus across different areas of politics and the cooperation between public authorities, social partners and national movements should be strived for to facilitate learning and knowledge enhancement among individuals.

⁸⁵ Regeringens proposition 2000/01:72. *Vuxnas lärande och utvecklingen av vuxenutbildningen*. Prop. 2000/01:72, www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/229/a/2579, accessed in November 2010.

The state steering documents influence the local level and the way these aims and goals are implemented. The local level is responsible for carrying out the measure. At a regional level there is some cooperation on adult education and individual studies and coaching but it should and could be increased.

On the example of one of the SMOC measures: Methods for individual studies and coaching for adults taking part in education and training at Lärcenter Falköping

Methods for individual studies and coaching for adults taking part in education and training at Lärcenter Falköping shows how state policies are met at local level when it concerns guiding adults in an individual way into a future direction either towards work or further studies.

Individual studies mean that studying adults can find their own way of learning, work at the same time as they study, execute influence on their studies and take responsibility for their study results. Those students who are well prepared for studies can speed them up and those who need more support can also have that. Formal and informal learning is recognized with the purpose of shortening the study path/time.

Policies and measures having positive effects

AVET/KY (*Kvalificerad yrkesutbildning/Yrkeshögskola*) is a form of post-secondary education designed to meet current competence needs in working life and it is organised in close collaboration with the workplaces. One of the aims of AVET is to meet the need of the commercial and industrial sector for required specially designed educational solutions/pathways.

KY offers post-secondary education with a high level of know-how and a level of know why which without scientific claims shall give the students a theoretical understanding of context and problem analyses which are directly applicable in working life. The expected result is that the student after having finished their studies can undertake a professional task.

The main regional task concerns the goal and strategic level. Its most important role is that of policy and strategy coordination. An area which is increasing in importance is the regional development plans and the growing importance of regions in Sweden when it comes to competence enhancement, innovation and growth. Education providers in Västra Götaland have been very successful with applications for KY courses. Out of 503 KY courses starting in the autumn of 2009 in Sweden 100 started in Västra Götaland. The local level has the role of providing these different pathways.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

A Bill was presented to the Parliament in 2009 on the creation of higher vocational education institutions. Vocational higher education brings together post-upper secondary school vocational programmes not found in the higher education system, including advanced vocational education which became the cornerstone of post-secondary VET in Sweden after passing the Law on Advanced Vocational Education in 2001⁸⁶. The new Agency for Higher Vocational Education⁸⁷ established in 2009, effectively gathers all publicly-financed post-secondary VET in the country under one administrative structure and will lead to more consistent funding mechanisms and norms for post-secondary VET. The agency superseded the Agency for Advanced Vocational Education and also assumed responsibility for two smaller VET forms for adults – supplementary education and post-secondary training – from the National Agency for Education, which retains national responsibility for IVET for adults through municipal adult upper secondary education.

Necessary conditions

As part of a general trend in Swedish society towards decentralisation of responsibility and decision-making powers, the education system (including VET) has undergone fundamental changes in recent decades. In accordance with decisions in Parliament (*Riksdag*), in 1991 responsibility for teaching staff was transferred from central authorities to municipalities and local school authorities, which were also given responsibility for organising and implementing school activities. Parliament also laid down the principles of school management by objectives and results with fewer regulations and clearer goals. Another guiding principle of education policy has been to create scope for diversity within the education system, and freedom for individual students to choose between different types of schools as well as between

⁸⁶ Lag om kvalificerad yrkesutbildning: SFS 2001:239, <https://lagen.nu/2001:239>, accessed in November 2010.

⁸⁷ Myndigheten för Yrkeshögskolan, www.yrkesmyndigheten.se, accessed in October 2010.

study routes. The main principle of the division of responsibilities and functions within the Swedish education system today is that the Government should control educational activities by defining national goals and guidelines. The central and local education authorities together with other education providers are responsible for ensuring that the system is organised in accordance with national goals. Within the framework and guidelines established by the Government and administered by the Swedish National Agency for Education⁸⁸, education providers enjoy considerable freedom to determine how activities are to be implemented and resources utilised.

The change to goal- and result-oriented steering of the education system requires the central and local authorities, as well as individual schools, to systematically follow up and evaluate educational activities in relation to goals and conditions applying to them.

General policy decisions on objectives, activities and financing of the education system are a responsibility shared between Parliament and the Government. Legislation is passed by Parliament, which also decides on the funding of appropriations to the educational system. The Government issues ordinances as well as general guidelines on the distributions of appropriations. The Government also approves the curricula for the entire school system, after development by the Swedish National Agency for Education.

WALES

Contextual factors that caused variations

Over the period 2000-2008 there is a general and steady upward trend regarding participation in lifelong learning by adults in Wales. However, the economic crisis from 2008 onwards presents massive challenges for businesses, individuals and Government, and skills/education as a means of either remaining in, or attaining employment gained particular significance.

Policies and measures having positive effects

The *Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning in Wales* (2009)⁸⁹ provides policy guidance to learners and providers in the further education sector. Delivery is supported through ESF and domestic funding. Examples for successful projects include, but are not limited to, the ESF-funded Workforce Development Programme and projects under the EU Lifelong Learning Programme. The main focus in this policy area is on Vocational, Educational and Training (VET) mobility of learners and providers, and to enhance essential and employability skills across all ages, either informally or through recognised qualifications.

The Welsh Assembly Government has focused support for lifelong learning on people threatened with redundancy, not in employment, economically inactive, or young people who had disproportionately high rates of unemployment. This has been a necessary response to particular challenges in specific target groups and geographical locations across Wales – while at the same time promoting the value of continued learning to both economic prosperity and social intergration.

An important role is played by the Regional Government's Workforce Development Programme (WDP). The focus of the programme is on the demand side of the labour market – that is, to engage employers and support them to develop their workforce. WPD support includes the provision of:

- Advice, guidance and information regarding workforce development.
- Access to a wide range of mainstream skills and training programmes, initiatives and services.
- Discretionary funding to support the implementation of training that is not easily delivered by mainstream programmes.

As part of the programme, and to meet employer needs, a team of dedicated Human Resources Development Advisors may recommend a wide range of publicly funded training and support options.

Policies and measures that will have positive effects in the near future

Careers Wales was established in 2001 as the first all-age careers information, advice and guidance service in the United Kingdom. Careers Wales provides a variety of services which include careers information, advice and guidance for all age groups; support for schools and colleges in the delivery of the Careers and the World of Work Curriculum Framework.

⁸⁸ Skolverket, www.skolverket.se, accessed in October 2010.

⁸⁹ WAG-Welsh Assembly Government (2009), *Quality and Effectiveness Framework for post-16 learning in Wales*, <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/qualityframeworkpost16/?lang=en>, accessed in November 2010.

Careers Wales also delivers a placing and referral service for mainly 16 and 17 year olds who are not in education, training or employment.

More in depth assessment and support is available to clients with additional needs through the Youth Gateway⁹⁰ Careers, information, advice and more in-depth guidance is available for adults aged 19 or over that are not participating in the New Deal⁹¹. Careers Wales has had and continues to play a significant role during the economic downturn as part of a coordinated multi-agency approach to service delivery, supporting those made redundant and the adult unemployed, this includes the EU ESF funded ReAct programme. In addition, dedicated projects such as Go Wales⁹² are directed at specific groups such as higher education students, providers and employers looking to recruit graduates.

The Welsh Assembly Government also works with organisations such as the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)⁹³ to support adults who wish to enhance their skills and education.

Adults are able to access education and training through a range of services, for example, through further education, higher education, and a number of projects and schemes funded domestically and/or through European structural funds (mainly ESF).

In Wales, performance against this 'snap-shot' participation figure has been consistently above the EU benchmark, suggesting that Wales' continuing emphasis on the benefits of lifelong learning in the adult population is having an effect. However, the overall figure does hide elements of learning need within the adult cohort. For example, Wales has a significant issue with levels of basic skills in the adult population –in both reading and mathematics the mean score in Wales was slightly lower than the OECD average score of 500. This difference was statistically significant for both reading and mathematics⁹⁴. The Regional Government continues to promote the value of learning, while at the same time placing greater emphasis on specific learning needs through the *Basic Skills Strategy*, to better ensure that all adults have the skills, knowledge and life chances to reach their full potential.

⁹⁰ www.careerswales.com/16to19/server.php?show=nav.4685, accessed in November 2010.

⁹¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/econ2009/hdw200906184/?lang=en> and www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Jobseekers/programmesandservices/DG_180442, both accessed in November 2010.

⁹² www.gowales.co.uk, accessed in November 2010.

⁹³ www.niace.org.uk, accessed in November 2010.

⁹⁴ See footnote 51.

3. ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

3.1. Interregional cooperation: quality and effectiveness through the Soft Open Method of Coordination (SMOC)

Introduction

1. Reinforcing international cooperation between Regional Governments in matters of lifelong learning and employment policies accompanies moments of great reform as well as periods of consolidation of the changes introduced.
Cooperation among regions is the political answer to the economic relationships that already connect the various local productive systems and their respective job markets.
Regional Governments cooperate to reinforce economic and societal internationalisation through their policies as well as to establish policy decisions on the evidence produced from experience elsewhere. Being open to comparing and transferring new ideas, procedures and instruments guarantees greater relevance of decisions taken and better results.
2. The expectations that accompany cooperation and mutual learning between Regional Governments need to be alert to the quality of the processes through which this is accomplished. In guarantee of the added value of international cooperation, over the past decade the Regional Governments of various European countries have adopted **procedures and instruments that direct the cooperation processes and establish them on reciprocal guarantees of quality and effectiveness** through simplification of the Open Method of Coordination and adopting forms of Soft Open Method of Coordination.
3. Reinforcement of the quality and effectiveness of interregional cooperation is a necessary condition to overcome some of the limits of the Lisbon Strategy and to **adopt a Community strategy for more decentralised growth and employment**⁹⁵, which is established on the potential of the regions and cities that, by virtue of their competencies, are the main promoters of innovation, research and education in Europe (Committee of the Regions, 2009:22).
4. **Interregional cooperation is fundamental also for implementing the Community goal of territorial cohesion, hence for the future of common policies.** As the Committee of the Regions mentions, the field of application of territorial cohesion must consider three dimensions: a corrective one aimed at “reducing existing inequalities”; a preventive one aimed at making “more coherent the sectorial policies that have territorial impact”; and an incentivating dimension aimed at “improving territorial integration” and promoting cooperation (Committee of the Regions, 2009:23).

The European reference framework

5. The European Commission states that “To achieve transformational change, the **Europe 2020 Strategy will need more focus, clear goals and transparent benchmarks for assessing progress.** This will require a strong governance framework that harnesses the instruments at its disposal to ensure timely and effective implementation”⁹⁶ (European Commission, 2010:25). In addition, it states that “regional and local authorities should implement the partnership, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, contributing to the elaboration of national reform programmes as well as to its implementation” (European Commission, 2010:27). Lastly, it proposes the adoption of special instruments, making reference to “reporting by the Member States through streamlined national reform programmes including information on growth bottlenecks and progress towards the targets, followed by policy advice at EU level to be issued in the form of recommendations under the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (art. 121.2) and the Employment Guidelines (art. 148)” (European Commission, 2010:31).

⁹⁵ Committee of the Regions (2009), *The Committee of the Regions' White Paper on Multilevel governance, CONST-IV-020*, <http://web.cor.europa.eu/epp/Ourviews/Documents/White%20Paper%20on%20MLG.pdf>, accessed in October 2010.

⁹⁶ European Commission (2010), *Europe 2020-A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, Communication, Brussels, 3.3.2010, COM(2010), Bruxelles*, http://europa.eu/press_room/pdf/complet_en_barroso_007_-_europe_2020_-_en_version.pdf, accessed in November 2010.

6. This will be possible only within a multilevel governance framework. “The European Union’s capacity to perform its role and achieve Community objectives depends not only on its institutional organisation but also and above all on its mode of governance. The legitimacy, efficiency and visibility of the way the Community operates depend on contributions from all the various players. They are guaranteed if **local and regional authorities are genuine “partners”** rather than mere “intermediaries” (Committee of the Regions, 2009:5).
7. **Delivering results depends on stronger governance.** Therefore, as the Committee of the Regions claims, the Community is the most suitable one to guarantee implementation of multilevel governance. Nevertheless cooperation between Regional Governments, for operating in the sectors where the sole competence of the EU is coordination and complement, must refer to volunteer models and must be capable of promoting cooperation and exchange of best practices and agree, if possible, on common objectives and orientation. The **Open Method of Coordination is a useful point of reference, but it is too complex and lacks adequate support and instruments** with respect to the requirements of regions. Compared to the initial goals, it still has not brought the foreseen added value nor has it shown to be satisfactory for the regional and local authorities, which are not sufficiently involved in it (Committee of the Regions, 2009:24).
8. Models to guarantee the quality and effectiveness of international cooperation must be adopted because in order to achieve common goals, multilevel governance must be established on **reciprocal loyalty between all levels of government and between institutions.** (...) good cooperation between the various levels of political power and the institutions is absolutely vital; **it has to be based on trust, rather than on confrontation between the different legitimate political and democratic roles** (Committee of the Regions, 2009:10-11).

3.2. Quality guarantees

Cooperation and mutual learning between Regional Governments that adhere to the Soft Open Method of Coordination is established on the following principles:

- Cooperation must adapt to the dynamics that accompany the political and decision processes of each individual region. These dynamics are characterised by phases of hard innovation produced by deep reforms, alternated by moments of soft innovation, by the slow progressive accumulation of perfecting practices. This is why cooperation must be open to synchronous as well as asynchronous procedures. Each region must find a reply to its improvement demands through cooperation in its priority times and topics. Policy learning processes must be activated in response to the demand of each region and not just when there are initiatives linked to common interest goals. The regions adhering to the SMOC guarantee their partners **policy learning opportunities in the means and ways most suited, as and when the need arises, to be carried out on both a bilateral and multilateral basis.**
- The quality of cooperation between Regional Governments depends on the constant commitment to building an organised European area of Mutual Learning, that fosters the encounter between demand and supply of cooperation between regions. This means **building and maintaining stable relationship channels, using a European dimension network of services that guarantees communication between potential institutional partners,** guarantees regular, recurrent flows of exchange of information about new ideas, current challenges and successful cases, and takes on the commitment of progressing towards a quantitative type of interregional benchmarking.
- All the Regional Governments are a source of knowledge and experience that enrich the wealth that is necessary for good governance. Through regional policies, they are all committed to achieve the European Strategy 2020 in the specific territorial contexts and in proportion to their institutional competencies. The quality of the policy learning offer that each region can grant on an international level depends on the existence of intelligent policies, i.e. evidence-based, which means documented and evaluated in their processes, results and, if possible, their impact.

Furthermore, it depends on institutional availability to establish international collaboration relationships, as well as the possibility to activate the necessary resources.

This is why, when Regional Governments that practice the Soft Open Method of Coordination accept policy and mutual learning demands, they **guarantee the partner the most suitable level of policy interlocution and the necessary technical contribution in terms of access to information and relationships with stakeholders**. The undertaking in understanding the differences and specific aspects of each of the partners means that they can all surpass the national cultural filters that obstruct policy learning in an international dimension.

- All Regional Governments have reasons to use international cooperation in order to improve their policies, whether connected to managing regional development or international dimensions. For this commitment to produce added value, the demand for cooperation must correspond to a solid need for improvement and change, corroborated by an explicit institutional choice. In the region this is the condition for expected improvement to be achieved in the short and medium term, and for a demand for cooperation that can generate satisfactory results for all the partners.

Therefore the Regional Governments that use the Soft Open Method of Coordination **give a quality guarantee to their partners** - before making any proposal for cooperation – **specifying and guaranteeing solid local foundations to their policy learning demand**. The proposal is always the product of a consultation process that has had the participation of the key actors. In addition, it is always formulated according to the European strategies and policies, as a reference point that promotes the specification of common points of interest. This is accompanied by the proposal of the appropriate actors according to the type of policy selected and the responsibilities involved, depending on the results that are expected. Policy learning quality guarantee depends on the preliminary commitment in work aimed at overcoming the various types of cultural filters that hinder mutual understanding and arise from diversities of ideas, concepts and practices.

Initiating a policy learning process between Regional Governments potentially produces further needs for investigating and developing relationships. This is why a further preliminary condition of quality and success is formed by demonstrating the capability to activate the resources necessary for potential developments and the availability of reinforced bilateral and multilateral cooperation in mutual learning prospects.

- Internationalisation of the job market, training and productive systems is accompanied by the Regional Governments with concerted actions of common interest aimed at creating infrastructures, services or initiatives of reciprocal interest. This can concern movement of citizens for training, work, business and also the joint, coordinated production of training offers or other joint ventures.

This is why the Regional Governments that use the Soft Open Method of Coordination have adopted a route that, depending on the subject, provides for the **stipulation of bilateral agreements and annual implementation plans, or underwriting contracts for the production of goods or services**.

- The whole of the cooperation work between Regional Governments provides concrete confirmation and evidence to shed light on the possibilities for implementing, on a comparative basis, the European strategies and for proposing improvements.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Contextualisation of the SMOC partners and their respective projects and planning⁹⁷

The relevance of the regional aspect

Policy issues are more and more relevant on a global level (environment, poverty, peace etc.), and policy making takes place more and more on a global level. Collaboration and networking on a multinational level (like in the EU) is one of the most important means for nations to become global players. On the other hand, the concrete topics to deal with for every human being are more and more locally situated. So, the regional dimension of societal aspects becomes more and more important mainly in the fields related to the needs of the people and regional developments.

The SMOC project approach is rationally based on this current reality and is an important contribution to the perspective of a human future of society. Essentially the method of soft and open coordination takes into account the fact that the underlining importance of regions has to tackle the difference amongst regions in a sensible, and in spite of this, effective way. Regardless of whether they are more or less developed, regions have different needs, different problems, different chances and different ways of resolving issues. To make the best out of that the most innovative, effective and efficient strategy is to learn from each other; to know more about the objectives, aims and problems of other regions and mainly to better understand their way of solving problems. This might lead in the end to a comparable structure of policy making in the same field (in this instance, education) in the regions, without neglecting the different needs and approaches.

The method chosen in SMOC to organise learning from each other shows all different kinds of transfer, modification and exchange of good and best practices. This is true not only for the qualitative way of discussing and solving problems, but also for the quantitative point of comparison, the acknowledgment of benchmarks. In this way regions can not only learn from each other, they also can find themselves in a broader frame of achievements.

In the field of lifelong learning and adult education the SMOC approach led mainly in this quantitative observation to the finding that we have a kind of stagnation and decreasing in almost all of the participating regions regarding levels of participation. Mainly the findings show that amongst the majority not participating in adult education there is a large group of people not involved in any activity socially – neither working, sports nor other social activities.

These general problems are trying to match projects and activities in the seven participating European regions. Each region developed its way of solving the problem by focusing on one specific aspect referring to the results of analysis before and putting a central paradigm, a central postulate. This central paradigm refers to the overall background including all human beings in the future of the common society.

General observations

Some observations on the interaction of the regions in SMOC might be helpful for further activities.

The first is that in no case it was possible, nor intended, to reduce the elements of solution (projects, measures etc.) on adult education; whenever educational problems are arising, all pedagogical sectors are involved and need to be thought about.

The second is that – not surprisingly – the stronger cooperation is amongst those regions which are more similar, regarding the type of problem and more similar regarding the political aims.

Related to that there is the third observation. The less difference between problems, the easier it is to transfer solutions to that problem – which means first practical analysis of the problem, then application of the solution.

The fourth aspect is that there are big differences in the investment in education by the regions, which is sometimes difficult to explain why. Obviously evidence of the economic effects of education, even short-term effects, are not always present.

The fifth observation is the fact that a strong and systematic qualitative discussion to interpret the quantitative benchmarks it is needed, as they are not self-explanatory.

For which the sixth observation is an example.

⁹⁷ By Prof. Ekkehard Nuißl von Rein-DIE Deutsche Institut für Erwachsenenbildung – Leibniz-Zentrum für Lebenslanges Lernen (Internal Evaluator of the SMOC).

Problems are very often similar, but not identical, and because of these slight differences a transfer of solutions might fail – e.g. the minority problem regarding Roma people in Bulgaria, and Chinese people in Tuscany. And finally, the seventh observation is that the solutions found in the regions came from the learners rather than from the “system”, so - in spite of being introduced from the top - they follow more or less a bottom up strategy, which seems to be a prerequisite for effectiveness and efficacy in this field.

4.2. Severozapaden

Bulgaria and Vidin Region in particular will have to work in order to reach the educational goals of Europe 2020. The biggest problem seems to be the country's largest number of children who stop going to school at early age. Data from National Statistical Institute for the academic year 2009-2010 shows that 93.4% of children between 7 and 10 years attend school. These figures however fell to 82.4% for children 11 to 14 years, and currently only 78.6% of young people finish high school, which means that 22% fail to receive diplomas. These data indicate that Bulgaria will be challenging to reach the EU targets for reducing the number of children who leave school early below 10% by 2020.

As for higher education, Bulgaria is in a good position to reach the European goal - at least 40% of young people will have higher education by year 2020.

For the academic year 2009/2010, 33.1% of the young Bulgarians between 19-23 years were students at a university or higher education colleges. Other 3.9% attended colleges and 0.8% attended educational institutions for vocational training.

Bulgaria is now preparing its national targets to help the country to achieve the educational threshold strategy in Europe 2020. Sofia must submit national goals and description of exactly how it intends to achieve them in Brussels. To reach the objectives, Bulgaria needs to invest more in the education sector. According to Europe 2020 Strategy each country should invest 3% of its gross domestic product (GDP) in research and development. In May 2010, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikolay Mladenov, said that this percentage can be provided only partially and the country will probably spend only 2% of GDP. Even this figure, however, will depend on the reform in the research and development of Bulgarian economy.

Bulgaria is currently developing a comprehensive learning outcomes based national qualifications framework (NQF) covering all levels of the education and training system and their corresponding qualifications/degrees. The new Bulgarian Government acting since July 2009 sees the NQF as a precondition for implementing the European Qualification framework (EQF) and as such an important national priority. The development of a NQF is given high priority in the Programme of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (2009-2013). According to the 2010 Action Plan, a NQF draft is to be ready by 15 December 2010.

In April 2008, a task force was set up by an Order of the Minister of Education to develop proposals on how to relate the national qualification degrees to the EQF, to prepare a plan for sectoral qualifications development, and to submit a proposal for changes in the national legislation. A separate task force prepared a draft qualifications framework for higher education (HE), based on Dublin descriptors. It also aligned the national descriptors of the existing higher education structure (BA, MA and Doctorate) introduced by the Higher Education Act (1995) with the cycles and descriptors introduced in the context of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). A draft set of national HE-descriptors has been elaborated as well. A draft set of descriptors for VET levels of the NQF were designed in January 2010. They are based on learning outcomes and are constructed by degrees of vocational qualification.

The work on linking the VET levels with the general education stages is ongoing.

4.3. Syddanmark

Lifelong learning is a tool in order to reach economic development within the strategic business areas – Welfare Technology, Energy, Amusement Economy and Clusters. The current strategy runs through 2011, and in the work with the new strategy for economic development, there will be some connections to the EU 2020 Strategy. In the Region of Southern Denmark, there is a possibility to incorporate some of the ideas from the Swedish model “*Tech College*” within the framework of the South Danish Agreement on Education. The Steering Committee for the South Danish Agreement on Education agreed that it is necessary to develop a broader corporation between the educational system and the private companies. The idea is that this deals with the elementary schools and the upper secondary levels and VET.

In the forthcoming work with this, the Technical College idea will be used as a kind of inspiration, since it is not possible to simply transfer it, as the initiative in Sweden came from the social partners and the companies.

4.4. País Vasco

In the Basque Country, the last decade has seen the introduction of policies and measures in line with the strategic objectives addressed in the Europe 2020 Strategy. Some of these measures are mentioned below. With regard to strategic objective no. 1: *“To make reality of lifelong learning and the mobility of students and teachers”* the following has been launched:

- The device to recognise skills acquired through work experience or through non-formal training.
- The network of learning mediation services functioning at regional level and providing information on the training offer (whether formal or informal) in their geographic area, guiding people depending on their prior training interests and expectations, detecting training needs and endeavouring to cover these.
- The co-funding of projects for the mobility of students, young workers and teachers, both through the Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus sub-programmes, meaning that in 2010 12% of students completing their vocational training studies participated in a mobility project.

With regard to strategic objective no. 2 *“To improve the quality and efficacy of education and training”* the following has been fostered:

- Trilingual (Spanish, Basque and English) learning experiences at compulsory secondary education, bachelor and vocational training levels.
- The introduction of quality systems to the management of training centres, meaning that the percentage of centres in the Basque Country certified by UNE-EN ISO and/or EFQM standards is high. Of a total of 60 vocational training centres, 48 are certified under standard UNE-EN ISO 9001 (80%), 52 centres (86.66%) have obtained 400 EFQM points, 9 centres (15%) have obtained 500 EFQM points and 12 centres (20%) hold the UNE-EN ISO 14000 certificate.
- Specific training plan for education centre management teams.

With regard to strategic objective no. 3 *“To foster equity, cohesion and active citizenship”* the following has been developed:

- The Initial Professional Qualification Programmes for young adults over the age of 16 who have abandoned their compulsory education studies without having attained the objectives and, therefore, without having obtained their compulsory secondary education leaving certificate. The objective is that these young people obtain a level 1 professional qualification, whether by obtaining their compulsory secondary education leaving certificate or by accessing intermediate vocational training.
- Early attention to student diversity and special education needs through educational reinforcement projects, curricular diversification programmes, extra schooling programmes, intercultural programmes and programmes to include recently arrived students.

With regard to strategic objective no. 4 *“To increase creativity and innovation, including the business spirit, at all levels of education and training”* the following has been launched:

- TKNIKA-Centre for Innovation in Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning, created in 2005, has the mission of converting innovation into the backbone of vocational training in the Basque Country, progressing in new environments and learning processes and reducing the competence gap from the moment an idea or technology appears until society is able to take advantage of it. By means of technological observation, TKNIKA designs, develops, introduces and transfers to vocational training centres and, from these, to the business sector, innovative products and services in the areas of Management, Training, Technology and ICTs – e-Learning. This centre holds the UNE 166002 certificate⁹⁸.

Law 5/2002, of 19 June, on Qualifications and Vocational Training, establishes the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications and the system for assessing and recognising professional skills. This Law defines:

⁹⁸ www.tknika.net, accessed in October 2010.

- Professional qualification: is the combination of professional skills useful for employment which may be acquired by means of modular or other kinds of training and through working experience.
- Professional skill: is the combination of knowledge and qualifications making it possible to go about a professional activity compliant to the demands of production and of the job.
- Training associated to vocational training titles: is modular in nature and establishes the equivalence of each professional module with credits corresponding to the European system, ECVET. The modules are defined in terms of learning results and assessment criteria.

The state regulations establishing vocational training titles and their minimum teachings have been transferred to and are therefore particular to each Autonomous Community.

Moreover, each title establishes the supplement to the diploma or certificate integrating the Europass document, establishing the level corresponding to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), and anticipates the equivalence in the EQF, for the moment when the national qualifications framework is established, in accordance with European recommendations, in which the corresponding level of this title will be determined in the national framework and its equivalent in the European framework. All of this helps to promote the transparency of qualifications and the mobility of students and workers.

The regional policies developed by regions with authority in the area of education and training are essential for States and the European Union to achieve the objectives established by the strategies launched in the different periods. In this respect, interregional cooperation, making effective use of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and developing synergies between regions, as developed to date within the Earllall⁹⁹ framework and the projects carried out between its member regions, are clearly valuable for improving policies and measures developed in the fields of education and training in each region. Learning between equals, the exchange of best practices, the circulation of results, are common working tools between the Earllall member regions and have been perfected, especially, through projects (i.e. Prevalet and SMOC), developed within the framework of the European Lifelong Learning Programme.

In this context, the study visits made to the regions of Syddanmark and Västsverige by those responsible for the policy making and technical aspects of developing and managing the training of adults in the Basque Country have been enormously useful for fostering new measures, result of the partial adaptation of specific policies and measures carried out in two of the European regions to enjoy the highest participation rates of over-25s in training activities.

Specifically:

- Flexibility of management and training options adapted to the needs of adults attending the *Folkhögskola* (*Folk high schools*) in Västsverige, facilitating progress with the acquiring of skills and qualifications while conciliating training with their working and family lives.
- The guidance network related to the Education of Adults and Preparatory Adult Education (FVU): welcome, information and guidance.

4.5. Toscana

The region of Tuscany, in the planning documents adopted by the new legislature, gives education a central role in promoting strategic processes for a knowledge society able to support a smart sustainable and inclusive growth. The goal of the Regional Government is to lead the change with education as an instrument of change.

To do that the region has identified the following benchmarks regarding to Europe 2020:

1. Fight against early school dropout. The Tuscany region of Europe 2020 takes as its objective to ensure that the school dropout rate in ten years, less than 10% (currently 17% in Tuscany).
2. Raising the educational level of the Tuscan citizens. Objectives of Europe which provide a percentage of graduates by more than 85% (currently 80% in Tuscany) and that at least 40% of young people should be university graduates (currently 17% in Tuscany).
3. Integration of school work, supporting new forms of collaboration between training schools and enterprises in order to establish continuity between the two sectors that will allow one hand, to better understand the context of the skills required by the economic system and, secondly, to facilitate the transition from school to the company.

⁹⁹ European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning, www.earllall.eu, accessed in October 2010.

4. Policies of educational continuity from 0 to 6 years, promoting support of children developing solutions to educational continuity between nests of childhood and preschool that have as their objectives the development of new teaching methods and support for integrated gender policies especially with regard to working time.
5. Adult education. The objectives of the Europe 2020 provide that a knowledge society for growth of innovative capacity requires more intelligent that they acquired during their lifetime. The regional objective is to make available to citizens Tuscan training, especially non-formal, to increase knowledge and skills that can be used as tools of innovation in career paths.

New ideas and the ability to transfer into regional and local systems successful measures tested in other countries, enabling systems to be flexible and fast view of a Government which should aim to reduce costs and optimize their results.

4.6. Steiermark

As far as the use of European tools is concerned the Styria Province is depending on national developments, e.g. there is neither a lifelong learning strategy nor a defined National Qualification Framework in Austria, Styria included. Nevertheless Styria is trying to develop educational strategies and policies oriented to expected national and European strategies. This concerns the early childhood education, the so called "*Neue Mittelschule*", adult education, and lifelong guidance.

The idea of the partner organisation, the Provincial and the National Government is that without cross-regional, transnational, European, and global (i.e. OECD) cooperation and interaction no regional, national development is feasible.

For Styria SMOC is an important part of this framework. The interregional contacts created therein will continue in concrete (i.e. with Västra Götaland for the Austrian lifelong learning strategy processes).

The new regional governmental programme of the Styria Province is oriented towards regional demands as well as national and European strategies. SMOC can contribute to the educational part, especially in the area of early childhood education, guidance, teacher education and adult education.

The dimensions of ET 2020 (especially mobility, key competencies, entrepreneurship) are a backbone for this development.

Concrete actions are running and planned in the areas below concerning cooperation in the SMOC process:

- Lifelong guidance as an integrated part of lifelong regional guidance strategy.
- Cooperation between initial education and adult education, in guidance and lifelong learning.
- Coordination concerning the regional implications of the national lifelong learning strategy process.

4.7. Västsverige

As part of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth 'An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs' is the Commission's contribution to reaching the EU employment rate target for women and men of 75% for the 20-64 years age group by 2020. The Strategy also highlights the EU's targets to reduce the early school leaving rate to under 10% and increase the number of young people in higher education or equivalent vocational education to at least 40%.

The measures chosen as best practice in Västra Götaland are in many ways adopted to the new Strategy. Regional cooperation between upper secondary schools in order to increase quality both through competition and cooperation will prevent drop-outs, make sure that schools prepare students for university level, higher vocational education and for the labour market in a better way.

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education serves as the national coordinator for the European Qualifications Framework in lifelong learning. Region Västra Götaland has taken part in a reference group with the mission to elaborate a National Qualification Framework. Region Västra Götaland is in the frontline in Sweden when it comes to elaborating a regional system and methods for validation and recognition of competencies. Region Västra Götaland together with The Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) are members representing Sweden in the EC ECVET Network Users Group with the objective to promote the implementation of ECVET on a national as well as regional level.

Region Västra Götaland chose to learn more about the vocational education and training systems including the apprenticeship system in Region Syddanmark and in Styria due to the fact that Sweden and therefore also municipalities in Region Västra Götaland are implementing a new reform concerning

upper secondary level education and training as from the autumn of 2011. The most important facts learnt are the measures showing how to assure good quality in apprenticeship programmes through a clear and defined relationship between schools and social partners. The measures showed that the social partners in both countries take a much bigger responsibility in the education and training of young people mainly due to different regulations concerning apprentices than in Sweden. This responsibility was indeed impressive but, on the other hand, it was clear that systems like those in Denmark and in Austria have been suffering badly from the economic crisis.

4.8. Wales

Wales has its own devolved Government within the UK as the EU Member State. The Welsh Assembly Government plays an active role within the European policy process through the UK Government's membership. The Welsh Assembly Government's aim is for Wales to be a key player within Europe and an active participant and partner in the European Union.

The Welsh Assembly Government ensures the interests of Wales are voiced at a European level. From our offices in Cardiff and Brussels, the European teams are responsible for:

- Responding to European Consultations.
- Ensuring that EU legislation is complied with in Wales.
- Raising the profile of Wales in Europe.
- Hosting Ministerial visits to Brussels and, equally hosting European Ministerial visits to Wales.

Current and future EU strategies and implementation tools such as the European Structural Funds emphasize the role of regions in achieving EU strategic goals. The sharing of good practice and knowledge at a regional level is essential, and interregional cooperation can offer a flexible, pragmatic implementation approach as well as meaningful benchmarking. Statistical comparisons at Member State level may not reflect the wide variations within Member States, resulting in misleading interpretations of data and a lack of evidence for the further development of policies and practical implementation tools. Therefore, the main benefit of tools such as SMOC is the fostering of such interregional cooperation, and a systematic approach to benchmarking at a regional level.

Standards and tools such as EQVET, EQF and others are taken into consideration when developing policy for Wales. European Structural Funds (such as the ESF, ERDF, EFF) and programmes such as the EU Lifelong Learning Programme are important tools that support the implementation of Welsh Assembly Government policies. These are broadly aligned with European agendas as set out in the EU 2020 Strategy. The Welsh European Funding Office, which is part of the Welsh Assembly Government, works closely with the European Commission to ensure programmes are delivered in line with EU goals but support the specific requirements of Wales.

A visit by further education representatives from Wales to the Basque Country in December 2003 provided new ideas for VET mobility and led to the development of a Coordination Project. The project will support institutions across Wales with respect to VET mobility efforts. A further visit by representatives from further education providers to Västra Götaland offered insights into ways of cooperation between multiple parties to deliver VET qualifications and especially how to work with businesses. Feedback on both visits has provided fresh impetus in the development of qualifications, VET mobility, and employability skills.

SMOC related information, such as leaflets, the visits programme, invitations to events, leaflets and reports have been distributed using electronic means (email, circulars, newsletters), meetings and workshops. Links with other programmes and projects have been utilised and emphasized to participants, to support joined-up and cross-project working. Policy changes take time to materialize, but the visits to the Basque Country and Västra Götaland have been considered a success by the participants. It is expected that the enthusiasm created will inspire new ideas and projects, which will utilise the policy learning and translate it into practice. To assess more concrete benefits and outputs, a follow-on project or monitoring report would be useful.

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