young aduIllt

Deliverable report for

YOUNG_ADULLLT

Grant Agreement Number 693167

Deliverable 8.3

Final Report to Research, Policy, and Practice

Due date of deliverable: 28/02/2019
Actual submission date: 26/02/2019

Lead beneficiary for this deliverable: *WWU*

Dissemination Level:		
PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Description of task

The main task of this Deliverable is to produce a Final Report to Research, Policy, and Practice, which draws on cumulative results continuously elaborated in the previous research phases of the YOUNG_ADULLLT research project. This Final Report synthetises the results achieved in the project's three phases – the policy-mapping phase, the data treatment and analysis phase, and the comparative analysis and policy phase – and completes the comparative study on lifelong learning policy-making in nine EU member countries. As such, it offers first-hand information on their complex embeddedness in local economies, labour markets, education systems, as well as in social and youth policies, and examines their impact on young adults' life courses.

2. Description of work & main achievements

One of the crucial challenges of the Final Report to Research, Policy, and Practice was to compile and concisely present the results of 36 months of intensive research activity from YOUNG_ADULLLT. At the same time, the Report is intended to reduce complexity and enable policy practitioners and various stakeholders involved in policy-making to benefit from the findings and make use of them to support their various needs and objectives. Thus, reaching such a broad audience requires use of a clear structure and accessible presentation.

As such, the work on this Report has been guided by the project's three research objectives. The *first* objective aimed at understanding the relationship and complementarity of LLL policies in terms of their depiction of target groups, including analysis of their potential implications and (un)intended effects on young adults' life courses. The *second* objective was to enquire into the policies' fit and their potential for fostering and mobilising the hidden resources of young adults as they build their life projects. Finally, the *third* objective sought to research LLL policies in their embedded interaction with the regional economy, labour market and the individual life projects of young adults in order to identify best practices and patterns of coordinated policy-making at local/regional level. Correspondingly, these objectives guide the structure of this Report. After extending and fine-tuning the first version of the Report drafted by core partners, the Lead Partners gave their feedback and comments, and the Report was finalized.

The Report starts with a short introduction to the research objectives and methodology of YOUNG_ADULLLT and continues with a description of the main results. It finishes with

concluding remarks as well as key recommendations for research, policy and practice. First of all, we provide a brief summary of the main achievements of YOUNG_ADULLLT outlined in this Report, aligned with the project objectives.

With regard to the first objective, there are a number of findings, which focus on the processes of target group framing, the varying perspectives of young adults and experts, as well as on policy formulation and target group construction.

- The policy analyses show similarities in terms of the identification of target groups in different Functional Regions. This is very often based on varying conceptions of lifelong learning. In this respect, two notions had a significant impact on the definition of lifelong learning: employability and vulnerability. The notion of *employability* was commonly referenced in the policies under study, either explicitly as a principal objective, or implicitly as a rationale that framed policy agendas and practice. Enquiring further, we identified four underlying logics of intervention (*Prevention*, *Compensation, Activation* and *Empowerment*). In addition, the notion of *vulnerability* has substantially framed the way in which policies target their addressees. Framing young adults as 'vulnerable' creates manifold side effects. First of all, it essentialises vulnerability as a phenomenon that belongs to young adults' lives. Once officially designated as vulnerable, young adults may unconsciously accept this ascription and behave according to predefined expectations of normality/deviance, thereby re-producing the socially established conditions that first produced their vulnerability. Moreover, expectations of a linear life course frame the interpretation of young adults' achievements or deficiencies. When policy-makers orient their work according to linear or 'normal' understandings of life courses, they risk producing stigmatising and pernicious effects for those young adults who – for whatever reason – do not fit the mould. Against this background, YOUNG_ADULLLT has emphasized the de-essentialization of vulnerability and highlighted that young adults must not blamed for circumstances beyond their control. Instead, we have proposed the adoption of a context-sensitive approach, which assumes that similar policies can have different effects in different contexts and for different target groups. In addition, we have worked with a notion of vulnerability that focuses on young adults in vulnerable positions and does not individualize precarious life settings.

- This study has also revealed the discrepancies or mismatches between how policies perceive local problems and how they devise appropriate solutions. A vast majority of the policies under study highlighted structural deficits and inconsistencies in their regions, yet proposed policy solutions based on individual interventions. This, in turn, makes it hard for young adults to reach their desired or even socially expected outcomes, which often leads to demotivation, frustration and disinterest in participation in lifelong learning programmes.

- When comparing young adults' and experts' perspectives, it became clear that there are very few examples of young adults being included in the design, implementation and enactment of policies, leading to ambivalences and misunderstandings. In contrast to this, in-depth comparative analyses have revealed that young adults are active learners and are willing to take up new challenges. Moreover, since many of them have had negative experiences that provide a reference for interpreting new learning programmes, they actively seek support and recognition in the generation of LLL policies.

- With regard to target group construction and policy formulation, the research has shown that target group construction is based on rather broad criteria, such as age, level of education, sex, immigration status, and educational/training qualifications among others. However, such categorization does not provide accurate information on the context-specific conditions, living standards and actual needs of young adults. In addition, since the policies often focus on lack of skills or personal deficits, they may indirectly promote stigmatisation and foster negative experiences.

- There is a tendency in LLL policy-making to help young adults to pursue or restore a 'normal' life course ('process of re-standardisation'). However, young adults tend to experience the opposite in their life course trajectories and do not necessarily follow a linear life-course ('process of de-standardisation'). It was observed that many LLL policies have institutionalized the vision of a standard life-course, which creates additional demands on young adults and diminishes their chances of establishing a sustainable life trajectory.

With regard to the *second* objective, comparative analyses of the living conditions of young adults combined with existing skills ecologies, as well as the different understandings of Functional Regions as dynamic units, have provided a number of notable results.

- Analyses showed that significant differences exist between the living standards of young adults across and within regions (both at national as well as at Functional Region level). In general, although not in the case of all countries, the least economically developed nation states hardest hit by the economic crisis also face the greatest regional disparities. There was evidence that the ongoing impact of economic recession on the living conditions of young adults is most pronounced in the less developed regions, or regions more exposed to economic shocks. When accounting for the contextual living conditions of young adults and devising policy responses, attention needs to be paid to the mismatch between administrative boundaries and the dynamics of the regional setting.

- The complexity and dynamics of Functional Regions produce manifold inequalities and disparities. For example, there are regions dependent on one economic sector, which frames labour market demands. Also, there are many regions with a high economic dependency on current market developments and changes. Such distinctive regional characteristics impact the ability to find permanent employment, develop more creative aspirations, or build lasting social and support networks. Against this background, it is vital to account for the dynamic nature of Functional Regions, their changing administrative and territorial borders, their temporal developments and intersections with other regions and smaller units, as well as their expanding functional relationships. In addition, intensified efforts to expand the data set at the level of Functional Regions are much needed to design and formulate responsive policy measures.

- Every Functional Region has its unique pattern of governance of skills production and use, involving different actors, institutions and structural settings. Common to the majority of the Functional Regions was the presence of national institutions. Also, within each country, similar actors were often involved in the policies of different regions. Our comparative studies suggest that all the regions experience a varying range of skills (mis)matches. Some regions are faced with skills shortages, while others are affected by skills surpluses. In this respect, skills equilibriums are predominantly found in urban areas (e.g. Bremen, Glasgow, Milan and Vienna). Differing skills ecologies are, in turn, affecting the educational trajectories and possible job opportunities of young adults. Again, local dependencies, national structures and global economic development heavily

influence unsteady skills equilibriums and raise new questions regarding the importance of local and regional economic, educational and labour market environments.

Finally, regarding the *third* objective, the examination of coordinated policy-making included contextual and institutional analyses that offer interesting insights into metagovernance constellations, parameters of the planning, implemention and provision of LLL policies, as well as a starting point for deliberation on reflexive tools for policy-making.

- Departing from the observation that policy-making at local level can be best understood and assessed by accounting for its diverse elements, and that local LLL policy-making is highly context-specific, the researchers have adopted the approach of storytelling as policy analysis. This analytical procedure was helpful in establishing 'relations between sets of relationships'. As such, storytelling showed that the relationships between the designers', implementers' and addressees' points of view are sometimes divergent and that often the 'right' choice is made by the addressees for the 'wrong' reason.

- The contextual analysis identified three distinct forms of metagovernance constellations that occur in mixed forms in the regions under study. If hierarchical governance prevails, the main emphasis of policy-makers is on accountability, strict procedures, and process management. If market governance prevails, the emphasis is on competition, output and decentralization of structures. Finally, if network governance is the main governmental style, the policy-makers emphasize interdependence, interactive cooperation and more or less informal networks. In reality, none of these governance structures occurs in a pure form, but rather as a mixture of the above with an emphasis on one approach. On the basis of these metagovernance constellations, three particular configurations have been observed and further analyzed, focusing on interactions regarding target group construction, policy implementation, and pedagogical interactions. Tracing these various constellations has revealed the importance of reflecting on how metagovernance influences policy-making and contributes to its formation and design.

- Looking at the various stages of the policy-making process, three particular phases – planning, regulation, and provision – have been focused on, offering the

possibility of developing a *reflexive tool* for policy-makers and other stakeholders involved in local and regional policy-making. Using such a tool, during the first phase of planning a particular measure, policy practitioners could consider the frames of reference for target group construction, the various actors involved and their mutual relationships, as well as the perspectives and visions of young adults as active shapers of LLL policy-making. During the second phase, regulation, they have the opportunity to question the aims and objectives of policy measures, to think about the contextual factors that affect implementation, as well as the existing implementation arrangements and young adults' acceptance and expectations. In the last phase of provision, stakeholders can reflect on the organiational forms of pedagogical interactions, their strategic educational goals and targets, as well as the chosen styles of communication and the way young adults participate in learning processes.

3. Deviations from the Workplan

There were no deviations and the Deliverable has been successfully accomplished.

4. Performance of the partners

All partners fulfilled their tasks. After core partners agreed on common standards, a primary document was drafted, which was edited and expanded by the principal investigator and his team. Afterwards the document went through several rounds of joint editing by members of the Consortium. Imbalances were mitigated by the coordinator.

5. Conclusions

The Full Assembly deems this Deliverable to be fulfilled satisfactory.

Deliverable D8.3

young aduıllt

Work Package 8

Comparative Analysis and Reporting

Final Report to Research, Policy, and Practice

University of Münster (WWU)

Marcelo Parreira do Amaral & Jozef Zelinka

University of Glasgow (GU)

Michele Schweisfurth

University of Education Freiburg (PHFR)

Hans-Georg Kotthoff & Juan Felipe Carrilo Gáfaro

University of Porto (UPORTO)

Tiago Neves

26/02/2019

Executive Summary

The Horizon 2020-funded YOUNG_ADULLLT project has observed how lifelong learning (LLL) policies are designed to create economic growth while also guaranteeing social inclusion. In researching these measures, the project was particularly concerned – as many policies are – with young people in vulnerable situations.

The main unit of analysis used for understanding the regional economy and labour market is the 'functional region' (FR), and the project created 18 FR case studies in 9 EU partner countries.

The project had three primary aims: to thoroughly review LLL policies; to enquire into their fit with young adults' life projects; and to research how these policies are embedded in FRs.

The methodology included mapping and reviewing policies (183 in total); quantitative analysis of young adults' living conditions; qualitative interview research with key stakeholders; comparative analysis of skills supply and demand; and cross-case and cross-national comparative analysis.

This report synthesises comparatively the main findings of the project, and draws out lessons for policy, practice and research. It is organised based on three categories of findings: the meanings and impact of LLL policies in and on young adults' life courses, and how the concept of vulnerability is operationalized (2.1); a comparison of the regional landscapes, their skills ecologies and the local living conditions of young adults (2.2); and the patterns of policy-making in these contexts (2.3). Drawing on all of these findings, the report concludes with a reflexive tool designed to assist policymakers in contextualizing their decision-making in local economic and social realities as well as in the lived experiences of young adults and their life projects. The following messages can be highlighted:

- LLL is a conceptually rich and much-debated term. While the tension between more humanistic and economic understandings is ongoing, *employability* has become a central aim. The project identified four different logics of intervention underlying the studied policies: prevention; compensation; activation; and empowerment. While the policies are underpinned by an understanding of difficulties as largely structural, the solutions more often than not put the onus on the individual young adult.

- *Vulnerability* as a socio-political frame for LLL policies promotes an understanding of a 'normal' life course. If young adults do not adhere to these prevailing narratives,

they are considered vulnerable. Four main conceptions of vulnerability emerge: lack of education/training; current occupational status; structural conditions such as poverty; and physical or cognitive impairments. Interview data revealed increasingly de-standardized life courses among young adults, but also efforts to re-standardize. Many young adults have internalised some of these discourses but placed them within a wider framework of life strategies, setting them apart from policymakers' perceptions. Policy discourses define their target groups in terms of attitudinal limitations and a lack of 'soft skills', in terms of their deep social vulnerability, in terms of standard life courses, and/or in terms of how intervention helps to overcome weaknesses.

- The living conditions of young people vary substantially across EU countries but also between FRs in individual countries. The economic crisis continues to have a substantial effect on some regions, and the poorest regions face the triple challenge of longer term relative underdevelopment, lingering economic recession, and high youth unemployment.

- NUTS-2 data was used to profile regions but has limitations in terms of its mapping on to FRs as dynamic units.

- FRs produce different skills ecologies, networks, and patterns of policy-making. Some FRs rely on very specific sectors which may themselves be vulnerable or which may offer only precarious or challenging employment or jobs which require specific skills that may be in short supply. Within the differing FR contexts, European Social Funding, national policies and structures are evident but young people's lives are very much influenced by contextual regional factors. Within local institutions, actors and the relations between them are also shaped by FR-specific factors.

- The project adopted a 'storytelling as policy analysis' approach in order to generate context-specific findings and to demonstrate how policy designers', implementers' and addressees' points of view sometimes diverge, challenging the imperative for co-ordination.

- Approaches to policy-making in these contexts included mixtures of hierarchical, network, and market governance. Patterns of interactions observed relate to the construction of target groups, the implementation of policies, and the pedagogical interactions involved.

- The metagovernance analysis opened spaces for reflexive modification of policy implementation processes. This requires an understanding of the existing mixture of governance styles and their effects and a recognition that, locally and regionally, implementation can be modified regardless of the underlying economic pressures, without neglecting the involvement of young people in the process.

- The reflexive tool we have developed provides a set of questions focused around 'windows of reflexivity for co-ordinated LLL policy-making'. This follows a (more or less) chronological sequence of planning, regulating, and enacting a policy, with multiple options for deliberation on key issues that are likely to affect its success in the local and regional contexts. Flowing from the project findings, it embraces, for example, multiple frames of reference, policy co-ordination structures, actor points of view (especially including young people), and forms of pedagogical interaction and communication.

- The report concludes with a series of specific recommendations, which reflect the broader need to: enhance and improve data availability at NUTS-2 and NUTS-3 levels; involve and recognise young adults as active stakeholders in the policy process; address cross-regional heterogeneity when designing skills policies; and deepen knowledge and understanding of young people, their life worlds and life courses.

Acknowledgements

Members of the YOUNG_ADULLLT Project Consortium have contributed to this report as authors of the national/international reports which served as the empirical basis for this Report (see http://www.young-adulllt.eu/publications/working-paper/index.php). The Coordinator is the main contact for requests regarding this Report.

We wish to thank all members of the Consortium for their feedback and useful suggestions for improvement.

Content

List of Figures

1. Introduction

The YOUNG_ADULLLT project was funded under the European Commission's Horizon 2020 research framework — Call '*YOUNG-3-2015: Lifelong learning for young adults: better policies for growth and inclusion in Europe'*. This Call was centred on the specific challenge facing Europe to "overcom[e] the economic and social crisis and meet [...] the Europe 2020 targets on employment, poverty reduction, education, sustainability, innovation". It thus focused on lifelong learning policies targeting young adults, in particular those in vulnerable positions (cf. EC 2013, 2018), bringing together economic and social objectives. Indeed, according to the European Commission, a crucial challenge facing Europe today is to foster economic growth and, at the same time, guarantee social inclusion (cf. EC 2010). Developing Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies is seen as key to achieving these objectives by supporting European populations to have enriching experiences, broaden the scope of their knowledge and acquire the most sought-after skills in the labour market.

Against this background, we observed that most current European Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies have been designed to create economic growth and, at the same time, guarantee social inclusion (EC 2010). In responding to the Call, the YOUNG_ADULLLT research consortium has carefully examined the compatibility and co-extension of economic and social objectives. Although there exists a certain complementarity between these two goals, they are nonetheless neither linearly related nor causally related to each other and due to distinct orientations, differing objectives and temporal horizons, serious conflicts and ambiguities may arise from policies that attempt to elide both aims. For this reason, YOUNG_ADULLLT has *set out to conduct a thorough review of policies and programmes* in order to study the potentially competing, and possibly ambivalent, orientations and objectives of LLL policies and to *analyze their intended and unintended effects on young adult life courses*. It researched the impact of LLL policies on young adults' life courses, and the potential conflicts they may cause or exacerbate, intended to yield insights on the *individual* conditions, strategies, contingencies, and necessities required for these policies to become effective. Further, YOUNG_ADULLLT placed its focus on the regional and local level, *analyzing LLL policies in their embedding and interaction in the regional economy, the labour market and individual life projects of young people*.

One of the most innovative features of the project is related to the *deconstruction of dominant representations* regarding some target typologies by analysing policies and their implementation, as well as of their effects on target groups. Namely, the various profiles

under which policy-makers categorise target groups may produce self-fulfilling prophecies and narrow aspirational horizons.

The project sought to understand the implications as well as the intended and unintended effects of policies on young adults' life courses and to yield new insights into the processes of formulation and implementation of lifelong learning policies. From this, a reflexive tool was developed for co-ordinated LLL policy-making as a means to support intelligent decision-making at different policy levels.

The general aim in terms of *impact* was to critically analyze current developments of LLL policies in Europe and to enquire into the specific forms of embedding of these policies in regional economies, labour markets, education/training systems, and the individual life projects of young adults. The latter implied calling attention to concrete local and regional landscapes, where policies meet people. In doing so, the aim was to prevent ill-fitting policies from further exacerbating existing imbalances and disparities and to identify sustainable practices and patterns of coordinated policy-making at regional and local levels across the European Union. The next section further specifies the framework of research and its objectives.

1.1 YOUNG_ADULLLT – framework and objectives

The research programme of YOUNG_ADULLLT was structured over a three-year period (2016-2019), during which we conducted comparative multi-level analyses using a mixed-method approach. Research was conducted in nine EU-member countries: *Austria*, *Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain,* and *the United Kingdom*. In order to thoroughly review and map the relevant LLL policies and programmes, analyses focused on two Functional Regions (see below) in each of the participating countries (cf. Parreira do Amaral, Valiente & Neves 2018).

We began from the understanding that today lifelong learning is incorporated into active labour market strategies, vocational education and training, adult education initiatives, and social welfare and support measures for disadvantaged groups, and assumed that this has an impact on the orientations, objectives and logics of intervention as well as how policy target groups are constructed.

> *LLL policies* as defined in YOUNG_ADULLLT include highly heterogeneous measures developed in the policy sectors of *education, labour market and social and youth welfare*

that provide support/guidance, training or (further) education opportunities for young adults. We viewed LLL policies as multi-dimensional and focused on aspects beyond vocational (and recurrent) training for employment of adults, while incorporating economic, political and social aspects for younger generations, in particular those who find themselves in vulnerable situations (cf. Kotthoff et al. 2017).

Given the aim of conducting a more differentiated analysis than the national level allows for, the concept of Functional Region was useful in calling attention to the specific landscapes in which policies play out. As Klapka, Halás & Tonev outline (2013, p. 96), a functional region is: "a region organised by functional relations that are maximised within the region (maximisation of intra-regional flows) and minimised across its borders (minimisation of inter-regional flows or interactions) so that the principles of internal cohesiveness and external separation regarding the intensities of spatial flows or interactions are met."

The concept of Functional Region refers to a sub-division of territories that results from the spatial differentiation and organisation of social and economic relations rather than purely geographical boundaries, administrative particularities or historical developments. An FR may be seen as organised by functional relations and can be described as a unit defined by labour/economic activities (cf. Lowden, Pandolfini & Parreira do Amaral 2018; see also Weiler et al. 2017).

Functional Regions as specific landscapes of institutional frameworks, education/training opportunities, labour markets, and informal initiatives offered a better perspective on how lifelong learning policies impact the individual life courses of young adults, especially those in vulnerable positions, and to what extent they exacerbate or support young people in pursuing their desired life projects. This approach also allowed study of the *structural* relationships on site and the match and/or mismatch between education/training, social and youth policy, and labour market sectors. In addition, we gained first-hand insights into the *institutional* dimensions of lifelong learning policymaking, paying much attention to the regional/local networks of actors, dynamics, trends, and redundancies. The attention to regions and localities highlighted the importance of a context-sensitive approach to policy-making, thereby acknowledging the role of institutional and cultural specificities and local socio-economic structures in affecting the design and implementation of lifelong learning policies at national and supranational levels.

The project was designed to achieve three major objectives:

> *First*, to understand the relationship and complementarity of LLL policies in terms of orientations and objectives for specific target groups, including analysis of their potential implications and intended and unintended effects on young adults' life courses.

When approaching the first objective, YOUNG_ADULLLT conducted a detailed mapping and review exercise of 183 lifelong learning policies and programmes across 18 Functional Regions of the participating countries. The specific focus was on the compatibility of their orientations, objectives and target group constructions. In the next step, we interviewed policy experts in order to elucidate more precise meanings of what constitutes 'young adults' as a target group. Through these observations, we searched for the specific modes of setting objectives and prioritising target groups, especially if they were considered 'vulnerable'. In the course of this examination, we asked ourselves: What are the stated problems? What sort of solutions are deemed suitable? How are target groups constructed? Who benefits from this construction and who is regarded as in need of assistance? To what extent does the problem construction reflect the structural peculiarities of the particular region? In subsequent comparative analyses, we were then able to question the mutual complementarity and direct implications of various LLL policy measures.

> *Second*, to enquire into policies' fit and potentials for successfully appreciating and exploiting the hidden resources of young adults for building life projects.

To address the second objective, YOUNG_ADULLLT conducted quantitative research into the living conditions of young adults, focusing on the regional and local disparities within the countries studied. In the next step, we conducted qualitative research through interviews with young people between 18 and 29 years old. Both data sets have helped us to enquire into the living standards of young adults that mediate their ability to pursue their life projects, as well as into the individual desires, social expectations and demands they place on lifelong learning. During this stage of the study, we paid a lot of attention to young adults' competences acquired in formal, informal and non-formal contexts and to their perception of their own needs and potentials by asking ourselves: How do young adults create subjective meaning and continuity through various phases of their lives? What skills do they value and how do they manage to gain them? How do LLL policies take into account and respond to the diverse living conditions of young adults in particular contexts? Are they sensitive to the professional preferences and individual life conditions of young adults? As

a result, we were able to portray a more concrete picture of LLL policies' ability to unearth and make use of young adults' hidden resources.

> *Third*, to research LLL policies in their embedding and interaction in the regional economy, labour market and individual life projects of young adults in order to identify best practices and patterns of coordinated policy-making at local/regional level.

In terms of the third objective, YOUNG_ADULLLT conducted regional/local case studies in two distinct regions/localities in each country. This purposeful distinction helped us to identify differences between regional and local policy-making networks related to lifelong learning in terms of the relevant actors, prevailing dynamics and trends, and occurring (mis-)matches and redundancies. Analyzing these networks further enabled us to reconstruct regional skills formation systems and identify initiatives and programmes which demonstrated best practice. While telling the story of each case under study, we sought out the parameters and set of indicators that would be necessary to develop better-coordinated policy-making. In the course of the analyses, we posed the following questions: What sort of actors, policies and sectors are involved in the definition and implementation of LLL policies? How do the emerging (new) patterns and networks of policy-making at regional and local levels evolve? To what extent are young adults active shapers of LLL policies? How do LLL policies relate to 'wicked problems' associated with young adults like NEET status, ESL, youth unemployment, ethnic and sexual discrimination? Understanding the local contexts has broadened our view on the underlying functionalities that accelerate or impede LLL policy-making in context.

1.2 Research Design and Methodology

Reaching the objectives on time and providing relevant information for researchers, practitioners and policymakers required a meticulously designed research programme.

The research design was based on a cross-disciplinary perspective that sought to integrate Cultural Political Economy, Life Course Research, and Governance Studies (cf. Parreira do Amaral, Valiente & Neves 2018; Weiler et al. 2017). The *Cultural Political Economy* perspective (CPE) helped us to reflect on the influence of economic reasoning and culturally and socially constructed discursive meanings in policy-making. The *Life Course Research* perspective (LCR) shed light on individuals' experiences during various transition phases.

The *Governance* perspective (GOV) drew our attention to the different levels and scales of policy-making as well as to the actors involved therein.

The design encompasses three levels of analysis – the individual level focusing on young adults, the institutional level focusing on LLL policy-making, and the structural level focusing on regional and local landscapes – and the central aim was to produce a novel comprehensive conceptual model and innovative empirical methods that go beyond the pre-existing state-of-the-art, particularly in regard to LLL policies' understanding of young adults' role in the economy. A further innovation was the implication of the local level in the empirical work and geographic scope, successfully capturing the diversity of situations in Europe.

Designed as a *comparative study*, the project adopted a multi-level, mixed-method approach and used a variety of sources and databases:

- The *mapping and review of LLL policies* was conducted in two stages. In the *first* stage, all relevant LLL policies were mapped according to a set of criteria in two research sites per participating country, amounting to 183 policies (cf. Kotthoff et al., 2017). In the *second* stage of the research process, synthetic descriptions of selected LLL policies compiled in the first stage were further elaborated and interpretive analyses of three LLL policies in each research site (N=54) were conducted (cf. Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka 2018).[1]

- *Quantitative analyses of young adults' living conditions* (cf. Scandurra et al. 2017) based on data from national and international databases, including Eurostat, the OECD, the European Labour Force Survey and the European Social and Income Conditions, were collated for more than a 10-year span (from 2005 up to 2016) (see also Alexander et al. 2018).

- *Qualitative interview research* with three different groups: a) biographical interviews with young adults (N=164); semi-structured interviews with experts and street-level professionals (N=121); and semi-structured interviews with key regional policy-makers and stakeholders (N=81) (cf. Rambla et al. 2018). These were audio-recorded and fully transcribed in the local languages in which they were carried out.

---

[1]   These policies can be accessed at: http://www.young-adulllt.eu/policy-mapping/index.php

In addition, the research teams produced two-page summaries in English of each interview which were coded and anonymised.

- *Comparative Analysis of Skills Supply and Demand* was conducted using a data set of policy documents (N=129) that came from grey literature and the institutional websites of Public Employment Services, municipalities, Chambers of Commerce and any other relevant policy actors (cf. Capsada-Munsech et al. 2018).

- *Cross-case and cross-national analyses of local/regional case studies* (N=18) that integrated different data sets and methodologies and aimed at yielding knowledge on different patterns of policy-making in LLL by applying an interpretive approach to policy analysis (cf. Palumbo et al. 2018).

The research has progressed in three phases and was clustered into ten sub-studies (Work Packages), which were designed to complement each other and provide preliminary results for the subsequent studies. A *Comparative Analysis Report* (cf. Parreira do Amaral, Zelinka & Schweisfurth 2018) aimed at bringing these different sources and methodologies into conversation in order to conduct cross-case and cross-national comparative analyses of the evidence produced in previous research activities. It represented an attempt to bring together data and results from the various sub-studies and featured a variety of perspectives on the relationships between lifelong learning policies and young adults that are shaped by the diverse local and regional structural conditions and circumstances. The Report operationalized comparison using three different approaches, namely *comparing realities, comparing visions,* and *comparing functionalities and/or relationships*. Through these specific perspectives it was possible to grasp the varied nature of interactions between the individual, institutional and structural levels of analysis (cf. Palumbo, Benasso & Parreira do Amaral 2018).

This *Final Report* aims to go beyond the insights provided in the Comparative Analysis Report, thus further synthesizing the results and drawing conclusions and messages for different audiences – policy, practice and research – and spelling out recommendations for these distinct action fields. The next section offers a brief overview of the remaining sections of this Report.

The remainder of this *Final Report* summarizes the central results of the research activities in various regional contexts across Europe. It addresses the three major research objectives

set out for YOUNG_ADULLLT and discusses the central messages developed throughout the research process.

Chapter 2 features the main results of the research project and is divided into three sections. *Chapter 3* outlines more general conclusions and *Chapter 4* deliberates on the impact of project results, formulating selected recommendations for policy, research and practice.

2. Description of the main results

This second chapter of the Final Report describes the main results of the research project and is divided into three sections that a) deal with questions as to whether and how LLL policies support young adults in their life courses; b) scrutinize the embedding and interaction of LLL policies in the local/regional economy and labour market; and finally, c) present and discuss insights into landscapes and patterns of policy-making across Europe.

More specifically*, Section 2.1* draws particular attention to meanings and impacts of lifelong learning policies, regional and local landscapes across Europe and systems of coordinated policy-making in lifelong learning. It focuses on the meanings and impacts of LLL policies on young adults' life courses and summarizes the potential implications and intended and unintended effects of LLL policies on them. The aim is to highlight complementary and contradictory meanings and deliberate on the impact these varying concepts have on young adults. Attention is also given to the concept of vulnerability as it has been emphasized in European LLL policy-making, targeting young people viewed as being at risk of social exclusion. While this targeted approach aims at delivering better policies to those who need them most, YOUNG_ADULLLT has found substantial evidence of unintended effects on young people's life courses, for example, through the framing of policy issues and needs of young people and how they are constructed as a target group.

Section 2.2 draws out key messages derived from comparing the regional landscapes of lifelong learning policies across the regions researched. It places its focus on assessing the living conditions of young people in order to more accurately address issues at the local/regional level. The second theme of this section is a discussion of the contribution of functional regions as units of analysis when attempting to capture the contextual dynamics in which LLL policies are implemented. Finally, the section also contemplates insights on the varying skills ecologies identified at local/regional level, which in turn impact on the ability of policies to actually support their target groups.

Section 2.3 explicates the main results related to policy-making in the field of LLL. It features important insights related to landscapes and patterns of policy-making across Europe that could help to bring hidden aspects back onto the agenda, thus supporting policy-makers in their decision-making. It focuses on analysis of the diverse contextual and institutional conditions of policy-making, spelling out parameters aimed at supporting decision-making in the field of LLL by providing a reflexive tool for analysis, planning, regulation and provision of lifelong learning policies, thus contributing towards the overall goal of better coordinated LLL policy-making.

2.1 Lifelong learning policies supporting young adults' life courses: Meanings and impact

The analyses of policies yielded important insights into the different meanings LLL policies hold for different stakeholders and their impact on young people's life courses. These different constructions and understandings may lead to intended and unintended impacts that affect young people's well-being and either promote or hinder growth and social inclusion. These different understandings of lifelong learning were substantially influenced by the notions of 'employability' and 'vulnerability', with significant consequences for the framing of the issues being tackled, the construction of target groups, and, not least, for the life course choices available to young people.

The concept of lifelong learning stems from long and rich debates that emphasize different connections from early childhood to adult learning and stress the universal right to education. "Learning to be" was seen as a lifelong process along the life course. From this point of view, policies should be organized along the principle of a humanistic, rights-based and holistic view of education. More recently, the political focus on LLL has shifted to labour market security and economic competitiveness and a stronger orientation towards human capital and employability. In contemporary European strategies — especially Lisbon and Europe 2020 — conceptions of LLL have again shifted. On the one hand, we see evidence of a more biographical orientation based on a continuous personal transformation, and on the other, a functional/instrumental orientation to learning as usually work-related, intermittent, and with attention to competences and outcomes during certain life phases. Nevertheless, *employability has become a central aim of lifelong learning policies.*

The meanings of the concept of LLL have thus changed considerably since it was first introduced in the 1960s. While the early 'maximalist' perspective on LLL (cf. Wain 2001) considered the whole of society to be a learning resource for each individual, taking into account the wider cultural, social, and political context and conditions under which education and learning take place, the 1970s witnessed a narrowing of the concept and the first move towards a more functionalist view of LLL in relation to the labour market. In this narrower and more instrumentalist discourse, the concept of LLL is linked with further training, professional development and economic growth. The importance of LLL as preparation for the needs of the labour market gained more ground during the 1990s when social problems such as low employability, unemployment and social exclusion were increasingly explained with reference to a mismatch between competences acquired in schools and the competences demanded by a fast changing economy (Walker 2012). In an increasingly complex world with a rapidly changing economy, LLL plays a crucial role in preparing a workforce that is able to adapt to the ever changing demands of the economy (Rizvi 2007).

As a consequence of the increased relevance of LLL for individuals and in particular for society – but also due to its conceptual richness or, as it also could be phrased, its inflationary usage – the concept is deployed in policies orientated towards education, the labour market and social/youth policy sectors. The vast majority of LLL policies analyzed could not easily be clearly distinguished and attributed to one policy sector.

Despite important sectoral differences across sites, raising levels of employability was the main objective of most policies analyzed. From a comparative perspective, this finding is insufficient and unsurprising given that the 18 sites studied share the European context (for instance, the strategic framework 'Education and Training 2020' or the 'Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning'), implement Europe-wide policies such as Youth Guarantee and draw widely on resources from the European Social Fund. For this reason, YOUNG_ADULLLT enquired further into the logics orienting the policies in pursuing this objective (cf. Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka 2018).

Four different *logics of intervention* were identified that oriented the implementation of LLL policy objectives. These four different logics were reconstructed from the interpretive analyses of the policies: *prevention, compensation, activation, and empowerment.*

Prevention aims at an individual solution to problems with school-to-work transitions: Policies drawing on prevention as a logic of intervention prevails in regions where apprenticeships, vocational education and training or on-the-job training schemes are well established. The core idea seems to be integrating professional orientation and pre-vocational education into (lower) secondary education to prevent dropout, avoid "waiting loops" in the transition system or reduce the number of NEETs and welfare recipients.

Compensation appears as a reactive rather than redistributive strategy: Policies oriented by this logic of intervention generally react to highly individualized perceptions of deficits or personal and/or family problems; often disregarding both socio-economic and labour market structures. Also, given that they focus on individual behavioural and dispositional issues in an almost pathologising way (as if vulnerability were an attribute), policies risk 'blaming the victim'.

Activation is the prevailing logic of intervention orienting policies focused on short-term labour market integration through individual employability. When a logic of intervention becomes dominant in a particular region, young people have no other opportunities to develop their own life projects. The role of long-term educational and professional projects in developing the life courses of young adults is threatened by the immense pressure of state-driven welfare policies to ensure a stable/growing labour force supply, operating on short-term horizons. This in turn re-defines the role of education and professional training, marking them as a means to an end, and not the other way around.

Empowerment of individuals may serve to eschew more institutional or structural solutions. While this logic of intervention entails a more holistic approach that might serve to support de-standardized life courses, it could also risk normalising issues by intervening primarily at the personal/individual level. It is worth noting that this becomes even more pressing when a policy is implemented in a region characterised by a single or weak labour markets that offer only scarce professional and labour market opportunities to young people.

> The analysis of problem perceptions of LLL policies – i.e. what are the issues at stake? – highlights that the majority of policies perceived the existing difficulties as more or less structurally conditioned. At the same time, in terms of the solutions devised – i.e. how can they be tackled? – it became clear that the overwhelming majority of the analyzed LLL policies proposed individual solutions. This discrepancy may be seen as an indirect effect

of emphasis of the notion of vulnerability in policy-making that targets so-called disadvantaged groups, as will be discussed below.

The graphs below illustrate the argument by highlighting the clusters of mapped policies that a) described the problem at stake as deriving from structural issues and at the same time b) devised solutions by means of interventions at individual level.
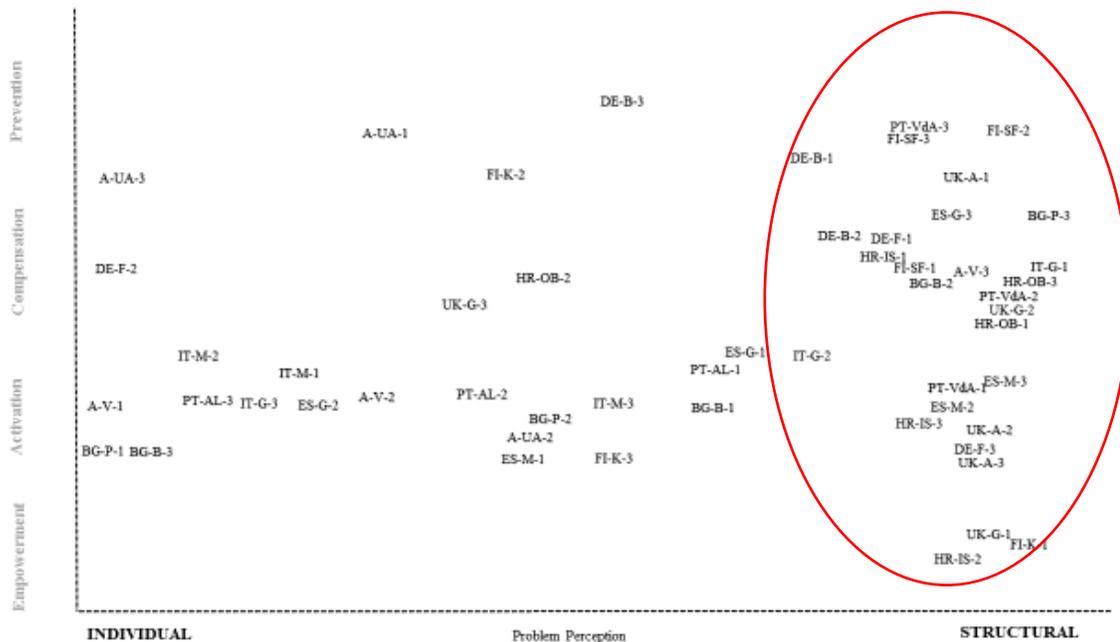
Figure 1. Problem perception of the LLL policies (from Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka 2018, p .150)

This points to a clear mismatch between the structural problem-perception and individual problem-solution. That is, although the majority of the policy-makers realise the structural difficulties that young adults are exposed to, they nonetheless devise policy solutions grounded on individual interventions. This potentially further opens up the cleavage between young adults' possibilities and their chances to achieve the socially and culturally created and expected outcomes, reinforcing 'Matthew effects' and oftentimes leading them to frustration and/or disinterest (cf. Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka 2018).

Taking these considerations on the meanings of LLL into account, we will now move on to discussing the potential implications and intended and unintended effects of LLL policies on young adults' life courses. The results will be presented using sub-sections that highlight different topics and themes deemed crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the

impact of LLL policies on young adults' life courses: *first*, vulnerability as a socio-political interpretive frame; *second*, young adults' perspectives on LLL policies in contrast to experts' perspectives; *third*, policy formulation and processes of target group construction; and *fourth*, processes of de-standardization and re-standardization of life courses.
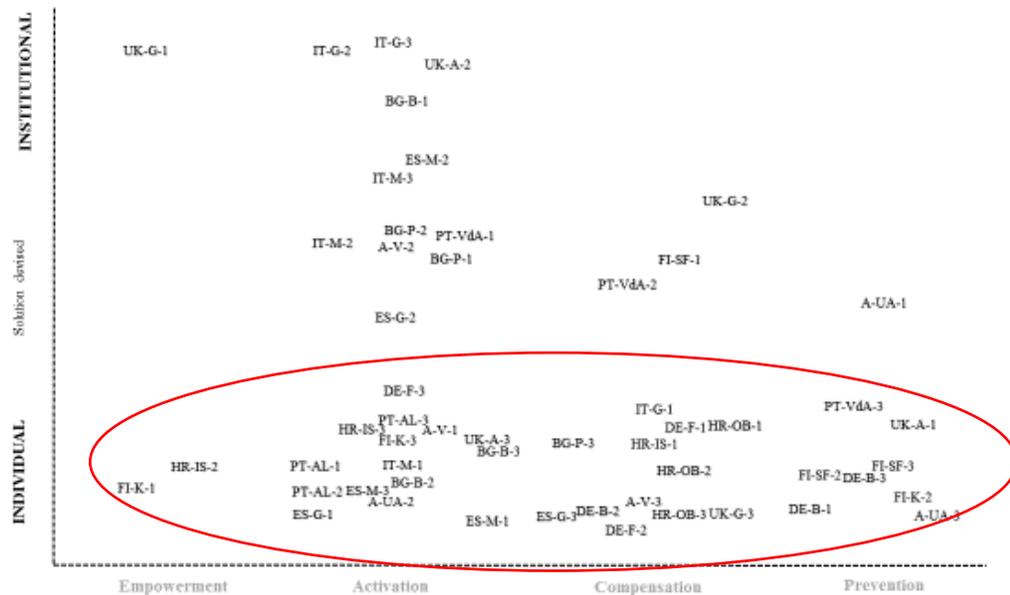
Figure 2. Solutions devised by the LLL policies (from Parreira do Amaral & Zelinka 2018, p .150)

Vulnerability as a socio-political interpretive frame

'Vulnerability' has become a key term in discussions surrounding the development of European LLL policies in recent years. The concept refers to the idea that humans are beings-thrown-into-the-world, which is to say we find ourselves delivered over to a world (Heidegger 1996). Vulnerability derives from Latin (vulnerare = to wound, injure) and this state of being exposed to the world provides us with a general notion of humans as vulnerable beings, independent of circumstances. Expanding on this image, sources of vulnerability can be further differentiated in terms of *vulnerability to nature* and *vulnerability to society*. The former refers to natural disasters and their consequences such as famine or natural catastrophes. In contrast, the latter, *vulnerability to society,* may be seen as a central issue in modern societies. In the field of lifelong learning, varying terms are used to describe and categorize persons or groups seen as particularly affected by societal conditions or risks

seen as causing 'vulnerability'. People are 'at risk', suffer from 'social disadvantage', are 'near social exclusion' or are simply described as 'vulnerable' based on social categories.

These terms – now well established in the social sciences – are used to indicate persons or groups worthy of protection or facing higher levels of exposure to poverty or welfare losses (cf. Alwang et al. 2001; Luna, 2009; Delor and Hubert 2000). In other words, vulnerability is used here to point to their relative position in the education system or in their transitions from education to the labour market in order to prioritize attention to these groups when tackling social exclusion among different populations. Despite this, in policy discourses 'vulnerability' is very often associated with individual/group circumstances or dispositions. As such, the term 'vulnerable' becomes a reference to intrinsic characteristics or attributes of target groups, rather than considering 'vulnerability' as a social-relational notion (cf. Scandurra et al. 2017, p.10f.).

One observation is noteworthy concerning the processes of framing young adults as 'vulnerable' in terms of their position in the labour market, their educational credentials, their socio-economic status, et cetera: since linear life courses are still seen as the norm, they take on the function of a socio-political interpretive frame, ambivalent in nature and potent in its implications. Socio-political interpretive frames, according to Axel Pohl (2015, p. 57) derive their efficacy from both their normative currency and their factual dissemination.

Vulnerability as a socio-political interpretive frame imbued in LLL policies promotes an understanding of a 'normal' life course and biography along institutionalized, more or less linear, trajectories from school to work. Young adults are expected to develop life projects that comply with such legitimated narratives. Those seen as 'unable' or 'unwilling' to pursue linear life courses are then perceived as 'disadvantaged' and/or 'vulnerable' (carrying negative connotations).

This socio-political interpretive frame is ambivalent in nature since, while it allows policy-making to justify integrative interventions, it also represents young people as passive and characterised by deficits or deficiencies, which risks producing stigmatizing and pernicious effects on their lives. It is important to note that these 'representations' do not simply or neutrally reflect young adults as beings, but rather constitute and construct them. The latter is not only a potential but an actual effect, since as discussed above, many LLL policies deals with structural problems by tackling individual deficits.

In the context of *YOUNG_ADULLLT*, 'vulnerability' was seen as defined and connected to the possible risk of social exclusion of young adults in relation to four main conceptions of vulnerability:

- *Educational/training*: understood as low levels of education, qualifications, early school leavers, drop outs;

- *Current occupational condition*: mainly NEETs and unemployed youths;

- *Structural*: due to material conditions (poverty, homelessness, health care), and social relations (lack of support from family or peer group, absence of guidance in difficult situations), immediate risks from the environment (segregation), or belonging to minority or disadvantaged groups (gender or ethnicity);

- *Physical and/or cognitive impairments*: for instance, sickness, disability, mental illness, immaturity, substance dependence, et cetera (cf. Palumbo, Benasso & Parreira do Amaral, 2018).

As a consequence of this understanding, LLL policies define specific target groups and focus primarily on individual aspects, which require prevention, compensation, activation and empowerment, more often than not by means of intervention at the individual level as discussed above. At the same time, labelling some groups as more vulnerable than others can produce a self-fulfilling prophecy which may lead to stigmatization and over-generalization. Young adults who, for whatever reason, do not follow a linear life course, should not necessarily or automatically be regarded and/or treated as 'vulnerable'.

Although the role of education as a producer of normality and deviance has been examined before (cf. Rinne 2015), *YOUNG_ADULLLT* has emphasized that in some cases, there is either the tendency to blame young adults for circumstances beyond their control or to simply forget that similar policies can have different effects in different contexts and for different target groups (cf. Palumbo et al. 2018).

The analyses in *YOUNG_ADULLLT* show that it is particularly important to question the belief that young adults are 'vulnerable' because they did not or could not follow a 'normal' life course and that by doing so, they are, or have become more, prone to risks. It seems too simplistic to establish that some of the risks that young adults face today and which emerge from economic and socio-demographic changes (e.g. the relationship between

work and family; single parenthood; low skills; a temporary situation of poverty or atypical employment among others) exist because the young adults' life courses did not follow a 'normal' path.

Young adults' and experts' perspectives

LLL policy programmes and initiatives both at national and local level rarely begin by investigating the concrete needs and aspirations of young participants, and even less opportunities are provided for young people to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy interventions. Attention is seldom devoted to the ambivalences created by a lack of coordination between the needs and expectations of both sides.

YOUNG_ADULLLT's qualitative research with young adults and experts shows an increasing de-standardization and individualization of the life course, thus confirming results from Life Course Research on the diversification of young people's educational trajectories. Conversely, they also show a persistent orientation towards an assumed 'normal' life course, which provides both a blueprint for the design of policy interventions and criteria for the assessment of success and effectiveness.

The analysis of the interviews conducted is of significant value when it comes to understanding LLL policies and their functioning, and in elucidating the ambivalences of LLL policies. It has been a very complex and enlightening process, which confirmed the assumption that LLL policies are mostly the result of macrosocial dynamics and do not necessarily take into account the points of view of those in the field. The objectives have been to examine not only how diverse policies can be, but also to analyze more closely the suggestion that the addressees' points of view differ substantially from those of experts. As a result of these closer analyses it became obvious that young adults and experts also share common visions, particularly with regard to the empowering nature of LLL policy measures (cf. Rambla et al. 2018). There is a difference between what young adults experience and the interpretation and analysis that experts make of these experiences.

Young adults are not passive recipients of LLL policies across the nine countries analyzed. On the contrary, although some (in particular, the youngest among them) express how they struggle to build their own life course in extremely uncertain circumstances; others are quite assertive about their life projects and openly criticize the

constraints they face. While in most countries young people have internalised a discourse of self-responsibility and achieving autonomy through labour market inclusion, still they attribute different meanings to their involvement and place it within a much wider framework of life strategies.

Considering their participation in LLL, young adults justified their involvement with reference to personal benefits they saw for their own lives. Among the benefits most often mentioned were: improved self-esteem and self-worth, increased self-confidence and self-satisfaction, raised motivation, reduced biographical uncertainty, acquired life skills, acknowledgment of educational possibilities, support in making choices, solving health and mental health problems, smooth transitions to the labour market, experiencing the importance of social contacts and support from peers, etc. (cf. Palumbo, Benasso & Parreira do Amaral 2018).

In short, young adults are active learners and willing to take on the challenges before them. They interpret their current position against the background of previous painful experiences (failure in formal schooling, bullying, neglect by teachers/parents, etc.). At the same time, they proactively seek support through LLL policies.

Reconstructing learning biographies from the narratives of the young interviewees, we encountered a wide diversity of individual life paths, which diverged significantly from the normative sequence of transitions implicitly prescribed in the policies.

A pattern that could be discerned in most functional regions was to take a detour back to education after experiencing a break with formal schooling. Young people following this strategy looked for LLL programmes that would allow them to achieve an educational degree they considered essential for finding access to their local labour markets. This was more common for young people from families with limited financial and cultural resources, especially those of migrant origin without recognized educational credentials and with informal skills. In contrast, young adults from more privileged backgrounds often took a wait-and-see attitude towards LLL and signed up for various courses expecting the local economy to improve and provide more opportunities for them. For these youths, the period of involvement in further learning was a legitimate form of waithood while being financially and emotionally supported by their parents. Slightly similar to this but led by strong ethical considerations was the strategy of young adults who participated in forms of civic learning. Having had better experience with formal schooling but still unable to access the labour market, the leading motivation of this group was to gain more (particularly soft) skills while

helping those in need. Another pattern of learning biographies was exemplified by young adults who found in LLL a fertile space to develop their personality, overcome personal barriers and discover their 'learning' self. The informal individualized support they received in the programmes enabled them to develop life projects and mobilize resources to achieve them. There was also another distinctive learning path of young adults who were struggling to overcome severe psychological and physical difficulties. Being in very vulnerable situations with limited or no family support, the young adults became involved in LLL to regain self-esteem and reclaim autonomy (cf. Palumbo et al. 2018; see also Rambla et al. 2018).

Young people often refer to interaction with street-level experts as their 'first experiences' of social recognition and sense of worth, pointing thus to the relevance of the pedagogical interaction.

However, the interaction between experts and young people is mediated by experts' interpretations of the issues to be solved. These interpretations become visible in implicit or explicit 'theories of change' inbuilt in policies, that is, the set of causal beliefs and factual claims as to how to tackle an issue at hand as well as to the expected effects of a policy intervention (Rambla et al. 2018).

> Experts/policy-makers draw from salient social categories – such as those related to vulnerability – in constructing target groups of policies. When professionals construct and pursue the objectives and devise a 'theory of change' for a given policy, they normally enact these specific social categories to which the beneficiaries supposedly belong. Significantly, the same policies do not always understand given categories in the same way, nor do the beneficiaries usually perceive themselves through the lens of the relevant categories of a given policy.

For instance, the European Commission's Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS) assumes that jobs, training, activation, partnerships and other complementary measures will eventually reduce the figures of NEET youth. These causal narratives enact social categories related to disadvantage, unemployment and social inclusion. However, young adults live out these circumstances in different ways, to which they attribute different meanings.

In addition, the understanding of lifelong learning and the YGS is likely to vary according to the transition regimes of member states. Although it is hard to classify Central and Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria and Croatia, in other cases it is much easier to portray

some general views of professionals. Thus, universalistic welfare regimes such as Finland normally relate disadvantage with individual rights. Liberal regimes identify disadvantage with poor employability, although Scottish policy-making is currently elaborating a more sophisticated version of this institutional mould. Conservative regimes such as Austria and Germany normally attribute disadvantage to lack of education. Finally, in Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Portugal and Spain, youths normally rely on family support until they create their own family at a relatively late age. In these countries, LLL policy-makers and professionals often assume that most young adults are somehow exposed to social disadvantage (cf. Palumbo et al. 2018).

In this vein, the YGS assumes that beneficiaries should change their routine in order to improve their participation in either education, training or the labour market. The social category of 'non-participants' forms a seemingly universal target group, however this group is also diverse in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and other social attributes. Therefore, such assumed heterogeneity may inspire unfounded expectations as to the impact of interventions.

In conclusion, not only does engaging with education, training or employment entail many specific challenges, but this very engagement may be quite different for young people coming from middle- and low-income backgrounds, as well as from different family trajectories of migration and location, in countries such as Bulgaria, Finland, Germany and Portugal.

Policy formulation and target group construction

Target group construction is a key part of policy design and considerably influences the impact of European LLL policies. For this reason, YOUNG_ADULLLT has emphasized the need to pay closer attention to how policies are constructed.

Our research showed that target group construction takes into account different criteria such as age, education, sex, immigration status, and educational/training qualifications among others. However, this categorisation is based on representations (usually national statistics) of the groups and thus far from considers the concrete different living conditions and actual needs of young adults. The addressees of the policies tend to be seen as a group of people with a 'problem', rather than individuals with a series of capabilities that can be enhanced. Indeed, it becomes evident that there are some discrepancies and divergences in target group construction, which not only affect the scope and mutual compatibility of LLL policies,

but can also unintentionally promote stigmatization. The majority of the policies focus exclusively on the group they address and, by doing so, inevitably exclude other individuals, while some LLL policies offer a broader perspective, trying to focus more on social interactions and categories.

> Target groups in LLL policies are neither 'natural' nor static categories that can be used by policies to 'address' particular groups and social issues. Rather, policy formulation significantly changes and constructs the target group. In the context of *YOUNG_ADULLLT*, target group construction has been related to how the policies construct 'young adults'. This definition, particularly in Europe, is related to three key assumptions: their potential for change, the rapid demographic change of society, and the expectation that economic growth and social cohesion will be secured for young people if they receive adequate education and training. What is the impact on the different understandings – and constructions – of target groups in LLL policies and what are the expectations or conflicts these policies create?

As shown in the *Comparative Analysis Report* (cf. Parreira do Amaral et al. 2018), LLL policies define target groups under the 'young adult' label in two modes: on the one hand, they focus on pre-defined social categories such as age, gender, migration status or qualification levels; on the other hand, they emphasize a "more functionally focused perspective of a policy sector in terms of perceived (behavioural or attitudinal) problems of the individuals or groups in question" (Parreira do Amaral et al. 2018, p. 140). As pertains to the latter mode, target group construction draws on four main discourses. The *first* discourse focuses on attitudinal and/or dispositional limitations, which require activation and compensation for a lack of necessary skills. In this way, a diffused image of idleness, incapacity and negative attitudes toward activation is portrayed. The *second* discourse is based on the idea of the deep social vulnerability of the target groups, which implies a need for a dedicated and specific multidimensional approach to empowerment. The *third* discourse mobilises the stereotypes behind target group biographies and positions them as a deviation from a standard or linear life course. Finally, the *fourth* discourse assumes that training or education works as a factor of conversion and helps to overcome the target group's weaknesses. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of policies examined.

Analysis of the policies shows that the majority define their target group as 'problematic' (Parreira do Amaral et al. 2018). This definition is related to young adults' difficulties in

finding employment and the expectations this creates. Therefore, in order to fulfil the needs of the labour market, the policies target either unemployed 'young adults' or 'young adults with low educational qualifications', with the intention of tackling a deficit of 'basic skills' while promoting 'skills for life' and concrete qualifications.
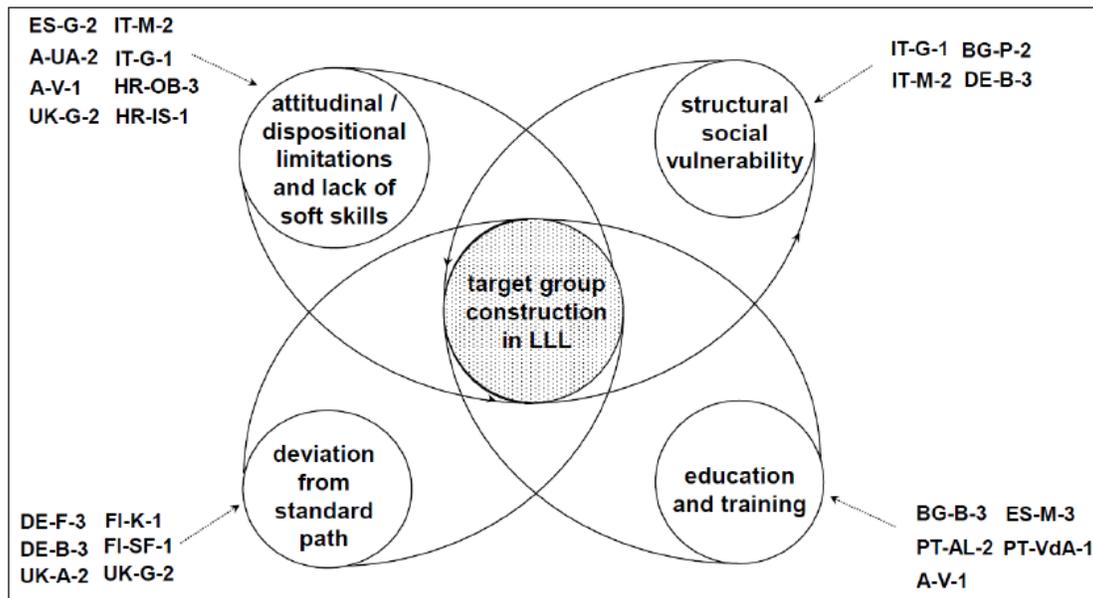
Figure 3. Discourses underlying target group construction (Parreira do Amaral et al. 2018, p. 220)

Many policies explicitly target young adults who are either unemployed or depend on social benefits. While the dual aim of both serving the needs of the labour market and equipping these young adults with basic skills is a rational line of argumentation, this approach produces unintended effects for young people: many reported a lack of agency in their participation or choice of LLL; some others criticized the lack of information about the choices available to them (cf. Palumbo et al. 2018).

The categorization of young adults as 'a problem' fosters a deficit oriented perspective. As described earlier, this perspective is very problematic as it carries the (highly normative) assumption that there is a certain standard in life, i.e. a 'good' way of life, which should be led by everyone. The idea that young adults are not capable of finding a job because their life project does not relate to these concrete standardized paths diminishes the scope of policy formulation in terms of lifelong learning. Although some of the LLL policies examined in *YOUNG_ADULLLT* do not suggest this explicitly, there is a tendency to 'solve' the problems of young adults by simply helping them to find a job. This could lead to a sort of invisibility of young adults in the sense that the policies, instead of serving their concrete

needs, are designed to mainly assure the labour market imperative as a preventive strategy. Thus, rather than taking into account the heterogeneity of young adults' life courses, policy formulation is attached to a narrow vision of lifelong learning, which leads to a debate between the 'utilitarian' and 'humanistic' visions of LLL. While the former is focused on employment, the development of work skills and labour market competitiveness, the latter promotes a series of values related to the personal development of young adults from a holistic perspective.

In most cases, target groups are not created according to the needs and expectations of young adults, but depend instead on the features of LLL policies, which are dictated by policy-makers' decision making. To give just two examples: the LLL policies 'Werkschule' in the FR Bremen and 'Developing the Young Workforce' in the FR Glasgow/Aberdeen, respond primarily to the concrete demands of the labour market and VET sector and far less to the fulfilment of young adults' own professional plans. This process becomes more complex when other actors such as experts and central institutions are involved. Although their participation is essential for the functioning of policies, it influences both policy formulation and target group construction.

Lifelong learning as a norm: processes of re-standardization and de-standardization

LLL policies have been associated to both processes of re-standardization and de-standardization, which directly affect young adults' life courses. While both trends offer challenges and advantages, the absence of choice for young people to decide on key aspects of their life courses is highlighted as particularly problematic.

There is a tendency to establish LLL policies as a series of standardized steps to be followed in order to fulfil social expectations and thus to attain a desired 'normal' life course ('process of re-standardization'). These expectations include rapid transitions between educational levels, concrete and almost unique paths to accessing the labour market, and, in particular, the idea that young adults are exclusively responsible for their own careers. However, life course trajectories are the sum of structural factors, events and circumstances that affect young adults' decisions and contradict the paradigm of a linear life-course ('process of de-standardization'). Most policies analyzed in YOUNG_ADULLLT, at least implicitly, refer to a standardized vision of life trajectories. This vision follows what has been defined as an institutionalization of young adults' life courses: the events and experiences in their past and expectations for their future tend to be synchronized by a sequence of 'steps' or 'markers'

that are supposed to define their life (for example: the passage from school to work and the creation of a new family) (cf. Weiler et al. 2017).

In this context, young adults are forced to adapt and follow a pre-established path that does not necessarily consider their needs and expectations: instead of fulfilling the notion of education for life, lifelong learning is reduced to strategic decisions closely related to the accomplishment of goals such as finding employment. This vision is widespread in the nine countries studied in *YOUNG_ADULLLT* and becomes particularly evident in countries like Germany, Finland and Austria, where young adults' life courses are strongly linked to labour market dynamics. The objectives of most of the LLL polices studied throughout the project suggest that there are standardized steps to be taken which lead to a 'successful' way of living. This assumption leads to policies that aim to re-standardize young adults' life courses, i.e. by creating conditions in which individuals or groups who are "out" of the normal cycle of standards can return (ibid, p. 201). For example, LLL policies like '*Back to the future*' in the FR Vienna or '*Preparatory training for VET'* in the FR Kainuu demonstrate an intention to re-direct the life projects and expectations of those young adults who are seen being as far from a 'normal' life trajectory.

In contrast to the processes of re-standardization described above, there are also a few cases that show how policies explicitly deal with processes of de-standardization, acknowledging that "life states, events and their sequence […] occur at more dispersed ages and with more dispersed duration" (Brückner & Mayer 2005, p. 32f.). However, what becomes evident is that most of these policies did so by equipping individuals (with skills and competences, resilience levels, guidance, etc.) to cope with social expectations of normality, rather than by addressing issues of rigidity and inflexibility at institutional level. If life courses have become unpredictable, this 'unpredictability' is unlikely to be 'fixed' by LLL policies that tackle only individual issues.

To be sure, this discussion is not new and there is ongoing debate as to what extent (de)standardization processes have been pervasive (Widmer & Ritschard 2013). Nonetheless, the issue at hand is not how statistically representative de-standardization has been, but rather how LLL policies can be devised to take full account of the concrete life courses of young adults today.

Additionally, YOUNG_ADULLLT has insisted on the importance of connecting the objectives of LLL policies to the dialectical relationship between institutionalized life courses and the individual biography. As shown in WP5 and WP7 and from a Cultural Political Economy

perspective – which highlights the relevance of the cultural dimension (understood as meaning-making) in the interpretation and explanation of the complexity of social formations such as policies – these objectives should be compatible with heterogeneous life projects and styles. This means that they need not only adjust to the different changes in young adults' lives, as shown in the examples above, but also fit specific contexts. This requires paying increased attention to regional and local contexts in LLL policy-making, which will be presented in the next section.

2.2 Regional landscapes of LLL policies in Europe

In this section, we draw out the key messages derived from comparing the regional landscapes of lifelong learning policies across the 18 functional regions researched in this project. We focus on three themes: the varying living conditions of young people; functional regions as dynamic units; and skills ecologies. Comparing these contexts is a precursor to understanding how policies do or do not respond in co-ordinated and embedded ways to local realities in these dynamic units.

The living conditions of young people

YOUNG_ADULLLT contributed relevant insights by recognizing the structures of opportunities and constraints that characterize the regional contexts in which young people build their biographies and courses of action, and by examining their relationship to LLL interventions.

> The living conditions shaping young adults' life courses vary substantially across Europe. Despite this variation, most policies are informed by data at national level, undermining the ability to account for local/regional contexts and needs.

The *first contribution* of YOUNG_ADULLLT was to develop a theoretical model for researching young adults' living conditions and the associated risks informed by an understanding of 'vulnerability' as social, contextual and place-based. Social vulnerability thus refers to the exposure to social disadvantage that results from complex configurations of risks affecting various life domains: economic structure, demographics, education and training, labour markets, social inclusion and participation, and health and well-being. Data was collated for a 10-year span, from 2005 through to 2014, which is the most recent data available at NUTS-2 level. This enabled comparability across countries and regions, before and after the financial crisis (2007-9). Young adults were defined as individuals aged

between 18 and 29 years, but for operational reasons a plurality of age ranges was used pragmatically to overcome data limitations.

This longitudinal approach enabled patterns to emerge and be examined within this timespan. While harmonization was feasible and of course necessary for comparison, it proved challenging given the gaps and inconsistencies in the data available for common indicators. In addition to such data availability issues, given the dynamic and administratively unbounded nature of FRs, it is unsurprising that the smallest regions represented in NUTS2 did not align with the FRs as we had defined them. This raises questions about the range of data sources and how they are clustered geographically.

The model below aimed at revealing the contextual structure of enabling factors and constraints at NUTS-2 level within which policies are embedded, and young people in vulnerable situations become their subjects and objects.

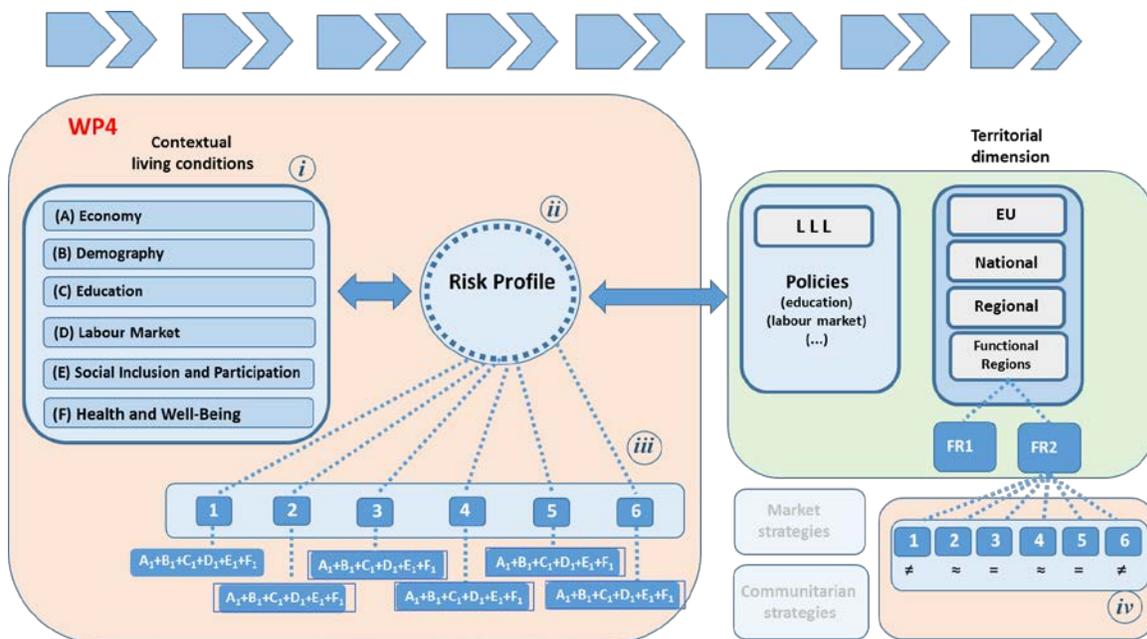*Figure 4. YOUNG_ADULLLT's theoretical model for studying young adults' living conditions and risks (cf. Scandurra et al. 2018).*

The graphs below illustrate the contextualized analyses by means of a radar diagram for two selected regions in Italy and Finland and their country averages for 2014. The six dimensions plotted represent composite indicators of young adults' living conditions, ranging

from 0 to 1. The doted lines refer to national level data, the others to NUTS-2 level data, thus revealing the fairly substantial discrepancies between these two levels of aggregation.
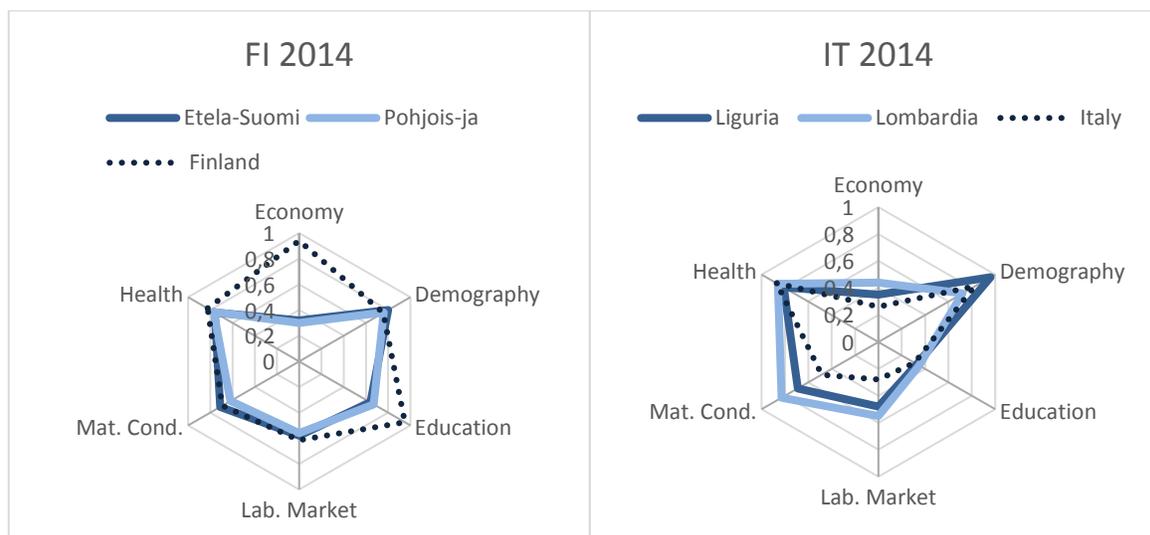
Figure 5. Contextual living conditions of young adults in Italy, Finland and selected regions 2014 (cf. Scandurra et al. 2018).

In comparing, we saw significant differences between the living conditions of young people in different FRs, including significant in-country variations. We will not reiterate all the statistics here, but consider, for example, the youth unemployment rate as a percentage of the national population. In Spain, Croatia and Italy, youth unemployment affects more than 42% of 18-24-year-olds, while the percentage is much lower in Germany and Austria, both below 16%. However, these country averages do not account for stark regional differences within countries, which in Italy for example, range from approximately 15% to 60%. These reflect the double hardship of the recession in some regions. As a general but not absolute pattern, the least economically developed countries hardest hit by the economic crisis also face the greatest regional disparities. As examples, these statistics demonstrate not only the variations in contexts and conditions which policies must respond to, but also the importance of disaggregated data for informing policy-making.

Over time, the analysis indicated some general overall improvement in social conditions, but this generalization masks significant disparities. There is evidence, particularly in less developed regions or those more vulnerable to economic shocks, of the ongoing impact of the recession on young adults' living conditions. The analysis also pointed to evidence of path dependencies that pre-date the recession and may well persist well beyond it. This may be attributable to a range of pre-existing disparities and economic and labour market

patterns, but the resilience of social and cultural dynamics are also significant both in terms of contextual living conditions and patterns of policy response.

> Young adults need to be seen in a range of contexts which shape their life chances as well as their relationship to the labour market. This means creating locally-sensitive risk profiles responsive to local living conditions and labour market realities, which may differ in significant ways from national profiles.

For *researchers*, such disparities and path dependencies are seams to be mined in order to understand the dynamics shaping these units. The challenges of capturing a moving picture are myriad. The mismatch between administrative boundaries and functional regions becomes a data and statistics puzzle that demands new approaches from *researchers and policy-makers* alike. Since functional regions are dynamic, new ways of collating data that reflect their shifting natures and boundaries will need exploration. If FRs are to be reflected in datasets, how can conventional categories such as those used in NUTS-2 be harnessed, or will new sources need to be sought and new and flexible ways of collating be needed?

For *practitioners* too, the particularities of FRs and the stark differences between them across and within national contexts need to be considered. As we shall see below, the repertoire of policy and practice responses is somewhat limited across the case study FRs. However, with such a range of living conditions, these will not only shape the resources available, the employment opportunities for young people, and their day-to-day survival in contexts of vulnerability – they will also affect the parameters of social inclusion, and hope.

Regions as dynamic units

The use of Functional Regions (FR) as units for analysis has been a unique and fruitful feature of the YOUNG_ADULLLT project.

> Functional Region refers to a sub-division of territories that results from the spatial differentiation and organisation of social and economic relations rather than to geographical boundaries, administrative particularities or historical developments. In other words, FR denotes a relational delineation of space that does not necessarily reflect geographical characteristics or historical events, but which is drawn with respect to spatial flows or relations of various kinds — for instance, of persons, goods, material, energy, information, et cetera.

Using FRs to contextualize the case studies contributed to capturing and analyzing the different sub-national realities in terms of education and training, welfare and labour markets, focusing on the specific regional/local landscapes of policy-making. This focus allowed us to analyze in-depth the implementation and impacts of LLL policies in the 18 chosen FRs (see Figure below) as case studies in their specific contexts, capturing their complex and multi-layered realities, identifying particular constellations of actors and interplays among individual, structural and institutional dimensions as well as understanding whether and how policy-makers, professionals and young people navigate the shifting geographies of LLL and coordinate their activities (cf. Lowden et al. 2018).

Functional Regions	Case Studies (codes)	Case Studies (names)
1 – Kainnu	FI-K-1	NUPPA Centre
2 – Southwest Finland	FI-SF-1	Ohjaamo Centre
3 – Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire	UK-A-2	DYW
4 – Glasgow City Region	UK-G-2	DYW(GCR)
5 – Bremen	DE-B-3	Werkschule
6 – Rhein-Main	DE-F-3	VbFF
7 – Upper Austria	A-UA-2	Du Kannst Was!
8 – Vienna	A-V-1	Back to the Future
9 – Vale do Ave	PT-VdA-1	Professional Courses
10 – Litoral Alentejano	PT-AL-2	EFA courses
11 – Girona	ES-G-2	TP12
12 – Malaga	ES-M-3	Workshop Schools
13 – Milan	IT-M-2	NEETwork
14 – Genoa	IT-G-1	Civic Service
15 – Istria-County	HR-IS-1	Open Public University Diopter
16 – Osijek-Baranja County	HR-OB-3	LLCG Centre
17 – Blagoevgrad	BG-B-3	University Student Training Practices
18 – Plovdiv	BG-P-2	Youth Guarantee

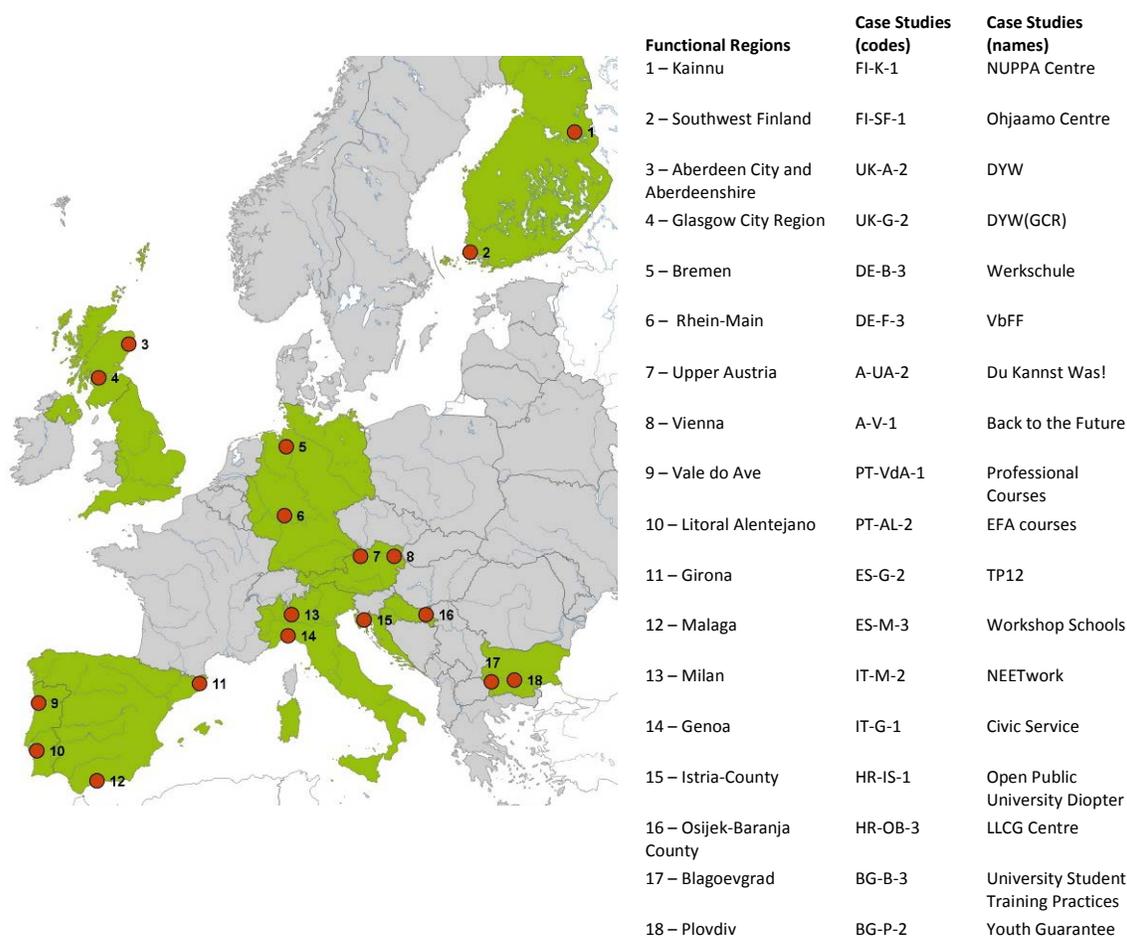*Figure 6. Functional Regions and case studies in YOUNG_ADULLLT*

Functional Regions are situated within a more general respatializing of human activity, with dynamics of globalization, EU principles and programmes, national policies and locally-mediated or -generated schemes all helping to shape experiences and outcomes. For instance, the EU Youth Guarantee is omnipresent across these national and FR contexts.

Some other phenomena shaping the regions are near-universal within and beyond Europe: the variable but inevitable impact of the global economic crisis, increasingly precarious work conditions (or, more innocuously, 'flexibilization') and increased participation in tertiary education. The latter may sound positive but as an unintended consequence, those without it are living under conditions of increased vulnerability.

Comparing at sub-national level, however, we see marked differences between the regions under study. The vast majority of the FRs under study are urban (15 out of 18),[2] and are characterised by a wider range of employment opportunities and more varied and plentiful provision of training schemes. The urban settings are particularly dynamic, subject as they are to intra-national and international migration, extreme wage disparities, and spatial distributions that concentrate poverty and unemployment into neighbourhoods which become acculturated to them. Urban areas are also, in many cases, either physically or administratively closer to power and central attention.

Some FRs are highly dependent on a particular sector, such as oil and gas in Aberdeen, or tourism in Malaga. This is seen to create a particular set of dynamics as this narrow focus can leave young people in vulnerable living conditions if the sector faces rapid change from exogenous forces, such as the impact of the decline in oil and gas prices on the Aberdeen labour market. Focus on a particular sector also has gendered implications; Aberdeen again being an example, where the engineering and technical jobs associated with the industry are also associated with male participation. Thus, when changes occur, vulnerability particularly affects this group. Other categories of FR include those marked by extensive commuting (e.g. Frankfurt) or those centred around a port or other transport hub (such as Genova). Each of these distinctive characteristics brings with it specific needs both in terms of preparation for employment and in terms of shaping young adults' wider aspirations, their social and support networks, and their gendered and class-based outlooks.

The underlying assumption is that regional/local peculiarities produce different skill ecologies, different types of networks and generate distinct patterns of policy-making, impacting the life courses of young people. While data on socio-economic conditions,

---

[2]   This provided a somewhat limited opportunity to understand the very different dynamics of rural, largely agrarian economies as compared to large urban settings.

welfare, labour markets, and education and training systems is available at national and sub-national levels for administrative units in almost all countries, the use of these units in research presents limitations such as glossing over important intranational differences. Functional relations, which are vital to understanding socio-economic phenomena, are likely to be cut out as administrative boundaries are the only basis for delineation. An alternative territorial unit for research are FRs identified on the basis of spatial flows and interactions both within and across the borders of administrative units.

For *researchers*, the unit of the FR and its dynamic nature constitute an underpinning basis for new and old forms of categorization, with which to then generate recommendations for action. This demands a thorough understanding of the dynamics of influence up and down the different levels of analysis. It also calls for fine-grained study of the extent to which and the ways in which FRs are unique, and longitudinal research into how these dynamic units change over time in response to exogenous forces from different levels of the nested vertical axis.

For *policy-makers*, FRs offer a context-sensitive approach to assessing needs and demands, thus increasing the odds that a policy serves the actual needs of the different stakeholders on the ground. Improving the reliability of analyses grounded at FR level requires an intense effort in order to develop richer context-based information at the different territorial levels (both NUTS2 and NUTS3).

The issue of resilience also emerges from both the living conditions and dynamic regions theme: what stays the same in the face of these forces, and why? The specific needs of FRs require particular responses from policy-makers and practitioners. Local policy actors and practitioners are likely to be sensitive to these particular needs but may need to rely on this sensitivity rather than a firm evidence base, given the data issues raised above in regard to young people's living conditions.

As we will see below, the range of policy responses is narrower than the range of needs, and the question of whether the policy response should be linked exclusively to the demands of the labour market is an important one for policy-makers. There is a tendency to blame programme failure – such as when apprenticeships do not function as envisaged – on programme flaws or on individuals. It is important to look beyond this to the dynamics of the local context, and also – as we shall see below – to the skills ecology of the FR and the possibilities and limits this presents to policy-makers and practitioners alike.

Skills ecologies

The policy directions on skills formation are commonly drawn at the national level, but their enactment usually takes place at the regional and local level. The different educational and employment opportunities experienced across regions are likely to influence young adults' educational and (un)employment experiences. In order to understand the *regional governance of skills* it is important to identify relevant actors and institutions involved in it, the way they interact and collaborate with each other, their interests and mechanisms of coordination, and how these affect the educational and employment opportunities of young adults in the region. Moreover, each region has to face its specific skills challenges, such as skills shortages, overqualification or unemployment.

The comparison of the regional governance of skills in the 18 regions under study has been based on four main points: 1) the actors and institutions involved in the governance; 2) their degree of involvement and commitment to Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems (e.g. funding and provision); 3) the levels and mechanisms of coordination among actors to govern the region; and 4) the regional socioeconomic context and relevant skills (mis)matches (cf. Capsada-Munsech et al. 2018). These have been identified as the main factors constituting the *regional skills ecology*, as illustrated by Figure 7 below:
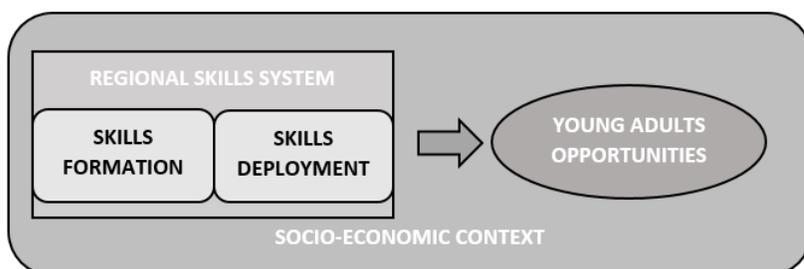
Figure 7. Regional skills ecology model (from Capsada-Munsech et al. 2018)

A comparative approach across regions showed that the main similarity refers to the presence and direct influence of national institutions in the region. Similarities can also be drawn between regions within the same countries, as most of them present the same — or fairly similar — formal actors involved in the regional governance of skills. In most regions there is at least one institution mediating the supply and demand of skills formation, although with different degrees of involvement and action. Most regions also present an institution that aims at smoothing the relationship between the supply and demand of skills in the labour market. Similarly, most regions institutionally link the relevance of skills formation in the region to labour market needs. A series of regional challenges – which are discussed later

on – can be identified in these three key points where institutional arrangements are considered to mediate different parts of the regional skills system.

Across most countries, the institutions and coordination mechanisms with regards to the VET system are established at the national level and enacted regionally. Most countries have stressed the high public commitment to skills formation, mainly based on the provision and funding of VET. Several countries have pointed out the relevance of European Social Funding (ESF) to support VET and other employability courses in the regions. Despite the relevance of VET and apprenticeship policies across countries, the degree of employers' involvement in VET is low in most countries, Austria and Germany being the exceptions. In most cases employers only contribute to the provision of VET if no extra direct costs are to be assumed on their part. However, some countries have highlighted the variation of employers' involvement across sectors.

There is certainly some variation across regions in the degree of decentralization, although within countries it remains stable. The extent to which the steering and value of skills comes from a public or a market perspective is more controversial.

The mechanisms of coordination at the regional level, between the education and training system and existing firms, vary widely across countries. While Austria and Germany — and to a lesser extent Finland — base their overall coordination on institutional arrangements, in Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy and Portugal, institutional coordination is project-based. Scotland and Spain tend to approach coordination by providing information to address market failures.

Regions experience a range of different types of skills (mis)matches. Several regions are affected by skills shortages, either in specific sectors of the economy, for specific educational levels or during different seasons of the year. In some cases, these skills shortages are more related to the employability of youths, while in other cases, these are more related to the unattractive working conditions and salaries of the jobs available.

Skills surplus is another of the mismatches affecting several regions. In some cases, this translates into unemployment (e.g. in Croatia), whereas in others it results in overqualification (e.g. in Bulgaria and Spain). Skills equilibrium at the low and high level is experienced to a larger extent in regions with a predominant urban area (e.g. Bremen, Glasgow, Milan and Vienna).

Low-skilled youths in urban regions are those who face more difficult educational and employment trajectories and are usually trapped in unemployment or low skills equilibriums.

In many cases it is strongly related to young people's social background, especially in countries with educational pathways leading to dead ends or limited funding for VET.

Youth from an immigrant background or belonging to ethnic minorities are more affected by unemployment, overqualification and low skilled equilibriums in several regions. The social groups most affected by unemployment vary widely across regions, being in some cases higher educated youths, low skilled women or youths with immigrant backgrounds or belonging to an ethnic minority.

The formal enactment of the national structures at the regional level can be considered fairly stable across regions. However, the actual functioning of these institutions, the relationship between actors involved in the skills system, and the influence of these interactions on young adults' lives are very much shaped by the structural and contextual regional factors. Therefore, deeper examination of regional challenges appears crucial.

A set of regional challenges, as perceived by key regional actors we interviewed, have been identified. These can be classified in three groups which refer to key transitions: 1) in the lifelong learning system; 2) from education to work; and 3) the relevance of skills formation for regional labour market needs, as Figure 8 below illustrates.
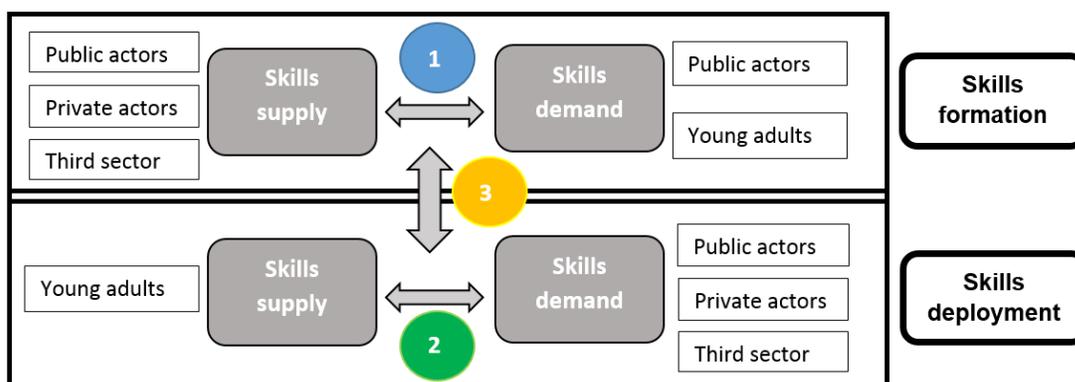
Figure 8. Identifying challenges in skills formation and deployment at regional level (from Capsada-Munsech et al. 2018)

The transitions within the lifelong learning system is where less overall challenges have been encountered. In some countries the main threat refers to rigid educational pathways leading to dead ends, which becomes a trap for skills upgrading for the most disadvantaged youths. The role of European Social Funding (ESF) has been identified as a very relevant

source of funding for several regions, but the question remains as to what extent regions should be dependent on European funding or be able to sustain themselves in the long term.

The education and labour market spheres are largely disconnected in several regions. While in countries with less-developed VET systems and apprenticeship schemes their development is regarded as the only way to smooth youths' transition to the labour market, in those regions where VET and apprenticeships are long-standing, there is evidence of struggles with the scarcity of vacancies in which to place students and the quality of the training. Unsurprisingly, the most affected by these problems are socially disadvantaged youths. Regional data systems providing information on current skills supply and demand are in place and have been deemed useful in several regions. However, the limitations of these labour intelligence systems have also been stressed, as their slow pace does not cater for rapid socioeconomic and labour shocks, and they struggle to forecast future skills needs. Initiatives to address the school-to-work transition vary across regions. While in some regions the solution proposed is to improve youth skills to meet labour market demands, in other regions they claim that the main problem is the limited number of jobs available in the region or the precarious working conditions offered in the predominant sectors, which youths do not find attractive.

The relevance of skills formation for the regional labour market is a recurrent topic. In most regions the tension identified is to what extent the publicly-funded skills formation system should serve the needs of private employers, even if it promotes youth employment. While most public authorities are willing to fund and provide general skills, employers are more interested in occupation, industry and firm-specific skills. The tension is even stronger in those regions where there is a predominant industry or sector (e.g. oil and gas, tourism), as it might be the only feasible source of employment.

The functional approach to skills (mis)matches, as summarized in Figure 9 below, showed that most FRs experience some kind of skills shortage or gap in the region. While some of these shortages are related to specific sectors (e.g. oil and gas in Aberdeen, ICT in Plodiv and Glasgow, seasonal workers in Alentejo Litoral, textiles and agriculture in Vale do Ave, metal and wood in Kainuu, marine and automobile in South West Finland, tourism and shipbuilding in Istria) in other cases they are related to the educational level of the local population (e.g. shortage of high-skilled workers in Vienna).
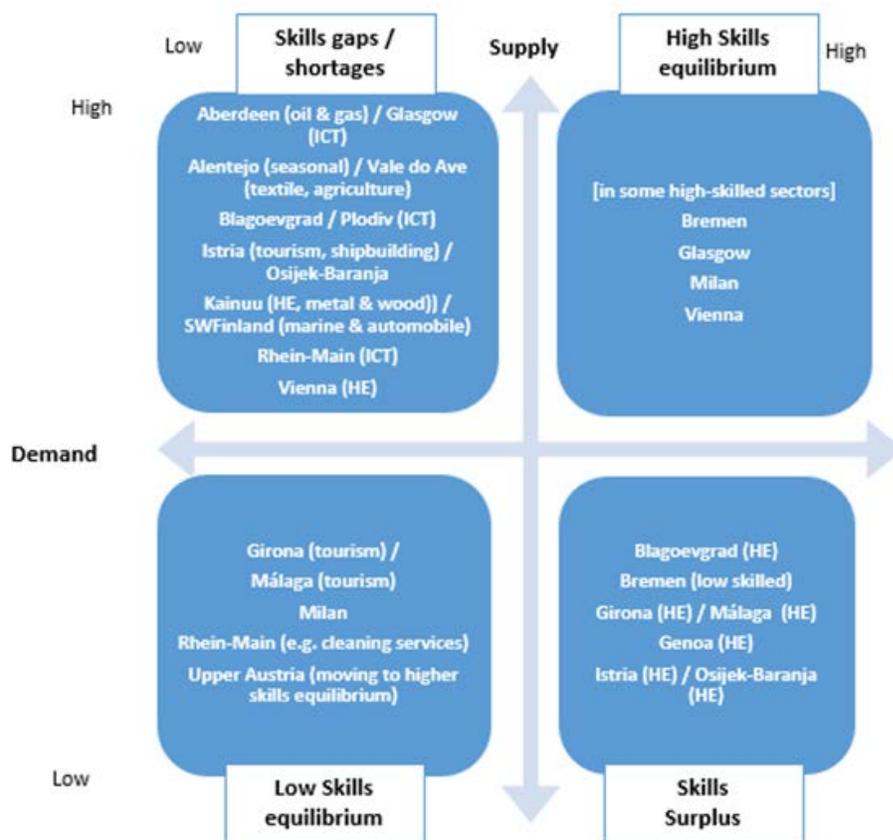
Figure 9. Functional approach to skills (mis)matches across FRs (from Capsada-Munsech et al. 2018)

> In short, the national and regional institutional arrangements of skills formation systems and their levels and forms of coordination do not vary greatly, whether within or between countries. However, the actual functioning of these institutions, the relationship between actors involved in the skills system and the influence of these interactions on young adults' lives are very much affected by structural and contextual regional factors.

Against this background, it becomes clear that the term 'skills ecology' connotes a kind of equilibrium within a system, but this is more an aspiration than a *de facto* reality. The findings from WP6 (Capsada-Munsech et al. 2018; Parreira do Amaral et al. 2018) point to issues in the ways in which supply-side and demand-side factors are matched and prioritized by policymakers in FRs and other administrative units. Given the heterogeneity of socioeconomic contexts and living conditions within countries, the choice and effectiveness of national policies will inevitably be affected by regional labour markets and the employment opportunities available to young people.

More consideration is required of how theoretical models classify different skills systems, and the types of policy responses to them. Many of these suffer from methodological nationalism and do not take the different levels sufficiently into account, either in terms of how EU and global patterns manifest, or how these models play out at the local level of the FR. However, across these models an important division distinguishes those models which emphasise the supply side from those which emphasise the demand side. This distinction is highly relevant along the whole vertical axis, in a context of global mobility (which shapes and changes the pool of talent locally, and their particular needs) and local FR characteristics (which shape employment possibilities and wider social patterns). *Supply-focused theories* place more emphasis on the individual factors of employability, and how the individual can be prepared for work. Here, the individual factors and attributes that are considered the most important are attitudes such as diligence and honesty, transferable skills from previous employment or life experience, formal qualifications, understanding of the work environment, state of health (both psychological and physical), knowledge and skills to find a job (such as preparing a CV and searching effectively for suitable work) and flexibility (including willingness to travel and work shifts). On the other hand, *demand-focused approaches* emphasize social and labour market factors, and the attendant policies are driven by what kind of work is in demand from local employers. Demand factors are generally more external to the individual. Usually they are structural in nature. These include the dynamics of the local and regional labour markets (such as dominant sectors of the labour market, qualification requirements, and the level of competition for jobs), the macroeconomic environment (including levels of employment and capital investment), job characteristics and types, recruitment practices and policies that support job seeking and attainment (such as tax or benefits incentives to work incentives). All of these exist within a context of other social policies affecting the opportunity to take up employment, including transport and childcare provision.

Analysis across the FRs in this study demonstrates flaws in both of these logics. Supply-side approaches tend to put the onus on individuals to prepare for work and develop 'employability'. A 'blame game' ensues which puts responsibility on (potentially vulnerable and young) people and if they are not successful in gaining and staying in employment, it is regarded as their fault. We see, for example, such discourses emerging in the two German FRs, where readiness for work in general is an emphasis of employment training. At the same time, the formal education system is also criticised for being too academic and not sufficiently preparing the labour force for its purpose. On the other hand, emphasis on the

demand side remains a dominant policy tactic in many regions. This becomes troubling in a number of contexts. When a FR is reliant on a particular sector, this becomes a focus for training – but the sector may itself be vulnerable (as noted above) and therefore not able to supply sufficient jobs or may not be appropriate for a particular individual's life project and talents. Equally, the industry or sector may demand from workers such a high degree of flexibility that the employment on offer does not constitute 'decent work' by European standards. Seasonal work in tourism, for example, tends to be precarious and poorly-paid. Other sectors (such as metal and wood in Kainuu) offer very hard working conditions.

Two particular training models dominate across the FRs, situated within particular skill formation regimes – apprenticeships and employability training programmes. The analysis highlights how these are embedded over time and so become part of what Hufton and Elliot have called 'the pedagogical nexus' (2000). As a 'travelling policy', apprenticeships have been introduced in many settings. However, their effectiveness depends not only on their deep integration across the education and employment sectors, including positive employer attitudes to apprenticeships which are part of the culture, but also on labour market performance in a particular FR. Labour market performance affects the availability of apprenticeships, as seen in Austria and Scotland (Aberdeen) and generates competition for each place, disadvantaging the vulnerable who are less likely to be selected. Employability training programmes, on the other hand, can be tailored to regional labour market demands. However, this does not always happen consistently and where quantity and quality of employment opportunities is lower, this is not always taken into account.

For *researchers*, the intersection of the FR as an analytical unit with existing and new typologies of skills formation regimes opens up areas for further investigation as part of a wider move towards place-based approaches. These would need to take into account the dynamics within these units and aim to understand the interplay of a range of contextual factors for LLL: the extent to which the FRs are cohesive and singular; how they are shaped by both intended and unintended exogenous forces originating in larger units including the national and supranational levels; how they change over time including their skills ecologies and their boundaries; and how economic and social integration do or do not characterise particular areas as pre-conditions or consequences of LLL programmes. For *policy-makers*, attention to this embedding of LLL policies in regional landscapes would generate useful evidence and policy advice to facilitate their engagement with the FR level by identifying

how particular skills regimes and LLL policy options play out at the micro level. In other words, there is need to coordinate policy-making, a topic to be discussed below.

For *practitioners*, there needs to be vigilance concerning the potential mismatch between programmes and the regional labour market, whether the programmes are demand or supply-driven. This mismatch may manifest as preparation for jobs that do not or no longer exist, that will not exist in the future; or jobs that are not 'decent'. There also needs to be sensitivity to the dangers of 'blaming the victim' in employability programmes, as the voices of young people remind us.

2.3 Coordinated policy-making in LLL: Supporting decision-making

The point of departure for the analyses in YOUNG_ADULLLT was the assumption that the different elements involved in LLL policy-making come together in myriad configurations in the specific sites. In this way, they shape and substantially impact LLL policy-making and thus also the ability of policies to become effective and successfully meet the expectations embodied in them. The argument has been that policy-making at local and regional level can best be understood and assessed by accounting for these different elements, which, in turn, allows us to identify key parameters of coordinated policy-making in LLL.

Supporting decision-making in the field of LLL, we suggested, can best be pursued not by identifying decontextualized 'best practices' in LLL policies that could be transferred into different contexts. Rather, identifying the parameters for policy-making and elements of effective implementation of LLL policies contextualized at local level — in terms of sustainable solutions — might help to develop a set of more general indicators and parameters to support coordinated policy-making.

Better coordinated policy-making in LLL, as suggested below, can be achieved by means of a reflexive tool (instead of an 'intelligent' but technocratic one). The following section *first* discusses an approach to policy analysis conducive to such a contextualized analysis and deliberates on metagovernance constellations and patterns of policy-making. It *also* presents and discusses parameters identified in the policy process from design, formulation and target group construction, implementation and the enactment in concrete (pedagogical) arrangements and interactions. The section *closes* by suggesting such a reflexive tool for (a) analysis, and (b) planning, regulation and provision of lifelong learning policies.

Context-sensitive analysis for LLL policy-making: Storytelling as policy analysis

Lifelong learning policy-making is extremely context-specific. In that respect, more accurate insights depend on context-sensitive analytical categories, such as the concept of 'Functional Regions', which are needed to allow for a better understanding of the varying embeddedness of LLL policies in regional landscapes. Examining these contextual specificities more closely also revealed the interdependencies between the implementation of lifelong learning policies and the sedimented economic and socio-cultural arrangements, such as a focus on a single industry or long-term structural unemployment.

This section deliberates on how policy analysis as storytelling can help us advance from case to knowledge, for instance, by overcoming a one-sided perspective of policy-making to include addressees' standpoints in understanding policy-making while accounting for the complexity that characterises policy-making on the ground.

The comparative case studies in YOUNG_ADULLLT adopted a storytelling approach intended to grasp the complex interrelations among the different actors in the field of LLL policy-making. By describing the development of policies from design to implementation as well as the effects on the intended young adults, we aimed at highlighting how the meanings, values and interests of different actors interact and are socially built or modified during the concrete making of policies in their own contexts.

The use of storytelling as a tool for policy analysis aimed to overcome a rather common constraint in the extant literature. Indeed, in this domain there is a quite widespread use of narratives focused on the policy problem, which tend to reproduce the perspectives and conceptual frames of policy-makers, or, more generally, of the people who design or implement policies, leaving little or no room for addressees' viewpoints (see Polletta et al, 2011). This tendency particularly emerges in situations in which different kinds of narratives are produced by different actors in a potentially conflicting scenario with different interest groups (e.g. McBeth, Shanahan & Jones, 2005), and it is quite usual in conditions of unbalanced power between countries (Roe, 1994), or between addressees and implementers.

In trying to establish 'relations between sets of relationships', storytelling allowed us to find meaningful sets of relations without a dramatic simplification of the reality, a price often paid by comparativists when making comparisons between overly abstract versions of reality. In other words, a serious limit of comparison is the strong simplification of cases needed to allow comparison itself, because generalization is permitted only at such a high level of

abstraction as to render the generalization useless. On the contrary, by highlighting relations between sets of relationships, the storytelling approach shows, particularly along the biographical entry point, that the relationships between the designers', implementers' and addressees' points of view are sometimes divergent, especially when the activation paradigm seems to promote the so-called 'Matthew effect' (Merton, 1968), according to which only the less disadvantaged part of a target group can be supported. The approach also shows how sometimes the 'right' choice is made by the addressees for the 'wrong' reason, obtaining the intended results according to a divergent mechanism. This happens because young adults react in diverse ways to policies, internalizing social expectations such as success and material wealth, yet the absence of equal opportunities to achieve those goals generate a strain between the socially-encouraged goals of society and the socially-acceptable means to achieve them (cf. Palumbo, Benasso & Parreira do Amaral 2018).

Metagovernance constellations and patterns of policy-making

In pursuing the end of better informed LLL policy-making, YOUNG_ADULLLT researched the different regional landscapes selected in order to identify patterns of policy-making in LLL. The vast heterogeneity and the high degree of complexity due to idiosyncratic features required the consortium to shift attention to what shapes the specific 'mixes' or patterns of interaction, which, in turn, impact on the level of commitment of those involved at different levels in the selected regions. Through analysis, various metagovernance constellations shaping policy-making came into focus and provided interesting insights.

Metagovernance constellations is a term used in public administration research to refer to the way in which different styles, scales and levels of governance are judiciously and/or accidentally mixed together. The most common metagovernance constellations include mixtures of hierarchical, network and market governance, which lead to varying approaches to policy-making.

Hierarchical governance is best characterized by top-down decision-making, strict accountability procedures and emphasis on project rather than process management (Meuleman 2008, p. 26). *Network governance* accepts the mutual dependence of various actors and accounts for interactive policy-making based on formal and informal networks (ibid., p. 33). Finally, *market governance* emphasizes a benefit-cost ratio, competition, decentralization of structures and promotes outputs over outcomes (ibid., p. 30). In order to

gauge the combination of these governance styles, one needs to acknowledge that all modes of coordination and governance are prone to failure (Jessop 2009, p. 96). Therefore, there is a correlative need for sophisticated forms of reflexive meta-steering or meta-governance of state development (Jessop 2004, p. 49), including the meta-governance of lifelong learning policy-making.

> In researching lifelong learning landscapes and modes of policy-making across and within the 18 European Functional Regions, we have identified three patterns of interactions, which are useful in informing the development of reflexive tools for better coordinated policy-making. These patterns of interactions relate to the *construction of target groups*, the *implementation of policies*, and the *pedagogical interactions* involved, and present different underlying assumptions behind policy design and configurations of interlinkages between structure and agency.

As such, these governance styles are embodied in the processes of policy-making and offer a perfect ground for assessing the underlying rationales, principles and beliefs that actors involved, or metagovernors, hold and actively pursue. Therefore, in the following section we will deliberate on these patterns of interactions with the aim of illuminating those opportunities where modes of reflexive reasoning may apply and create synergetic effects in local/regional lifelong learning policy-making.

Interactional configurations of the target group construction

With regard to the interaction related to target group construction, analyses revealed eight points of departure:

- Depending on the different levels of the policy agenda, LLL policies are modified according to the approach adopted by local/regional authorities. In adopting a top-down approach, authorities 'borrow' an already existing policy model, either European or national, and apply it in the local environment. Consequently, young adults have to fit pre-defined criteria, which are often far from their immediate realities and social conditions. Alternatively, a bottom-up approach frames the target according to the local conditions and, thus, has a higher chance of engaging the target group, but may find it difficult to directly relate to requirements/expectations at other levels.

- The approach to target group construction is often constrained by underlying funding criteria. This means that policy designers and implementers have to meet certain criteria

to increase their funding opportunities and offer stable and diversified vocational and training courses. Against this backdrop, private-public partnerships as well as a vivid economic infrastructure work to enhance the importance of market governance in the metagovernance mixture. However, one needs to remember that private funding institutions pursue their own particular goals and target specific groups of interest,[3] frequently focusing on outputs over outcomes. In this way, they emphasize employability as a central governmental goal.

- *Third*, building on the previous two aspects, there is a general interest in low unemployment rates, which underscores the role of lifelong learning policies as pillars of sustainable economic growth. A considerable number of policies that pursue a standard target group definition illustrate this trend. Such policies focus on people under 25 years of age who have left formal education and/or have been unemployed for at least four months. In some countries (including Bulgaria, Italy and Spain), the age group of the potential policy addressees also includes young people up to the age of 29 years.

- Indeed, *fourth*, it transpired that age range was the dominant criterion for target group definition. On the one hand, it is used to simplify the highly heterogeneous group of young adults and reduce the complexity of target group construction to age limits. On the other hand, defining target groups by age limits supports an instrumental approach to lifelong learning policy-making. Our analyses also revealed that, in some countries, the upper age limit is continuously decreasing, meaning that younger and younger groups become implicated in the transition from school to the labour market. In this way, the logic of early intervention is indirectly making the development of individual life projects more insecure. While trying to tame the 'upcoming' contingencies that may occur, more direct governance and control become favoured. Conversely, in southern Europe especially, the opposite trend may be observed, suggesting that the transition to adulthood is becoming 'lifelong'.

- *Fifth*, beyond age limits, policy analyses also revealed that some addressees are overrepresented when compared to officially stated definitions of target groups. This

---

[3]   However, it is important to note that these are not restricted to private firms, but also include non-profit organisations.

together with more or less obvious access 'thresholds' produces a 'creaming-off effect' and results in reduced heterogeneity among the actually reached profiles, only selecting the addresses deemed most 'appropriate'.

- *Sixth*, since the overwhelming majority of lifelong learning policies address 'vulnerable' target groups more or less directly, a number of characteristics understood as proxies for vulnerability have become obvious. At least four different categorizations of vulnerability were observed: seen either as an educational/training deficit (low education level, early school leaving etc.); in terms of current occupational condition (NEETs); as a more structural problem (various forms of poverty, lack of social support, segregation, etc.); or as a physical/psychological limitation (disability, sickness, immaturity etc.). Overall, vulnerability is attributed to young adults as a personality trait. Based on this essentialization, policy-makers often understand 'vulnerable' young adults as a 'weak group' to be empowered and assisted in their life courses.

- *Seventh*, As a result of the previous phenomenon, supporting 'weak' young adults through guidance and information emerges as 'the' proper policy solution. The implicit effect of such a perspective on policy-making is to reinforce the idea that definitive and effective knowledge exists on how to prepare young adults for the future labour market, and that endowing young people with such knowledge will ensure that they successfully follow their chosen life paths. It is important to note that activation policies represent intrinsically individualizing policy options, which eschew serious consideration and critique of the structural forces underlying 'the problem' they purport to tackle.

- *Eighth*, when contrasting policy target construction with young adults' own (negative) experiences, several features become visible. Young adults report that programmes are overly rigid and do not allow for personal autonomy, producing pressure to conform to expectations of a linear life trajectory. Moreover, young people face labelling (as 'vulnerable') and have to cope with social and cultural stigmas, which in turn influences their self-perception and ability to realize their own desires. Finally, many aspects young people's behaviours and motivations remain unaccounted for by policies, which together with poor self-perception undermines young people's expectations of the initiatives in which they participate.

To conclude, related to these eight thematic fields within the interactional process of target group construction, there are a number of factors that may mediate metagovernors' reasoning at the framing and target group construction stages of policy decision-making:

- First, a context-sensitive approach to policy-making will require a shifting of attention to local/regional conditions and arrangements. Here, funding opportunities, economic and institutional structures, long-term developments and current indicators of economic, demographic and social activities offer a primary source of information;

- second, gaining an accurate understanding of the local policy landscape requires careful examination of the existing discourses and narratives that shape social and cultural expectations for both policy-makers and policy beneficiaries, which are often clearly visible in the 'construction' of target groups;

- third, listening to young adults' voices and establishing a productive relationship with them presupposes a readiness on their part to deliberate on their own insecurity in following their chosen life projects as well as on the contingency of education and training programmes, which occur as time- and space-limited activities and change according to newly appearing circumstances. This means accepting the contingent nature of lifelong learning; something that goes well beyond preparation for transition to the labour market.

Interactional configurations of policy implementation

When examining interactional configurations affecting the implementation of policies, six elements must be considered in greater detail:

- *First*, taking the actors involved in policy-making into account, a series of metagovernance mixtures appear. In cases where the local/regional landscape is dominated and monopolized by one public or private actor, the range of services and possible outcomes becomes standardized and imbalanced. In cases where policy-making includes various competing actors, entrepreneurial goals tend to depend on funding issues and numbers of addressees and, thus, pay less attention to the real needs of young adults. Finally, in cases where network governance has good conditions in which to develop, services and programmes become more appropriate to the context-specific demands of young adults.

- *Second*, when implementing policies, the link between stated objectives and local needs reveals existing dependencies and prevailing expectations. If, for example, local governments prioritize reducing unemployment, policy-makers tend to promote economic activity over the pursuit of more humanistic educational goals. Moreover, in regions with mono-industrial labour market sectors, where local stakeholders require

specific employment positions to be filled, policy-implementers often adjust their training and/or professional courses correspondingly. Further factors, such as regional cohesion or family support, affect the way in which policies advocate for their goals.

- *Third*, the process of implementation is strongly influenced by the scale of governance and traditional or 'naturally' occurring metagovernance combinations. Regarding the latter, opportunities to directly devise and manage educational measures and create independent governing bodies vary across the countries under study. Regions with greater autonomy are less dependent on state-driven prescriptions, which, however, does not automatically make them less hierarchical. On the other hand, regions with less autonomy answer to central governments and have to adapt their policies according to the national goals, often taking into account national funding requirements and opportunities. Regarding metagovernance combinations, there are regions with traditionally more market-oriented policy-making, as well as regions with greater state-regulated influence over policy-making. These, however, result from long-term sedimentation of social and political relationships and are therefore always slow to change. This prompts re-consideration of the argument that traditional approaches to lifelong learning policy-making must be instinctively prioritized.

- *Fourth*, reflecting global tendencies in educational governance, our analyses supported the notion that policy-makers tend to re-standardize the life paths of young adults and, thus, normalize their life courses. Underlying assumptions regarding processes of de-standardization (diverging from standard or linear life paths) and re-standardization (restoration of a standard life trajectory) were observed in the majority of cases and reveal how more general societal megatrends need to be integrated into the design and implementation of lifelong learning programmes.

- *Fifth*, focus must be narrowed to the organizational aspects of implementation processes, especially access procedures, level of activation and the duration of interventions. With respect to access procedures, every governance style formulates and applies these in different ways. Hierarchical approaches prefer threshold measures, while market approaches call for competition, and a network approach favours free and open access. Regarding the level of activation, techniques range between an autonomous style and the tutored approach, thus modulating based on young adults' willingness and readiness to cooperate. Finally, the duration of interventions depends on funding capabilities and personal capacities on the one hand, and success criteria

and overall objectives on the other. The majority of policies implement measures over several months (10+), thereby opting for continuity and security, risking, however, becoming an end in themselves.

- *Sixth*, and in addition to the processes of target construction, when comparing young adults' positive experiences and justifications for participation with the perspectives of policy-implementers, several observations can be made. The success of partnership between mentors/lecturers and learners depends heavily on the ascriptions that young adults are exposed to. If they are perceived as a 'problem', they also tend to internalize this ascription and reproduce the relationships this implies. However, when encountered as partners and 'co-learners', young adults reported manifold personal benefits, ranging from improved self-esteem and self-satisfaction to reduced biographical uncertainty, support in making choices and the development of lasting social relationships.

To sum up, metagovernors' rationales during policy implementation could be reflectively modified, according to the factors described above, by taking the following approaches:

- *First*, recognizing and estimating the existing mixture of governance styles helps to better understand the opportunities and risks of a particular governance style as well as its prevalence in the metagovernance mixture. Moreover, this aids understanding of the given governance style, including its successes, results, limitations and potentials;

- *second*, taking global trends in education into account and acknowledging the discursive nature of educational narratives and ideas opens up space for more diversified and accurate implementation of measures. The highly complex social relationships that permeate and constrain processes of implementation can be modified even in local and regional conditions, regardless of the underlying economic pressures. For this to happen, more long-term objectives are preferable over short-term, quick activation measures;

- *third*, inviting young adults to shape the implementation of lifelong learning programmes as active partners enhances the possibility of programme success. When young adults encounter positive experiences, programmes and measures acquire a positive image and reinforce their relevance and societal benefit. However, the risk of LLL programmes evolving into economic supply-chains that merely provide for the labour market must be kept resolutely in mind, as this would negate their intended participatory nature.

Interactional configurations of pedagogical interactions

Looking at the interactional configurations present in policy enactment via pedagogical interactions, the following five issues play a major role:

- *First*, an important distinction needs to be made between the intentions of policy-makers and policy-implementers on the one hand, and policy addressees, in our case young adults, on the other. Learning is an individual activity embedded in complex social relationships, leading to numerous intended results. However, it also spurs on several unintended or transintentional effects. Accounting for these effects requires acknowledgment of unwanted dynamics and unexpected events, which may cause disappointment, frustration and demotivation on both sides of policy-making. In this respect, pedagogical interactions operate between the intentions of policy-makers and the practices of young adults. Transintentional outcomes are not necessarily problematic;

- *Second*, metagovernance constellations become visible in the daily practices of teaching, guiding, counselling and training. Practitioners apply a variety of learning techniques and methods and implement the particular policy in a given context. The delivery of previously agreed content, and its transformation into usable knowledge that results in either enhanced employability or more general life skills, is embedded in immediate interactions with young adults and contests their subjective meanings, life projects, and diverse expectations. In addition, young adults more or less willingly translate their life plans into education and training choices and, thus, place further demands on teaching practitioners and their techniques.

- *Third*, pedagogical interactions can be organised in various forms, including theoretical instruction, pair or group-work, practice-based learning in the work environment, direct counselling and more long-term personal guidance. According to the chosen mode of delivery, further considerations may come into play, such as necessary facilities, the rotation of teaching staff, existing and occurring peer-groups, et cetera. Moreover, such interactions can be more or less individualized or homogenized and can take place under formal, informal or non-formal conditions. As reported in the analyses, a wide range of counselling and guidance exists, ranging from the casual transmission of information to open, dialogic reflection on personal orientations and experiences. In this regard, the interplay of these components can influence the make-up of metagovernance constellations. For example, top-down, directive teaching and counselling facilitates the hierarchical governance style, whereas a non-directive approach characterized by

discussion and co-operation supports network governance. Finally, practice-based professional learning is oriented towards outputs and enterprise and, thus, reflects the market style of governance.

- *Fourth*, in their final and agreed form, education and training goals translate and materialize into more or less tangible outcomes. These may include soft skills and key competencies for everyday life practices. They may, however, also incorporate formally acknowledged certificates, which qualify candidates for better job opportunities, or help to place beneficiaries directly into further education, training or, in some cases, employment. In effect, the desired outcomes frame the overall interpretation of pedagogical interactions and implicitly structure the associated procedures, techniques and methods, since different outcomes require different approaches. Therefore, a given pedagogical interaction is both a translation of the underlying objectives as well as a result of sedimented power relationships. Young adults reported that often no certification was provided for non-formal and informal learning, undermining the value of participation.

- *Fifth*, related to the previous observation, pedagogical interactions entail verbal and non-verbal communication styles, which combine and/or favour oppressive or voluntary approaches. In this respect, specific contexts and requirements on the one hand, and cultural expectations and local notions of 'common sense' on the other hand can predetermine the chosen approach. For example, in classroom teaching, student/teacher roles formalize communication. In practice-based learning, the boss/worker hierarchy (giving and following orders) structures training. In a context with more horizontal communication, for example among colleagues or in group work and counselling, communication tends to be more informal. As our analyses have shown, young adults referred positively to more symmetric communication styles, which resemble the horizontal dynamics of network governance. The same applies to their experiences with collective approaches, best illustrated by peer-learning, which were explicitly mentioned as positive experiences. Since many young people reported negative experiences in formal educational settings, informal and horizontal approaches seemed to present the least barriers to learning.

In conclusion, the interactional configurations of pedagogical interactions revealed several points for reflection on possible metagovernance rationales:

- *First*, teaching and training practices are not only a means of delivering knowledge or operationalizing a policy: they are also the result of a continuously actualized combination of policy practitioners' abilities and competencies and policy addressees' learning capabilities and expectations. This permanent transformation (indeed, learning) positively stimulates pedagogical interactions, helping maintain their momentum. Here, young adults — often viewed as 'maladjusted' in previous stages of (formal) education/training — invite educators to create new forms of teaching and training, and to thereby acknowledge their life plans and own ways of pursuing their desires and visions.

- *second*, while interacting in numerous ways, policy practitioners and young adults establish temporary or long-term relationships, which in turn influence the latter's ability to develop productive professional and private relationships — keeping in mind that productive relationships may entail both cooperation and opposition. Therefore, the conscious choice of predominant governance style modifies how these relations translate into informal competencies and which characteristics they will foster.

- *third*, pedagogical interactions may be seen as policy enactment and represent a vital source of information and experiences, thus potentially contributing to further processes of lifelong learning (trans-)formation. Most importantly, these interactions offer a valuable chance to include young adults' voices in policy design and development. For this reason, careful attention to their experiences using various learning forms and communication styles enhances the policies' capability to offer long-term solutions to economic and social goals devised at local, national and supranational levels.

As public administration research indicates, it is desirable to improve the *qualifications* of metagovernors by increasing their willingness to consider multiple perspectives, by optimising their scope for discretion, and by selecting and training managers (here policy practitioners) with metagovernance capabilities (Meuleman, 2008, p. 322). Developing reflexive tools to support deliberation practices during various phases of policy implementation and enactment leads to a better quality of policy processes and, thus, supports the above-mentioned demands for improved qualifications. Learning how the various governance styles influence policy-making and policy formation is an open-ended process. In its ideal form, all three governance styles would operate in a context of 'negotiated decision making' (Jessop, 2004, p. 71). Such decision-making leads to a pluralistic guidance system consisting of both competition (market governance) and

cooperation (network governance) on the one hand, and the application of existing governmental resources to the negotiation process (hierarchical governance) on the other. Consequently, as the range of networks, partnerships, and other models of economic and political governance expand, official apparatuses remain, at best, first among equals (ibid.). Thus, the following examples (see Figure 10) visualize existing metagovernmental constellations in the analysed Functional Regions and give an overview of how various actors are embedded in the policy-making and policy implementation processes and where possible changes may apply.

Governance of lifelong learning policies in Girona

Governance of lifelong learning policies in Bremen

Governance of lifelong learning policies in Southwest Finland
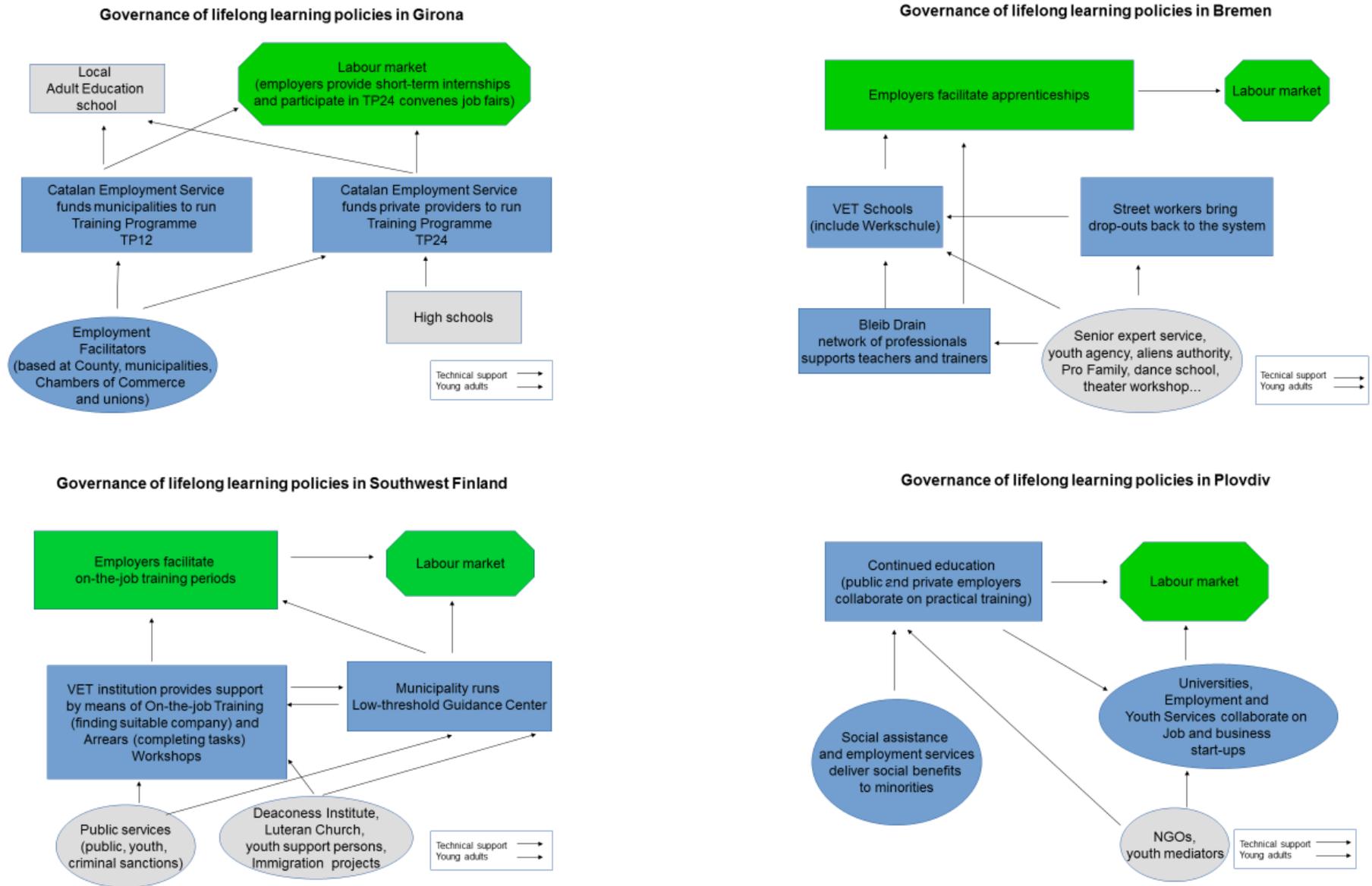
Governance of lifelong learning policies in Plovdiv

Figure 10. Examples of metagovernmental constellations in Functional Regions Girona (IT), Bremen (DE), Southwest Finland (FI), and Plovdiv (BG)

Parameters in the planning, regulation and provision of LLL policies

Against the background of the discussions in previous sections, a number of elements or parameters emerge as relevant in the planning, regulation and provision of lifelong learning policies. The following paragraphs briefly deliberate on these elements, following three main themes related to the policy process, namely: design, formulation and target group construction; implementation, and; enactment in concrete (pedagogical) arrangements and interactions.

Policy design, formulation and target group construction

- Policies are often designed at European and national level (e.g. Youth Guarantee; European Qualification Framework, etc.) and adopted/adapted to other contexts (regional/local), which makes it necessary to reflect on the implications of these frames of reference for policy formulation (e.g. aims and objectives, orientations) and target group construction. Reflecting on the latter also involves consideration of the dominant goals of labour market security and economic competitiveness, which encourage a stronger orientation towards human capital and employability by means of LLL policies, often disregarding that learning is not synonymous with 'education' and goes well beyond its narrow interpretation as the mastery of skills and competencies;

- Policies should not start from the assumption that individual deficits cause structural problems. The design should be flexible enough that practitioners and young participants can collaboratively design appropriate individualized approaches to these problems, starting from an acknowledgement of the individual's personal resources. This includes a clear distinction between cross-cutting holistic and segmental policies. There is also a need to formulate policies that balance flexibility and security for young people, and ensure that policies' goals and success criteria are oriented towards, or at least compatible with, the subjective-biographical expectations of young people who have to reconcile their chosen life course in relation to different functional and societal expectations and roles, different and competing expectations (for resources and time) and a range of normalities anchored in various spheres of life (family, education, work, leisure time, etc.);

- There should be careful consideration of the criteria used to define target groups, clearly distinguishing between causes and symptoms to avoid the pathologization of individuals through target group construction. This includes consideration of young adults' perspectives on target group construction, allowing reflection on its different impacts and reactions (intended, unintended, side-effects, etc.), and providing a means of ensuring correspondence and compatibility.

Policy implementation and enactment in concrete (pedagogical) arrangements and interactions

- Accounting for policy context appears as important as the policy content itself. However, ensuring that the policy aims and goals are appropriate to the specific implementation setting is crucial. The policy should take into account contextual features such as model and scale of (educational) governance, degree of regional autonomy, the various skills ecologies in place, and, not least, the mechanisms used in implementation.

- The role of different stakeholders and their ability to influence policy-making also demands careful consideration. For instance, state actors play central roles as networkers and connectors, even when a policy is implemented in close cooperation with private partners. In addition, the type and size of the organizations implementing the policies came out as central in the analyses, pointing to how (pre-existing) trust-based and productive relations among different actors dealing with similar target groups and providing similar services seem to be a key factor in creating and maintaining cooperation, rather than competition;

- During the implementation phase, it appears crucial to reflect on the consequences of underlying discourses and conceptions of the life course, the level of inclusion of target groups in policy design and formulation, but also of the tools, means and approaches to implementation. These include the mode of selection deployed to recruit and/or select participants in a policy programme and the duration of young adults' participation in the policy. These elements will have an impact on the young adults' rationales and justifications for engaging in a policy programme as well as their perceptions of its impact. Institutional reflexivity – i.e. allotting time and space to reflect during the implementation process (for example using periodic (internal) reviews) – appears as one means of ensuring these interactive effects are accounted for.

Policy enactment in concrete (pedagogical) arrangements and interactions

- Recognizing young adults as active learners and shapers of their own life courses oftentimes stands in contradiction to policies geared towards labour market integration and employment. Those young adults who diverge from this dominant orientation are at risk of suffering from further social problems, especially in contexts of successive economic crises that have devastated employment rates. Accordingly, countering stereotypes of youth as passive, incompetent, or unwilling to invest in skills development seems highly important, particularly considering the impact it can have on the perceptions, motivations and expectations of young policy addressees.

- Open and dialogical debates about the content and goals of learning and educational training were evidently important elements of LLL policy enactment. A clear distinction between a resources-based and a deficit orientation needs to precede the negotiation and translation of policy objectives to target groups. Also, open and horizontal communication styles are of paramount importance as they provide space and time for (peer) contact and exchange – not least because many addressees have previous negative experiences of formal education;

- Organizational forms of pedagogical interactions need to allow for customization to local contexts and the needs and demands of target groups as different (standardized or individualized) formats generate different pedagogical interactions and facilitate, to varying degrees, the matching of policies' and users' orientations and expectations.

The topics discussed in the previous sections provide important insights for deliberating on and proposing a reflexive tool that can be used in the planning, regulation and provision of LLL policies.

The next section deals with this theme.

Coordinated policy-making in LLL: a reflexive tool

In terms of expected impact, two central aspects are prominent in the Call for Proposals, issued in 2014, to which YOUNG_ADULLLT responded*:[4] policy learning and transfer* as well as an *Intelligent Decision Support System* (IDSS). In responding to the Call, YOUNG_ADULLLT took a conscious position of, while not completely negating the possibility of devising an IDSS tool, questioning the utility of a technocratic tool and the feasibility of policy transfer. This reflects the highly complex and context-dependent nature of LLL policies, as discussed throughout this Report. Instead, an important contribution of the project to the work programme lies in its analysis of how policies integrate labour market, social inclusion and individual life conditions, its recognition of sustainable solutions, contingencies, and necessities, and its inquiry into the necessary parameters for coordinated policy-making.

In contemporary discussions, terms such as 'smart' or 'intelligent' have been used to refer to attempts to improve policy-making and render the outputs of policy more effective and efficient. 'Smart' or 'intelligent systems', however, are – consciously and unconsciously – laden with specific connotations derived from technological understandings of social processes; the most obvious reference being artificial intelligence. This is not only imbued with unwarranted optimism, but also underplays the limits and implications of policy-making. Further, due to the complexity and heterogeneity of contexts and sites of application, it appears unfeasible to develop a 'one-size-fits-all' tool. Rather, against this backdrop, it has been our intent to analyze the embedding of policies in regional/local landscapes and the interactive patterns of policy-making across the selected research sites in order to identify parameters that can inform better coordination in LLL policy-making. These research steps, as discussed in the previous sections, will now serve as basis for proposing a *reflexive tool* that can be used in the planning, regulation and provision of LLL policies.

---

[4] Call "*YOUNG-3-2015: Lifelong learning for young adults: better policies for growth and inclusion in Europe*". The *YOUNG-3-2015* call can be found online at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/young-3-2015 [retrieved January 24, 2019].

The following paragraphs: first, deliberate on what 'coordinated policy-making' means in the context at hand; second, ponder the nature of a *reflexive tool* in light of the fact that it would be required to function in quite different sites and contexts across the continent, while not privileging scientific knowledge to the detriment of other fields; and third, present and discuss the tool itself, suggesting how it can contribute to LLL policy-making at regional/local level.

Coordinated policy-making denotes arrangements that successfully integrate labour market, social inclusion and individual life course aspects of policy formulation and implementation at regional and local level. It is important to highlight that this refers to a stipulative rather than lexical definition. Coordinated policy-making is viewed as an ideal-type, sustainable institutional solution that takes account of all relevant actors, stakeholders, dynamics, trends, and (mis)matches, avoiding redundancies and creating synergic effects in terms of coherence/integration of specific training or educational programmes with broader social interventions for specific groups. These institutional solutions allow policy-making to develop and implement regional and local skills strategies that coordinate the activities of different areas of government (education, labour, economy) and facilitate the involvement of non-governmental actors (business, training institutions, civil society) in the planning, regulation and provision of lifelong learning opportunities in a particular territory.

In more conceptual terms, the coordination of policy-making aims at accounting for the embeddedness of human action in institutional, economic, social, political, and cultural factors and conditions. Studying the functioning of economy, Karl Polanyi ([1944] 1957) coined the term *embeddedness* to point out that it is embedded in both economic and non-economic institutions. Later, questioning what he termed an 'oversocialized concept of action', Mark Granovetter (1985) viewed economic action as 'embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations' (ibid., p. 487) and argued that it is these social relations that help us explain outcomes. Notwithstanding whether one follows Polanyi's institutionalist or Granovetter's more structuralist conceptualisation of the term (cf. Beckert, 2007), embeddedness calls our attention to the cultural, cognitive and normative frames of reference, the patterns of (social) relationships, networks, and infrastructures available to those aiming for the coordination of action in LLL policy-making.

Coordination may be viewed as the result of a careful consideration of the manifold aspects and features of a policy in order to produce arrangements that account for

institutional, structural as well as individual dimensions of policy-making. Careful consideration of the process turns our attention to creating opportunities for those in charge of LLL policy-making to reflect and deliberate on the meanings, conditions, and impacts of their activities — here the actual meaning of politics comes to mind, namely, an emphasis on engagement and on political deliberation. The following paragraphs elaborate on our understanding of what a *reflexive* tool can mean.

Reflexivity as a concept has a long and contested history. The term 'reflex' has been taken to refer to a basic analytic ability to reflect, that is, an analytic capacity for self-awareness. But in what sense could we suggest a reflexive tool that goes beyond the circular or distanced move of 'standing back' and pondering over the meanings/representations, conditions, impact, et cetera of a policy proposal, to provide more practical guidance for coordinating LLL policy-making? If one takes reflexivity to be a human capacity, we also need to provide practical support for it to take place without fixing or restricting this process to a set number of alternatives or variables. In this sense, a reflexive tool makes a contribution in that it provides *opportunities for reflexion* — as it were, windows of reflexivity — as well as a *set of generative questions* that orient this practice. In other words, reflexivity takes on a performative character in that it recognises that reflecting upon the policy practices (perceiving an issue, formulating problems, targeting addresses, etc.) cannot be detached from actually performing these tasks. Thus, a reflexive tool has the function of offering both opportunity and direction to critically question the different forms of representation (of problems, of people, of solutions), to ponder over issues related to the conditions for policy success (compatibility, ambivalences, necessary and sufficient conditions), as well as to deliberate on the impact a policy has on those it addresses (in terms of their subjectivities and lived experience).

The figure below (see Figure 11) suggests a reflexive tool for coordinated LLL policy-making. Based on the project's results (see in particular Palumbo, Benasso & Parreira do Amaral 2018; see also chapter 2 above), it visualises three distinct phases of policy-making: the *planning* of a particular LLL policy; its institutional and organisational *regulation*; and its *provision* through enactment in specific pedagogical arrangements. It is arranged as a sequence of steps – or windows – that start in the upper left corner of the figure and follow a set of questions facing those involved in policy-design, formulation and implementation. Each window includes a number of questions that serve to initiate discussions and that can be amended to best represent the local context and needs. The

latter remark is crucial; the reflexive tool proposed here does not aim to account for all possible contexts and cannot foresee all aspects and features in the policy-making process. Rather it aims to spark a deliberative process – ideally involving the various stakeholders at different levels.

Stakeholders are invited to deliberate upon arrangements that aim at better coordinating policy along the sequence of decisions involved in the policy process. More specifically, during the *planning* phase, they can pay attention, amongst other things, to the frames of reference of the policy proposal, which might be related to different levels (European, national, regional/local), or inquire into specific institutional and contextual settings. During the *regulation* phase, they can examine, for instance, their specific modes of implementation, the economic, labour market and social conditions, or the current funding schemes and organizational dispositions. Finally, during the phase of *provision*, they can focus on the means used to operationalize the policies, that most often include pedagogical/learning arrangements, but also existing types of services or varying forms of provision.

As the figure shows, the more or less chronological sequence of planning, regulating and enacting a policy is accompanied by multiple options for deepened reflexion and deliberation on the issues mentioned. Such options, or *windows of reflexivity*, could be best expressed as various questions that initiate deliberation and open the space for stakeholders to add their own perspectives and integrate their local and regional specificities and experiences. In particular, the figure aims at accounting for and maintaining the dynamics of a policy-making process, thus highlighting the opportunities to pause and reflexively re-consider the policy's design, its conditions for success and think of possible re-arrangements. It guides those involved in policy-making through a variety of perspectives and visions that impact the policy's success and sustainability. As such, every stage of the policy-making process can be assessed independently of the previous or following stages, thus offering the possibility to react directly and in real time to new challenges and side effects.
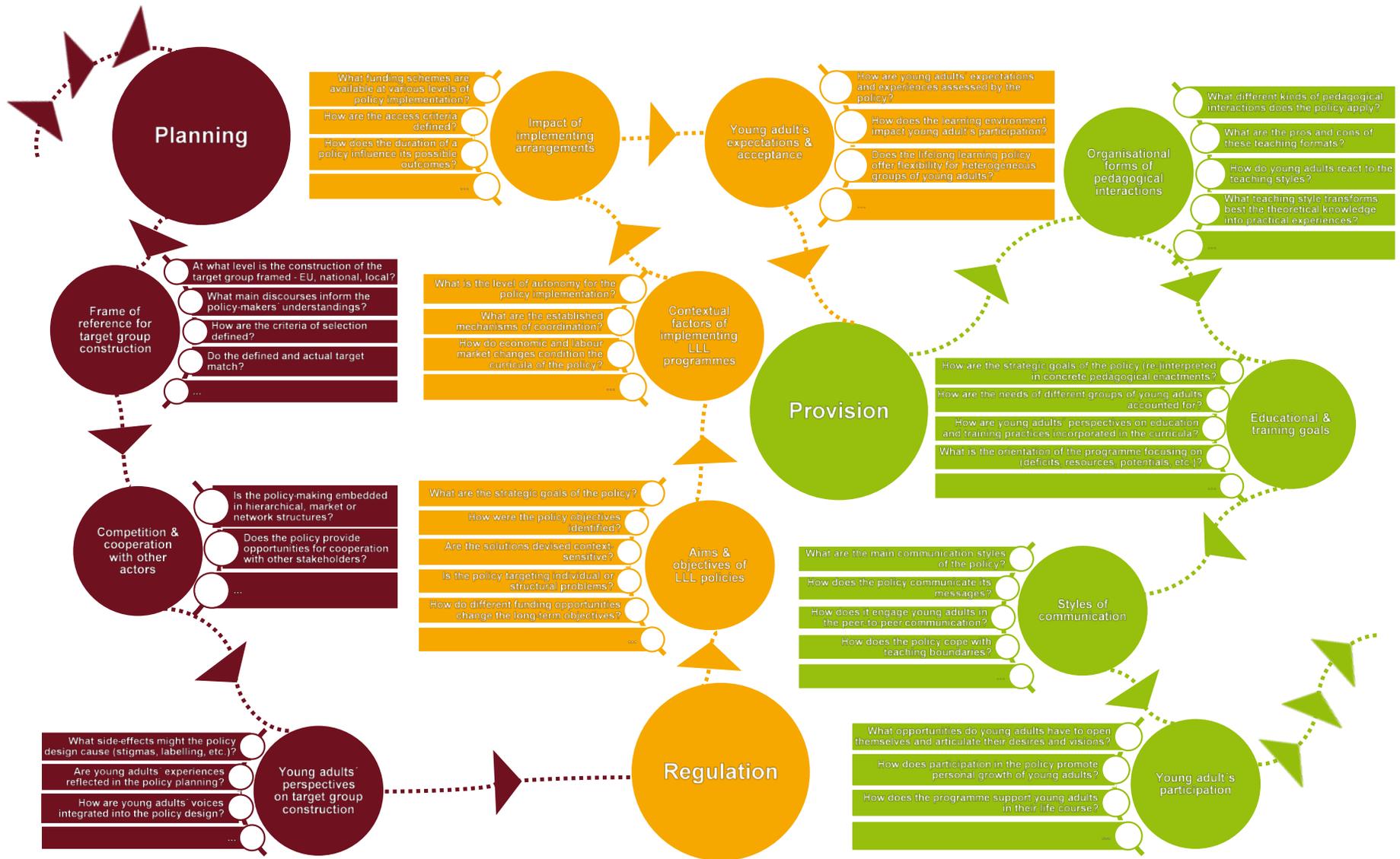
Figure 11: Windows of reflexivity for coordinated LLL policy-making

3. Conclusions

The Report has aimed to further synthesize the findings presented and discussed in the Comparative Analysis Report (D8.2, cf. Parreira do Amaral et al. 2018). The aim was to relate the project activities and results yielded to the overall project objectives (cf. Introduction to this Report).

The discussion of findings in the previous section support *three main conclusions* to be discussed in turn in the following paragraphs.

First, the particular achievement and contribution of the YOUNG_ADULLLT study to understanding the relationship and complementarity of LLL policies across the sites examined lies in its interpretive approach to policy analysis intended to discern policies' objectives, orientations and impacts on young people's life courses. While we conclude that overall, policies across the sites and countries studied converged on a dominant goal to enhance/secure *employability* and on a (deficit) orientation of *vulnerability* in addressing their target groups, we also highlighted the high degree of heterogeneity of strategies, including the logics and means of intervention deployed to implement the policies. The challenges and dilemmas confronting policy-makers and young adults alike derive in substantial part from this complex overlapping of needs, interests and contexts of adult learning policies. The concurrence of goals – related to labour market, social and youth welfare and education sectors – are seen to create contradictions in the functions of policies, which can already be identified at the design phase of the policy-making process. The results of the project emphasize the need for customization of policy solutions that are neither too broad nor too narrow in addressing local/regional needs and expectations. In terms of the governance of the policy process, we may also highlight the role of state actors as networkers and connectors; that is, as policy agents who can make a difference in shaping context-sensitive policy landscapes and manage the networks, which tap into the different abilities of stakeholders to influence policy-making. Finally, LLL policy-making needs to deal proactively with the paradox of devising individual solutions to structural problems.

Second, YOUNG_ADULLLT also contributed to a more differentiated view of issues related to assessing policies' fit and potentials for successfully appreciating and exploiting the hidden resources of young adults. Here, the main contribution lies in questioning dominant representations of young people and thus discerning between causes and

symptoms. Here, our research contributes by breaking the cycle of representing target groups in individualized and deficit-orientated ways and then addressing individual dispositions or shortfalls. One central aspect relates to recognizing the active role of young people – including those in vulnerable situations – in shaping their life courses and providing support. Instead of simply offering a choice between predefined alternatives, LLL policies need to, from the outset, integrate young people's voices into the policy-making process. In this sense, participation in LLL needs to be seen as a crucial part of the biographical self-determination of young adults. Related to this, supporting young adults in their life courses entails orienting policies not only towards functional needs or instrumental (social) goals, but also to include subjective success criteria and biographical competences in policy proposals. Crucially, experts at local level make a difference in supporting the life courses of young people. However, there is need to overcome deficit-orientations and expectations of normality as the interaction with young people is still framed by assumptions of normality that have become more and more fictitious. Finally, recognition emerges here as the interactional basis of successful LLL policies.

Third, in terms of informing and supporting LLL policy-making, YOUNG_ADULLLT has contributed original knowledge to the analysis of LLL policies by adopting an interpretive approach, uncovering ambivalences and incompatibilities in the objectives and orientations of policies. The regional focus further illuminated the complexity of policies. By drawing on functional regions we highlighted that policies in education, labour and welfare must be compatible with each other if they want to put young people in a position to develop their own life plans and fully take part in the European labour market. For this to occur, coordination needs to take place at different levels. However, policy-making is often framed at the national level, without due attention to substantial regional differences. Indeed, the employment-related indicators used to monitor the Europe 2020 Strategy, for instance, mask some key elements documented by the project (e.g. young adults' life courses, contextual diversity, dilemmas between employment-centred and empowerment-centred policy approaches, mismatches affecting either skills provision or skills use). Additionally, at the level of policy- and decision-making, YOUNG_ADULLLT has yielded important insights related to landscapes and patterns of policy-making across Europe that could help to bring these hidden aspects back to the fore, thus supporting policy-makers in their decision-making.

Instead of resorting to evaluative or positivistic research methods, the underlying idea of analyzing LLL policies with an interpretive approach was not to identify best practice policies in the narrow sense, but to understand how they function against their respective culturally constructed backgrounds. When mismatches or redundancies in their functionality occurred, it was crucial to see how it affected implementers and recipients and how these two groups responded in turn. Thus, rather than explaining their lack of functionality, the research in YOUNG_ADULLLT tried to uncover the various orientations of LLL policies and discuss their impact on problem perception and solution strategies. While assessing these policies' ability to be effective and estimating their power to generate long-term solutions for young adults. This approach at the same time paid attention to the highly diversified and de-standardized life courses of young adults, especially of those near social exclusion, i.e. those in 'vulnerable' positions.

A major contribution of YOUNG_ADULLLT to policy and practice lies in its proposal of a reflexive tool that provides a practical approach to better coordinated policy-making in the field of lifelong learning. It aims at opening up windows of reflexivity — both at individual and institutional levels — as a means of navigating LLL policies that are both contextually and culturally sensitive and provides a way to organize policy-making that allows for careful deliberation of crucial aspects or moments of the policy process — design, formulation, target group construction, implementation and enactment in education/training settings. While acknowledgement of the high degree of heterogeneity and complexity in the different regions researched suggests that traditional forms of policy transfer are not feasible, policy learning based on reflection/analysis from across the sites nonetheless becomes highly productive.

4. Impact

While YOUNG_ADULLLT's findings have been and are being disseminated and discussed in different local and national contexts in different ways, their relevance for policy and practice as well as for research may be further highlighted by the recommendations they offer to the various audiences of the research project, outlined in the following sections.

4.1 Recommendations for policy and practice

Enhance and improve data availability at NUTS-2 and NUTS-3 level

- *LLL policies interact in important ways with the social and economic contexts in which they are implemented.* The success of any political reform depends largely on how these are compatible with the local/regional landscape in which they are to operate. There are huge differences in young adults' living conditions across European territories. The economic downturn has even reinforced these differences in some regions. The YOUNG_ADULLLT project reviewed data for regional indicators of six dimensions (economic, demographic, education and training, labour market, social inclusion and participation, and health and well-being) in order to produce synthetic measures of young adults' living conditions. Unfortunately, the evidence produced by quantitative data analyses is limited due to poor data availability at lower levels of disaggregation and relied on incomplete comparative information. We recommend an increase in efforts to provide sound databases at NUTS-2 and NUTS-3 levels.

- Concentrated effort is needed in order to develop richer context-based information at the different territorial levels (both and NUTS2 and NUTS3). A comprehensive integration and analysis of multi-source data at the different levels of analysis is a hard goal to accomplish; however, contextualized data at regional and local level could produce a fuller picture of the risk profiles related to young people's living conditions in different European regions, thereby enabling a more fine-tuned target construction and more adequate and reliable analysis of the effectiveness of LLL policies.

- *Highlighting existing data gaps and improving the availability and accessibility of territorial information* for better targeted policies are crucial steps to improve nation-state based measures. Due to changing realities, such as internationalization, Europeanization and globalization processes, the use of the national level as a representative unit of account should be questioned and more context-sensitive localised proxies could be useful tools to describe changing social contexts.

- There is a need to increase our understanding of the contexts within which measures are implemented. In order to develop a broader interpretative framework, it is necessary to tap into new data sources that are not restricted to existing measures of education and labour market status. The availability of information related to dimensions such as housing, social and political

participation, individual well-being, relational and vital space and skills are needed for the construction of a more fine-grained analysis of the indicators of contextual living conditions. A holistic approach to living conditions is particularly needed in times of socio-economic change and reconfiguration of young adults' motivations and aspirations.

Involve and recognise young adults as active stakeholders in the policy process.

- *Young people actively reflect on their current conditions and their realistic opportunities.* Although they need guidance, information and training, they are active players in the field of lifelong learning. Therefore, there is a need for lifelong learning policies that are reflexive enough to identify, reflect and prioritise young people's individual learning and wider life needs, recognise informally accumulated skills and capabilities and attend to specific expectations. Recognising young adults as active stakeholders involves overcoming a common deficit-orientation of policies in order to avoid dysfunctional, exclusionary and de-motivating (side) effects. A possible tool to enhance participation may include deliberative opinion polls with random samples of young people across Europe.

- *Develop more sophisticated and contextualised systems that monitor and evaluate lifelong learning policies.* Governance arrangements extend across different levels – from the local, regional, and national levels through to the European level. However, it is governments, private providers and civil society organisations at the local level that direct and enact lifelong learning policies on the ground. While comparability at the European level – such as that implemented by the European Social Fund – is important, decision- and policy-making at the local/regional level requires not only standardized indicators but in also context-sensitive monitoring through context-sensitive indicators.

Address cross-regional heterogeneity when designing skills policies.

- *Consider regional differences and skills challenges when designing national skills policies* that are to be enacted and implemented at the regional and local level. Additional resources and support might be needed in some regions to attain the expected policy objectives. Include a degree of flexibility in decision- and policy-making at the local and regional level to better address specific local and regional needs.

- *Take into account alternative and/or more flexible educational pathways* to avoid dead-ends and limited opportunities for those young adults that do not follow a standard trajectory. Most lifelong learning systems are designed to accommodate learners with specific characteristics, paying little attention to learners with non-standard trajectories. Also, c*onsider regional variation*, as the profile of these young adults is likely to change across regions, as well as the educational and employment opportunities around them.

- Vocational education and training (VET) and apprenticeship schemes are regarded as the most common tool for smoothing the education-to-work transition for young adults, but this is a complex system that requires a lot of previous consideration and it may not be the solution for all. *Take into account equality of access* to VET and apprenticeship positions, as well as the *quality of work-based training* to promote equality of opportunities and outcomes among youth.

- *Weigh up regional employment opportunities with skills training.* Most skills policies aim to improve youth employability, but sometimes the main challenge might be in the limited and/or poor labour market demands. *Consider alternative and/or complementary means of facilitating labour market insertion* for youth with other educational levels who also struggle to find a job. *Consider yo*u*ths' expectations and preferences* when designing the offer of regional skills training, in addition to regional labour market needs.

- *Weigh up the funding and provision of skills formation* relevant to regional labour needs among public authorities, employers, third sector institutions and youths. Most regional skills policies focus on the relevance of skills for labour market demand, without bearing in mind that public funding should also consider young people's and societal concerns.

- *Raise awareness* among employers about youths' skill levels and expectations, as well as their need for work experience opportunities. Employers have high expectations with regards to young people's transversal and soft skills, as well as positive attitudes and commitment to work. However, they may not be aware of their level of maturity.

Those involved in LLL need a deeper and broader knowledge base on young people, their life worlds and life courses.

- *Include training for trainers for those enacting policies on the ground* as they need to be able to provide guidance and information for young adults. Professionals on the ground make a difference in supporting the life courses of young people. Knowledge and mastery of interactional and communication styles is essential, leading to enhanced participation and ownership among policy addressees. Those enacting policies need to be trained in *guidance and counselling*, especially with regard to supporting students at transition points in their life courses. Such professional skills need to encompass not only information on options but also include encouragement. Counselling skills have to become an indispensable part of teachers' and trainers' professional identities.

4.2 Recommendations for further research

Some strands for future research emerge not only from the results of the YOUNG_ADULLLT project, but also from the research process itself – both from its own limitations and the limitations it faced. Therefore, it appears crucial to:

- *Develop models for analyzing the effectiveness of LLL policies.* These will need to address the shortcomings in the empirical data available and put forward innovative, context-sensitive instruments that can both capture local/regional specificities and enable cross-regional and cross-national comparisons;

- Explore the ways in which (de-) and (re-)standardization processes occur in different regions/countries, and their articulation with LLL policies. This means assessing large-scale samples through the analysis of selected variables, combining this with smaller scale studies focused on meaning ascription. It also means considering the dynamic nature of these processes and acknowledging that their configurations cannot be taken for granted. Furthermore, the interaction of the territorial dimension with these processes should be examined;

- Identify, describe and analyse the top-level contexts in which the overarching European LLL policies are negotiated and settled. While access to such contexts may not be straightforward, this research may shed light on how to better adapt the values and principles behind such policies to local contexts. Furthermore, given the relevance of EU regulations in the definition of the field of LLL, the importance of having increased knowledge of how such matters are settled is self-evident.

Furthermore, YOUNG_ADULLLT has emphasized the need to involve and recognize the voices of young people in the policy-making process. Against this background, more research is needed on youth participation in LLL policy-making. A first key question relates to what participation of young people means in concrete situations. How can we all provide room and suitable formats for young people to become active in policy-making, articulating their own specific learning needs and needs arising from other life domains such as housing, family and children in order that they are recognized and taken into consideration? How can policies build upon young people's previous skills and how can we render policies more flexible so as to motivate and accommodate young people's expectations?

YOUNG_ADULLLT conducted comparative research, yielding important insights by *comparing realities, comparing visions and comparing functionalities/relationships.* This approach to research is deemed essential to reach some generalizations. In terms of tapping the full potential of context-sensitive analysis, case studies exploring the local/regional landscapes of policy-making in lifelong learning can make further important contributions. In this vein, metagovernance can be earmarked as an area for further research. For instance, the question as to how markets, hierarchies and networks intermingle at the local, regional, national and European scales of decision-making looms large and is of both scholarly and policy interest.

Further research should also address issues related to gender. More detailed thick descriptions are needed that help bring some gender issues to the fore that our general view could only capture indirectly. A series of new questions emerge on this topic. Do target groups include male and female young adults in the same way? Why do the gender distributions of early school-leavers and NEETs vary in a specific region? Does the gender of street-level professionals make a difference? And finally, local studies could unveil to what extent young adults face varying forms of vulnerability depending on how they experience sexual diversity and gender expressions.

5. References[5]

Alexander, L., Lipp, M., Görgen, N., Scandurra, R., Cefalo, R. & Kazepov, Y. (2018). Cross-regional measures of contextual living conditions of young adults in Europe. In Parreira do Amaral M., Zelinka, J. & Schweisfurth, M. (Eds). *WP8 Comparative Analysis Report.* **YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper. Münster: University of Münster, pp. 70-92.**

Alwang, J., Siegel, P. B., & Jorgenson, S. L. (2001). Vulnerability: A View from Different Disciplines. *Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 0015.* Washington, DC: World Bank. 1-42.

Beckert, J. (2007). The Great Transformation of Embeddedness: Karl Polanyi and the New Economic Sociology. MPIfG Discussion Paper 07/1. Köln: Max-Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung.

Brückner, H. & Mayer K. (2005), In Macmillan R., *The structure of the life course: Standardized? Individualized? Differentiated?* Volume 9. London: Elsevier, p. 27-54.

Capsada-Munsech, Q., Valiente, O., Palumbo, M., Cossetta, A., Pandolfini, V., Bouillet, D. & Ganter de Otero, J. P. (2018). *WP6 International Report: Comparative Analysis Skills Supply and Demand. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Glasgow: University of Glasgow.**

Delor, F., & Hubert, M. (2000). Revisiting the concept of vulnerability. *Social Science & Medicine*, 50, 1557-1570.

European Commission (2010). *Europe 2020. A European strategy for smart sustainable and inclusive growth.* (Online: accessed on February 18, 2019). http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%200007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf

European Commission (EC) (2013). Lifelong learning for young adults: better policies for growth and inclusion in Europe. *RIA Research and Innovation action - YOUNG-3-*

---

5   Entries that are at the same time a Project Deliverable are marked bold.

2015:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/young-3-2015.html

European Commission (EC) (2018). *Europe in a changing world - Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies.* Horizon 2020. http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/europe-changing-world-inclusive-innovative-and-reflective-societies

Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness. In: *American Journal of Sociology,* 91: 481–510.

Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and Time. A Translation of "Sein und Zeit".* Translated by Joan Stambaugh (7th ed.). Albany, New York: SUNY Press.

Hufton, N.R. & Elliot, J.G. (2000). Motivation to Learn: the pedagogical nexus in the Russian school: some implications for transnational research and policy borrowing, *Educational Studies*, 26(1): 115-136.

Jessop, B. (2004). Multi-level Governance and Multi-level Metagovernance. In I. Bache & M. Flinders (Eds.), *Multi-level Governance* (pp. 49-74). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jessop, B. (2009). From Governance to Governance Failure and from Multi-level Governance to Multi-scalar Meta-governance. In B. Arts, A. Lagendijk & H. J. van Houtum (Eds.), *The Disoriented State. Shifts in Governmentality, Territoriality and Governance* (pp.79-98). Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media B.V.

Klapka, P., Halás, M. & Tonev, P. (2013). *Functional Regions: Concept and Types.* Online. [Last accessed on February 18, 2019] https://is.muni.cz/do/econ/soubory/katedry/kres/4884317/41725568/12_2013.pdf

Kotthoff, H.-G., Gáfaro, Carillo, J. F., Bittlingmayer, U. H; Boutiuc-Kaiser, A., Parreira do Amaral, M. & Rinne, R. (2017*). International Report: LLL policies and Inclusion in Education and Work. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper***. Freiburg: University of Education Freiburg.**

Lowden, K., Pandolfini, V. & Parreira do Amaral, M. (2018). Functional Regions as Dynamic Units: Understanding coordinated policy-making in LLL. In M. Parreira do Amaral, H.-G. Kotthoff & M. Schweisfurth (Eds.), *Comparative*

Analysis and Reporting: Comparative Analysis Strategy. YOUNG_ADULLLT
Working Paper. Münster: University of Münster. pp. 162-189.

Luna, F. (2009). Elucidating the Concept of Vulnerability: Layers not Labels. *The International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 2(1), 121-139.

McBeth, M. K., Shanahan, E. A. & Jones, M. D. (2005). The Science of Storytelling: Measuring Policy Beliefs in Greater Yellowstone. *Society and Natural Resources*, 18(5), 413-429.

Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social Theory and Social Structure.* New York: Macmillan Publishing.

Meuleman, L. (2008). Public Management and the Metagovernance of Hierarchies, Networks and Markets. The Feasibility of Designing and Managing Governance Style Combinations. Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag.

Palumbo, M., Benasso, S. & Parreira do Amaral, M. (2018): Patterns of LLL policy-making: Parameters for LLL Coordinated Policy-Making. In Parreira do Amaral M., Zelinka, J. & Schweisfurth, M. (Eds). *WP8 Comparative Analysis Report.* **YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper. Münster: University of Münster, pp. 212-247.**

Palumbo, M., Benasso, S., Cossetta, A. & Pandolfini, V. (2018). *WP7 National Report - Italy. Regional/local case studies. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Genoa: University of Genoa.**

Palumbo, M., Benasso, S., Pandolfini, V., Verlage, T., Walther, A., Apostolov, G. & Milenkova, V. (2018). *Cross-case and cross-national Report. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Genoa: University of Genoa.**

Parreira do Amaral M., Zelinka, J. & Schweisfurth, M. (2018). *WP8 Comparative Analysis Report.* **YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper. Münster: University of Münster.**

Parreira do Amaral, M., Valiente, O. & Neves, T. (2018). *Overall Research Framework. Deliverable D2.1.* **YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper. Münster: University of Münster.**

Parreira do Amaral, M. & Zelinka, J. (2018). *Understanding Lifelong Learning Policies Across Europe: An interpretive approach.* **In Parreira do Amaral M.,**

Zelinka, J. & Schweisfurth, M. (Eds). *WP8 Comparative Analysis Report.* **YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper. Münster: University of Münster, pp. 135-161.**

Pohl, A. (2015). Konstruktionen von „Ethnizität" und „Benachteiligung". Eine international vergleichende Untersuchung von Unterstützungssystemen im Übergang Schule – Beruf. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz Juventa.

Polanyi, K. ([1944] 1957). *The Great Transformation.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Polletta, F., Chen, P. C. B., Gardner, B. G., & Motes, A. M. (2011). The sociology of storytelling. *Annual Review of Sociology, 37,* 109-130. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150106

Rambla, X., Jacovkis, J., Kovacheva, S., Walther, A. & Verlage, T. (2018). *International Qualitative Analysis Report. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Barcelona: Autonomous University of Barcelona.**

Rambla, X., Jacovkis, J., Lorente, G., Rocío Guerrero, L. & Luzón, A. (2018). *Qualitative Analysis. National Report Spain. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Barcelona: Autonomous University of Barcelona.**

Rinne, R. (2015). Education as a Historical Producer of Normality and Deviance. In Wärvik, G.-B., Runesdotter, C., Forsberg E. & Sahlström F. (Eds.). *Professor Sverker Lindblad's festschrift.* Gothenburg University.

Rizvi, F. (2007). Lifelong Learning: Beyond Neo-liberal Imaginary. In D. N. Aspin (Ed.), Philosophical Perspectives on Lifelong Learning. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 114-130

Roe, E. (1994). *Narrative Policy Analysis, Theory and Practice.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Scandurra, R., Cefalo, R. & Kazepov, Y. (2018). Constructing cross-regional measures of contextual living of young adults in Europe. Paper presented at SISEC Conference, January, Milan.

Scandurra, R., Cefalo, R., Hermannsson, K. & Kazepov, Y. (2017). *Quantitative Analysis Young Adults' Data. International Report. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Granada: University of Granada.**

Wain, K. (2001). 'Lifelong Learning: Small Adjustment or Paradigm Shift?' In D.N. Aspin, J.D. Chapman, M. Hatton and Y. Sawano (Eds.), *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. London: Springer, pp 183-198.

Walker, M. (2012). 'Egalitarian Policy Formulation in Lifelong Learning: Two Models of Lifelong Learning and Social Justice or Young People in Europe', In D.N. Aspin, J.D. Chapman, M. Hatton and Y. Sawano (Eds.), *International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. London: Springer, pp 181-193.

Weiler, A., Ganter de Otero, J. P., Parreira do Amaral, M., Boutiuc-Kaiser, A., Schaufler, S. & Verlage, T. (2017). *Comparative Analysis Skills Supply and Demand. National Report Germany.* *YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Münster: University of Münster**.

Weiler, A., Schaufler, S., Parreira do Amaral, M., Ganter de Otero, J. P., Wutzkowsky, F., Valiente, O., Neves, T. & Ribeiro, A. B. (2017). *Launching and Research Design. State of the Art Report. YOUNG_ADULLLT Working Paper.* **Münster: University of Münster.**

Widmer, E. & Ritschard, G. (2013). Life course changes in late modernity: towards destandardization and degendering. In Levy, R., Widmer, E., *Gendered life courses. Between standardization and individualization*. LIT: 2013, p. 161-182.

YOUNG ADULLLT Policy Mapping (2018). Available at: http://www.young-adulllt.eu/policy-mapping/index.php