



Deliverable report for

**YOUNG\_ADULLLT**

Grant Agreement Number 693167

## **Deliverable 5.2**

### ***International Qualitative Analysis Report***

**Due date of deliverable: 28/02/2018**

**Actual submission date: 09/03/2018**

**Lead beneficiary for this deliverable: UAB**

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)	

## 1. Description of task

### **Task 5.4: Producing an International Qualitative Analysis Report (months 21-24):**

The WP leader and core partners synthesize the National Reports, comparing the main results and conclusions, producing an International Report with cross-national general conclusions. The annex to the report contains the sample of analysed interviews (according to the terms of the common software, e.g., Atlas.ti “hermeneutic units”, RQDA “projects” or otherwise. Role of participants: The WP leader and the core partners do the cross-national analysis and write the International report.

## 2. Description of work & main achievements

Life Long Learning (LLL) policies across Europe have been repeatedly described as highly fragmented and often conflicting in their objectives in relation to their target groups and means of implementation. As the policies unfold differently on national, regional and local level they display often competing and ambivalent orientations and objectives, which can mismatch with young adults’ life courses. Within this context, the overall objective of Working Package 5 “Qualitative Analysis” is to enquire the policies’ fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults in order to explore hidden resources of young adults building their life projects. By means of qualitative research through interviews, this WP 5 assess young adults’ perception of social expectations underlying policies and initiatives, enquiries into their compatibility with personal interests and orientation, thus gauging the possibility of individuals to create subjective meaning and continuity. Moreover, WP5 coordinates the qualitative analysis in the eighteen selected functional regions (in nine EU member states).

Against this background, the research in this WP involved: 1) developing a framework for collecting analysing qualitative data through interviews with young adults and experts, 2) developing procedures for national data collection, 3) Implementing the fieldwork on national level and 4) Producing and International Qualitative Analysis Report.

WP 5 successfully completed the task 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, resulting in the National Qualitative Analysis Reports (D 5.1), this Report provides the international analysis of those results. This means, the International Qualitative Analysis Report (D 5.2) synthesis the National Reports, compares the main results and conclusions as well as produces cross-national general conclusions. In order to do so, the core team exchanged online in late December 2017 in order to organise the writing of this International Report. While UAB focused on comparing the sections on experts in the national reports, GUF and PU compared the sections on young adults. On the grounds of this previous work, by late January of 2018 these two teams exchanged again in order to take crucial decisions on the final content and the structure of the international report. Between December 2017 and February 2018, the core team drafted the international report. A first draft of the international report was completed early February 2018 and circulated among the Consortium partners who provided extremely valuable feedback. A final version is currently being proofread and the submission of D5.2 is scheduled for early March 2018.

### **3. Deviations from the Work plan**

The Work plan was accomplished as expected.

### **4. Performance of the partners**

All the partners fulfilled their tasks in due time with sufficient quality.

### **5. Conclusions**

The Steering Board of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project deems this deliverable was fulfilled in a satisfactory way.

**DELIVERABLE 5.2****Work Package 5****International Qualitative Analysis Report**

**Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB),**

Xavier Rambla, Judith Jacovkis

**University of Plovdiv (PU),**

Siyka Kovacheva (PU),

**University of Frankfurt (GUF)**

Andreas Walther, Thomas Verlage

<b>Project coordinator:</b>	Prof. Dr. Marcelo Parreira do Amaral (University of Münster)
<b>Project no.:</b>	693167
<b>Project acronym:</b>	YOUNG_ADULLLT
<b>Project duration:</b>	01/03/2016 to 28/02/2019 (36 months)
<b>Type of document:</b>	Deliverable
<b>Delivery date:</b>	28/02/2018
<b>Dissemination level:</b>	Public

## **Table of Contents**

### **0. Executive Summary**

### **1. Introduction**

### **2. Theoretical Perspectives on Lifelong Learning and Young Adults**

### **3. Methodology**

2.1. Methodological approach

2.2. Sampling and fieldwork

2.3. Interview schedules

2.4. Coding and analysis

2.5. Research ethics

### **4. Self-presentations of Young Adults**

3.1. Life conditions

3.2. Live plans

3.3. General aspects of young adults' self-presentations

### **5. Experiences of Young Adults**

5.1. The challenges of experiencing LLL

5.1.1. Young adults' expectations for enrolling in training programmes

5.1.2. The 'lived experiences' from the training itself

5.2. Questioning the data from the three perspectives

5.2.1. Young adults' discourse on lifelong learning policies (CPE)

5.2.2. The governance of lifelong learning policies in the views of young adults (GOV)

5.2.3. The perspective of life course research to young adults' experiences from lifelong learning policies (LCR)

5.3. Conclusions on the views of young adults

### **6. Views of Experts**

6.1. How do authorities understand lifelong learning policies in eighteen EU regions? (CPE)

6.2. How do lifelong learning policies affect the life course of young adults in eighteen EU regions? (LCR)

6.3. How are lifelong learning policies governed in eighteen EU regions? (GOV)

6.4. Conclusions on the views of experts

### **7. Concluding Remarks**

## **8. References**

## **9. Annexes**

8.1. Interview schedule for young adults

8.2. Interview schedule for experts

## **LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES**

Table 3.1. Number of young adults and experts interviewed in each region

Figure 6.1. Governance of lifelong learning policies in Southwest Finland

Figure 6.2. Governance of lifelong learning policies in Bremen

Figure 6.3. Governance of lifelong learning policies in Girona

Figure 6.2. Governance of lifelong learning policies in Plovdiv

**ABBREVIATIONS**

AT Austria  
BG Bulgaria  
CPE Cultural Political Economy  
CRO Croatia  
DE Germany  
ES Spain  
FI Finland  
FR Functional Region  
GOV Governance  
IT Italy  
ITC Information and Communication Technology  
LCR Life Course Research  
LLL Lifelong Learning  
NEET Young people not in employment, education or training  
PO Portugal  
UK United Kingdom  
YGS Youth Guarantee Scheme

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The authors of the national reports have certainly contributed to this report. The references are listed in the bibliography as Bouillet et al (2017), Doyle (2017), Kovacheva et al (2017), Palumbo et al (2017), Pot et al (2017), Rambla et al (2017), Rodrigues et al (2017), Tikkanen et al (2017) and Verlage et al (2017).

## Executive Summary

YOUNG\_ADULLLT aims at understanding the relationship and complementarity of LLL policies in terms of orientations and objectives to their specific target groups. Life Long Learning (LLL) policies across Europe have been repeatedly described as highly fragmented and often conflicting in their objectives in relation to their target groups and means of implementation. Although they aim to improve economic growth and social inclusion for young adults, they might produce unintended effects when they are not well suited to the highly diverse target groups, their needs and their life trajectories, especially as the fragmented LLL policies produce different effects in different contexts. Departing from the LLL policies fitness for young adults, the project YOUNG\_ADULLLT aims at identifying necessary parameters for future decision-making support systems. LLL policies for young adults are analysed in their interplay between economy, society, labour market as well as education and training systems at regional and local levels, including discussing issues of fragmentation and discrepancies affecting young adults' life course. Thus, the objectives of the project are:

1. To understand the relationship and complementarity of LLL policies in terms of orientations and objectives to their specific target groups including (intended and unintended) effects on their life course;
2. To enquire into policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults to explore hidden resources of young adults building their life projects;
3. To research LLL policies in their embedding and interaction in the regional economy, the labour market and individual life projects of young adults to identify best practices.

In the context of the overall objective of YOUNG\_ADULLLT, this sub-study (WP 5) analyses the policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults and experts. As LLL policies become effective at the regional/local level, it provides insights into learning histories and their competences acquired in the available informal and non-formal contexts. As both are shaped by specific living conditions and educational/ employment/ etc. possibilities on site, this analysis allows us both, understanding how learning histories evolve in a specific context and give young people a voice to express their needs and expectations. Both is a precondition for successfully connecting young adults' needs and possibilities with education/training offers provided by LLL policies).

In order to do so, this International Qualitative Analysis Report (D 5.2) synthesises the National Qualitative Analysis Reports (D 5.1) in the eighteen selected functional regions (in nine EU member states), compares the main results and conclusions as well as produces cross-national general conclusions.

Moreover, from the perspective of the young adults, the project enquires into policies' fit and potentials for successfully appreciating the hidden resources of young adults for building life projects. Within this frame, LLL policies are investigated in their embedding and interaction in the regional economy, the



labour market and individual life projects of young adults in order to identify best practices and patterns of coordinating policy-making at local/regional level. In order to contribute to the overall objectives of the project, the Working Package 5 (WP5),

Thus, the aim of WP 5 is twofold: This international report *first*, provides a systematic overview of the young adults' life projects, their perceptions of LLL policies, the compatibility with personal interests and orientations and their possibilities on site to improve their learning effectiveness. *Second*, it explores to what extent and how living conditions of young adults mediate and influence lifelong learning policies, by means of analyses of interviews with experts.

In this study, the research object has been conceptualised (chapter 1) along the projects three theoretical perspectives of Life Course Research (LCR), Cultural Political Economy (CPE) and Governance (GOV). This analysis explored how CPE and GOV of lifelong learning theories influenced the Life Course (LCR) of young adults as well as how current transformations of life courses posited challenges to policies. These interrelations were translated in a general hypothesis in this sub-study: That official discourses (CPE) and governance (GOV) contribute to shape life course pathways (LCR). However, we assume that life courses are not simply an outcome of official discourses and governance. On the contrary, it avails of the previous suggestions of these theories to explore systematically how this effect is enacted in the circumstances of young adults in nine European member states and eighteen functional regions within these states. In a nutshell, the research drew on complementarities and synergies between these theoretical perspectives (i.e. CPE, GOV and LCR) to construct its specific theoretical framework.

The theoretical approaches guide the data collection, treatment and analysis process as described in the **methodological approach (chapter 2)**. Concurrently, the sub-study considers that the results may open up new questions that were not previously asked. Departing from the approach of the „grounded theory“ (Glaser & Strauss, 2009), we interrogate the breadth and depth of those theories in order to inquire if new questions should be asked or new formulations should be elaborated. It highlights the importance of new emerging themes and questions arising out of the given data.

In order to do so, the perception and learning histories of young adults are in the focus of the analysis. Young adults are a heterogeneous group regarding their social realities, life projects, perspectives and needs, and thus differently affected by the regional/local unfolding of LLL policies. As a result, the focus is on the subjectivities and individual life courses along their biography, learning history, professional career aspirations, subjective life projects, living conditions, their support systems, resilience, experience with LLL policies as well as the expectations they are confronted with. This allows capturing the meaning of LLL policies in young adults' life courses as we analyse how they present and position themselves in general as well as with regard to education and training and the concrete measure of LLL. Their subjective meaning as it allows describing the individual life course along their learning histories as well as their meaning making of these along social, regional, gender and ethnic based inequalities *and* the life opportunities or obstacles created, which then manifest in educational and school-to-work transitions. Thus, we focus on distinguishing between *the life stories of young adults*, i.e. the themes young adults are talking about and *how they talk about their life stories*,

i.e., how they present themselves and construct their life stories.

In order to do so, the project interviewed 168 men and women between 18 and 29 years old as well as 128 professionals who were experts in lifelong learning policies in the 18 Functional Regions of the projects 9 countries. Young adults answered to a narrative interview that started asking for open questions about their biography. Experts were asked to elaborate openly on lifelong learning policies in their region. Then, they answered a series of more specific questions about the design, implementation, evaluation, target groups and governance of the policies. Both types of interviews were analysed according to a common set of codes, which were defined and reviewed through a continuous conversation back and forth between theory and empirical evidence.

**The analysis is divided in three sections:** first: the self-presentations of Young Adults (chapter 3), second: the experiences of Young Adults (chapter 4) and third: the views of Experts (chapter 5).

The summary condenses these chapters into the following outline of findings:

- The interviewees cope with an extremely difficult biographical transition between their previous family and school experience and their future participation in the labour market. Health problems, family conflicts, violence and bullying pattern their biographies.
- The interviewed young adults struggle to avail of any opportunity to define their life plans. Although lifelong learning policies help them in this endeavour, many beneficiaries are not confident of having their own life plan.
- The main experiences of these young adults are in line with the official expectations. Both parties expect young adults will eventually achieve formal qualifications and improve their skills.
- In many regions, the scope of available vocational training programmes is problematic due to high requirements and bureaucratic procedures.
- Many vulnerable young adults are concerned with the role they want to play in lifelong learning policies. Most of them struggle to improve the public image of themselves. Certainly, many see themselves as a group of vulnerable and stigmatised people. In addition, they seldom participate in the design of lifelong learning policies. However, most of the interviewees were eager to show their basic skills.
- In Austria, Finland, Germany and Scotland (UK) experts share a theory of change on the enablers and the outcomes of lifelong learning. This is not the case in other regions.
- When they have a theory, experts normally elaborate on the diversity of the target groups, and, when not, they are sometimes on the brink of stereotyping.

- The key predicaments of governance derive from the normal procedures of bureaucracy. Unsurprisingly, defining who must be eligible is a very difficult task. Other problems of implementation are the weakness of local governments and conflicts between stakeholders.
- Lifelong policy networks draw varying patterns in the eighteen regions. A general conclusion is that either they are well established or they are in the making almost everywhere.

The report concludes (chapter 6) by reminding the reader of the main findings. Key points have to do with the configuration of factors that lead young adults to a vulnerable situation, the relevance of LLL policies for young adults, and the variations of policies, professional assumptions and governances across regions. The concluding remarks also point out the contributions of the three theories (i.e. LCRM CPE and GOV) to our knowledge of LLL policies addressed to young adults in the European Union.

## 1. Introduction

The slow economic growth in Europe after the global crisis and the continuing de-regulation in the labour market impacted most strongly on youth people's transitions from education to work. The growing insecurity in both education and work makes the relationship between young people's credentials from school and their labour market integration more complex than ever before. The policy responses to now have been to increase the pressure although not always the offer of various LLL schemes and initiatives (Walther et al, 2016). The pronounced objectives of such programmes are to improve the knowledge and skills that young people have accumulated at school or university, compensate for their personal and family problems, and provide orientation and contacts with the real economy. The focus has shifted from getting young people into work to education-directed activities in the hope to make them more capable of dealing with uncertainty (Katznelson, 2017; Butler and Moir, 2017) and apprenticeship has been proclaimed to be 'the magic bullet' against youth unemployment without giving much consideration to the transferability of the policy programmes (Raffe, 2011).

The overall objective of WP 5 is to analyse the Life Long Learning (LLL) policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults and experts in the Functional Regions (FR) under study. As LLL policies become effective at the regional/local level, it explores the hidden resources of young adults use in order to build their life resources. The chapter also provides insights into learning histories and their competences acquired in the available informal and non-formal contexts. As LLL policies across Europe have been repeatedly described as highly fragmented and often conflicting in their objectives in relation to their target groups and means of implementation, the fact that the life course of people is embedded in a larger society comes to the fore. The views of the youth on their specific living conditions and their opportunities within education systems and labour markets that operate on a regional basis highlight how learning histories evolve in a specific context and gives young people a voice to express their needs and expectations.

The framework of WP 5 starts from the interrelation of three theoretical perspectives, namely: Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Life Course Research (LCR) and Governance (GOV). Firstly, the discourses that circulate through the social relations that stakeholders establish eventually influence the beliefs and decisions on the involved social agents (CPE). Secondly, young adults follow some pathways, which are moulded by both the prevailing institutional arrangements in their country and region, and the decisions they make at given moments of their life course (LCR). And, thirdly, the stakeholders that participate in the governance of lifelong learning policies establish some concrete linkages between them (GOV).

These interrelations inspire a general hypothesis in this sub-study. The point is that official discourses (CPE) and governance (GOV) contribute to shape life course pathways (LCR). However, the study assumes that life courses are not simply an outcome of official discourses and governance. On the contrary, it avails of the previous suggestions of these theories to explore systematically how this effect is enacted in the circumstances of young adults in nine European member states and eighteen functional regions within these states.

The report is structured in six chapters and one annex. Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 summarises the main insights taken from LCR, CPE and GOV in order to present the theoretical framework of the research project. Since the YOUNG\_ADULLLT State of the Art (Weiler *et al*, 2017) already contains a comprehensive elaboration of these perspectives, this chapter simply sketches some ideas that have been helpful for the qualitative analysis.

Chapter 3 focuses on methodology. It briefly introduces some underlying assumptions, and then maps out the main operations of research. The details of sampling, interviewing and analysing the interviews are systematically discussed. The final section looks at these operations through the lens of research ethics.

Chapter 4 explores the biographical self-presentations of 168 young adults in eighteen functional regions. The open feature of biographical interviews provided a rich corpus of data on the life conditions of the respondents. They were also invited to elaborate on their own interpretation of their circumstances.

Chapter 5 discusses how young adults experience lifelong learning policies. Not only this chapter notices how they get in touch with the relevant institutions in their region, but it also observes how they react to the official expectations regarding policy target groups. The impact of the policies on their autonomy is quite a complex issue that cannot be neglected.

Chapter 6 analyses the views of experts. These views reveal variable institutional arrangements as well as variable causal beliefs on the possible effects of policies. The views of experts are also expressive of what the policies expect the beneficiaries to do. The importance of both bureaucracy

and the networks of stakeholders is also scrutinised.

The conclusions point out why these findings are important, and how they are related to the theories. Finally, in the annex the interview schedules can be found.

## **2. Theoretical Perspectives on Lifelong Learning Policies and Young Adults**

In 2017, the partners of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT research project interviewed a sample of young adults who were exposed to vulnerable situations and benefited from lifelong learning policies in eighteen regions within nine member states of the EU. The further sections account for the diverse circumstances where social vulnerability is made in the selected countries. For instance, mental health and poor performance at school play varying roles depending on the countries. However, as a rule EUROSTAT (n.d.) estimates three situations in order to estimate how many people are vulnerable, namely: low income, low work intensity and material deprivation of households.

This analysis sheds light on the common perceptions of LLL policies, if they are compatible with the personal interests and needs of young adults as well as with the possibilities on site. In addition, a number of experts on these policies were interviewed, as their perspective allows to assess, to what extent and how living conditions of young adults mediate and influence lifelong learning policies. This chapter briefly summarises the theoretical perspectives and the research questions that were asked in order to analyse these interviews.

Three theoretical perspectives inspire the research questions leading this qualitative analysis, namely: Life Course Research (LCR), Cultural Political Economy (CPE) and Governance (GOV). In a nutshell, lifelong learning policies affect the life course of young adults in one way, but policies and young adults' lives are also linked in the reverse way. Lifelong learning policies cannot be neither operative nor effective if governments and stakeholders are not capable to translate them into some discourses and actions that are meaningful for young adults. In fact, the very capacity of these policies is closely tightened to the ability of policy-makers and professionals to deal with the de-standardisation of the life course. At the same time, these policies are designed and implemented in the midst of a given cultural political economy and a web of institutional arrangements that enable governance to take place.

The strand of scholarship on life courses (LCR) defines biographies as narrative accounts of people's lives. Biographies are not floating stories but narrate embedded experiences. "Life course is a configuration of social and individual components which develops over time" (Heinz *et al.*, 2009: 16). It articulates three kinds of interdependences. Firstly, past, present and future are interdependent insomuch as individuals learn from the past, engage in social relationships, are committed to obligations as well as anticipate and plan ulterior events. The second set of interdependencies is established between different spheres of action. The life course of any person is multi-dimensional to the extent that this person carries out many actions in the spheres of family, education, work and leisure. Coping simultaneously with such spheres as family and work posits predicaments on

allocating time in a similar way as planning retirement strains personal short-term decisions on resources. Finally, individual action is interdependent with socio-historic contexts. Political, economic, institutional and cultural changes structure opportunities, create risks, and contribute to shape biographies. However, these changes are also the consequence of the aggregate results of the individual choices that many individuals make during their life course.

In fact, it is noticeable that the young adult interviewees of this research project actually narrated a rich array of experiences. These experiences were made of these interdependences, as their self-presentations indicate in the following chapters. Especially remarkable is, that coping with such spheres of life as family and school was very hard for many of the respondents. These themes clearly overshadowed references to employment when they told their own story.

In the interviews, many young adults portrayed their personal life projects, while others said they were still waiting to define their own project. These reflections showed how different the recruitment and access regulation of the measures are. In very diverse institutional schemes, the respondents told they had discovered some opportunities for them to master their own life.

Life courses are interdependent with socio-historic contexts to the extent that individuals share constructions of reality and learn to trust or distrust one another in specific institutions. In coherence with these theoretical lens, a cluster of research questions inquired whether the self-presentations and the experiences of the young beneficiaries of lifelong learning policies coincided or disagreed with the views of experts. Salient findings may come up if analyses are able to look at what both parties look for in their interactions and how they feel about these interactions.

Besides acknowledging their specific subjective dimension, the research has to interpret these biographies in a wider institutional context. Societal discourses are not merely framing young people's life courses and biographies but are deeply intertwined and reproduced by and in biographical narratives. The most important aspect is that the lifelong learning (LLL) discourse develops the picture of self-responsible individual actors who are competent to make decisions for their own lives. LLL policies often include the idea that young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with problematic school careers, are not yet able to take good decisions that lead them into employment. The concept of 'employability' includes the ability to assess the own competencies and capacities, to relate them to labour market demands and consequently to develop 'realistic' perspectives. One of the research questions for the match between young people's perspectives and the objectives of LLL-policies is therefore whether young people accept this accountability and their responsibility for taking life decisions. There is diverse evidence that most young people actually accept this role and responsibility (Walther *et al*, 2016). Our analysis aims at re-assessing this correspondence between discursive and biographical construction across different countries, regions and types of policy measures.

In this vein, the CPE literature argues that policies are eventually made through the variation, selection

and retention of alternatives and discourses (Jessop, 2010). The lifelong learning policies that have been observed in eighteen regions within the EU were not invented from scratch. When designing these policies, decision-makers selected specific understandings of lifelong learning. Since the concept of LLL was coined by UNESCO some decades ago, it has been defined in many different ways. The findings of YOUNG\_ADULLLT only detected some of these meanings but not all.

The qualitative analysis of the interviews with experts in the area of lifelong learning has noticed two different components of their very expertise. That is, this analysis has really shown that the involved professionals produce and use a corpus of expert knowledge, which can be observed in the official 'theories of change' and the perceptions of 'street-level professionals'.

The selection and retention of discourses eventually institutionalises 'theories of change' (Pawson, 2006). These theories are sets of causal beliefs about how the objectives will be met and which impacts will be provoked. Neither policy designs nor evaluations make sense if their rationale takes into account too many factors and effects. The point is that policy-makers and evaluations often develop theories in order to reduce the complexity of the social world (Rogers, 2008). In fact, the European Union has a strong background in promoting its own policies by 'narrating impact assessment' (Radaelli *et al*, 2013).

The selection and the retention of discourses also feed the knowledge of 'street-level professionals'. Youth workers such as teachers, counsellors, caseworkers or facilitators perform their duties at the street level. They can only do their work through direct, face-to-face relationships with the youth. An old strand of research argues that these professionals must often face very difficult predicaments because of scarce resources, potential conflict with beneficiaries and contradictory guidelines (Lipsky, 1969). In order to sort them out, they develop their own perceptions and routines to cope with their official mandate. Therefore, it is plausible to inquire whether these perceptions and routines convey specific images of the target groups to whom the policies are addressed. The national reports have already discussed which categories of young adults are eligible for a variety of policies. But the international report can shed new light on how these groups are constructed in everyday social interaction between the professionals that carry out some measures and the young adults who are expected to benefit from them.

In the end, the mainstream theories of change and the perceptions of street-level professionals construct a general view on the actual experience of lifelong learning processes. This view conveys certain images of their life conditions and education. The report looks at how the interviewees associate these images with the main official objective of the policies, namely: fostering the employability of young adults in Europe.

Lifelong learning policies are governed by hierarchies, markets, networks and communities in the EU functional regions (Rhodes, 1997; Mayntz, 2009). Everywhere a variety of ministries, corporations, non-profits and representative associations participate in the operations of these policies (GOV). In

this area, the European Council and the national legislation constitute a bureaucratic hierarchy altogether with the parameters established by the European Social Fund. Markets coordinate the stakeholders insofar as private providers of training, counselling and other services compete for funding. Networks also govern lifelong learning policies if decision-makers discuss their views with these other stakeholders and ask them to deliver any of the relevant services. Finally, community governance may be observed to the extent that the youth themselves have a say in the making of these policies.

Against this backdrop, the three theoretical frameworks (LCR, CPE and GOV) remind that social agency inevitably takes place in the midst of structurally created options and constraints. People live experiences, but they cannot fully acknowledge all the circumstances that influence these experiences. When lifelong learning policies are addressed to young adults who are in different vulnerable situations, these interventions trigger spirals of agency and structure.

These theories retrieve three analytic consequences of these general premises. *First*, life courses always draw lines within a context. *Second*, policies manage resources (i.e. policies take place in the realm of the political economy) and make sense of collective decisions on how these resources are to be used (i.e. policies are cultural because policy-makers communicate their views through them). *Third*, a variety of policy actors who intervene in the cultural political economy influence the life courses of the young adults who participate in lifelong learning, but they can only do so to the extent that they coordinate their actions. Either explicit or implicit, formal or informal, coordination is indispensable for lifelong learning to take place, but different patterns of coordination are likely to raise different effects. These effects can be more clearly distinguished in the regional settings where YOUNG\_ADULLLT looks for them than in the national settings that have traditionally appealed the interest of researchers.

### 3. Methodology

This chapter summarises the main methodological assumptions and recommendations that were taken into account by all the YOUNG\_ADULLLT research teams. In order to ensure the provided guidelines were understandable and operational, four preparatory workshops were held so as to harmonise the main criteria. These workshops focused on the interview schedules, national data collection procedures, synergies with other work packages (e.g. policy mapping, quantitative analysis, skills analysis) and coding and analysis.

#### 3.1. Methodological approach

YOUNG\_ADULLLT draws on the “grounded theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). This methodological approach assumes that evidence and theory do not necessarily fit mechanically. On the one hand, a piece of evidence is not necessarily informative of a single theoretical approach. On the other hand, research may also spell out evidence that suggests fresh, innovative questions that were not taken



into consideration so far. In this way, it may stimulate further debate and theoretical sophistication.

Being aware of these complex relationships, the qualitative analysis of the interviews with young adults and experts looked for the significant evidence that answers a set of research questions. The “grounded theory” draws on two premises in order to make sense of this evidence. First, it is aware that these questions are framed within broader debates. Second, it considers that the answers are the outcome of fieldwork carried out on the ground. These answers may not only underpin or deny the questions but also shed light on other themes that were not noticed before. This caution is particularly telling for a research that explores the on-going transformations that affect people's life courses.

### 3.2. Sampling and fieldwork

In 2017, the partners of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT research project interviewed quite a number of young adults who benefited from a number of lifelong learning policies in eighteen regions within nine member states of the EU. These respondents were between the ages of 18 and 29. In addition, a sample of experts who were in charge of these policies were interviewed too. This allows us not only to understand their learning histories in relation to their living conditions, but also to give young people a voice to express their needs and expectations as a precondition for successfully connecting with education/training offers (policies).

The sample of interviewees met the following criteria.

1. Eighteen relevant regions were identified in nine EU member states (see the list in Table 1).
2. Interviews made reference to policies. Young adults and experts were selected so that different perceptions of the same policies were recorded.
3. The gender and any relevant ethnic features of young adults were taken into account.
4. At least, some managers of the main institutions in charge of the policies and some street-level professionals were interviewed.

The policies were chosen in accordance with the policy mapping that researchers had previously completed (Kotthoff et al, 2017). As LLL policies address young adults, especially in situations of high uncertainty or near social exclusion (ibid.), the main objectives, orientations and target groups of the offered policies in the regions come to the fore. The following paragraphs summarise the main characterisations of the policies, as the interviewees were selected within the mapped policies: .

- In Austria, one of the policies that were selected aims at facilitating the formal recognition of the qualifications of some young adults who could not complete an apprenticeship. Other policies tackle the problems of early school leavers and NEET youth (Pot et al, 2017).
- In Bulgaria, the Youth Guarantee is a mainstream programme of the Employment Agency. The sample identified experts who worked for a number of lifelong learning policies. Some of

these policies help young adults to have a job experience during their education and to start their career, sometimes by starting a new business. A social benefit complements income maintenance with some training (Kovacheva et al, 2017).

- In Croatia, the stakeholders were more heterogeneous. Since policies are not differentiated, the researchers looked at the core activities of the involved institutions. Thus, the Public Employment Service and the Chamber of Commerce were interviewed as in many other countries. But here an open university also proved to be a relevant actor (Boulliet et al, 2017).
- In Finland, a variety of policies were observed, namely: tailored workshops for young adults with poor academic skills, coaching services, work preparatory workshops, guidance centres for low-skilled workers and on-the-job training (Tikkanen et al, 2017).
- In Germany, some policies were committed to promote further education and support vulnerable young adults to complete an apprenticeship. Other policies were selected because their objectives were endowing some groups of women with higher skills as well as counselling teaching students with learning problems (Verlage et al, 2017).
- In Italy, the institutional scaffolding of the youth guarantee offers a few different services in Genoa compared to Milano. Since the Youth Guarantee Scheme has basically extended the civil service to vulnerable youth, who did not undertake this service previously, in Genoa some experts who worked in this service were interviewed. Notably, the service is remunerated by a small income. In Milano, all youth are delivered an amount of vouchers that they can spend in training. A number of experts were interviewed about their work in an in a measure targeted to integrate NEETs in this scheme. Young adult addressees of this measure were also interviewed (Palumbo et al, 2017).
- A number of vocational education and training programmes were selected in Portugal. Additionally, youth policies and local development policies were explored (Rodrigues et al, 2017).
- The young adults who participated in several vocational training programmes were interviewed in Spain. The experts who worked in these programmes also responded to the corresponding interviews. In Girona, a group of 'employment facilitators' who were funded by the Catalan Employment Service and were based in third-sector organisations were interviewed too (Rambla et al, 2017).
- Finally, in Scotland (UK) a varied sample of skills development programmes were included. Some offered trainings while others induced vulnerable people to enter the labour market; also, on-the-job support programmes were included. However, these were not labelled, or

described, as lifelong learning programmes (Doyle, 2017).

Departing from the mapped policies the interviewees were selected. The following Table 3.1 provides an overview up the number of interviewees of each type in each region. The total number of interviews exceeded the initially estimated sample.

**Table 3.1. Number of young adults and experts interviewed in each region**

Functional region	How many young adults were interviewed?	How many experts were interviewed?
Rhein-Main DE	9	6
Bremen DE	10	8
Vienna AT	10	5
Upper Austria AT	7	5
Blagoevgrad BU	10	8
Plovdiv Bu	12	8
Istria CRO	10	8
Osijek-Baranja CRO	12	8
South West Finland FI	8	6
Kainuu FI	8	6
Milan IT	6	6
Genoa IT	7	5
Vale do Ave PT	10	7
Litoral Alentejano PT	9	7
Girona ES	11	9
Málaga ES	10	5
Glasgow City UK	9	10
Aberdeenshire UK	10	11
agreed amount	152	100
Oversample	+16	+28

In all regions, the fieldwork was conducted between March and July 2017. Each research team could decide how to adapt the general guidelines to the particularities of their contexts. However, a set of general criteria had to be implemented in order to ensure compliance with the established ethical requirements (Parreira do Amaral et al, 2016a) and well as criteria of good conduct of research (ibid, 2016b).

- The interview schedules as well as the letters of consent were translated to the languages of experts and young adults.
- As the interviews deal with potentially sensitive topics (e.g., problems in school and in the

family), they could induce stress for the young adults. Thus, all interviewers received prior training on ethical conduct and good research practice as well as knowledge about national legislation in force.

- The interview transcripts/data and personal information were separated directly at collection. All researchers included in the fieldwork received a standardised procedure for the anonymisation of the transcripts ensuring that all personal identifiers are replaced or removed. For instance, codes were used instead of real names. This ensures that no individuals can be identified by using additional information from other sources.
- An on-line fieldwork follow-up system discussed how to sort out difficulties to reach some respondents.

Young adults were mostly approached in the institutions where they were taking either services, training or both related to lifelong learning. The management of these institutions was aware of this process. However, the institutions only served as sites where invitations for participation were placed (e.g., poster, flyers, etc.) and were otherwise not active in order to avoid pressure on the young adults, such as a feel of obligation for participation. Sometimes managers and street-level professionals themselves actively collaborated to look for potential interviewees. However, young adults were always told their views would not be communicated to the institution.

Experts were contacted on the grounds of their current professional appointments. They were also reminded that their views would not be transmitted to anybody else in their institution. Although they were asked for wicked issues affecting their responsibilities, the interviewers fully respected the 'institutional culture' when probing their answers. If they decided to stick to any script or any official version, they were not challenged for that. In fact, although in some countries they elaborated on their opinions quite openly, in other ones they preferred to align their answers strictly to the official guidelines.

Since the sample was basically regional, it paid special attention to a diversity of settings. The interviews were also attentive to both the national and the regional context of the policies and the lives of the young adults. Significantly, urban and rural as well as prosperous and deprived regions were included in the sample. Although space was not a theme of the research, all the questions allowed the respondents to talk about their region as much as they wanted.

### **3.3. Interview schedules**

Interviews are social interactions between people who engage in a conversation with varying strategies, performing different social roles and taking their own reality for granted. YOUNG\_ADULLLT researchers carefully looked for the best way to contact a sample of young adults and experts in order to enforce the basic rules of meaningful and respectful social interaction.

An interview establishes a social relationship. Thus, the outcome depends on how interviewees feel themselves in that context. It is crucial that researchers invest in that relationship by asking questions

in a meaningful and appropriate way as well as by actively listening to their narrative with full respect.

A common interview schedule was elaborated for young adults. Basically, these interviews focused on the following themes:

- From the very beginning, the interviewees were asked to narrate their life as openly as possible.
- When they finished, they were asked a few questions about the gaps and the most significant events of their narration.
- A further set of questions inquired about their family life, their educational trajectory, their skills, their experience with lifelong learning policies and the time line of their biography. The questions only referred to issues that had been touched upon in previous narrative provided by the young adults where researchers expected more detail and potential. Thus, young adults themselves decided whether they answered to questions on skills and participation in the LLL policies
- The interview concluded with a few questions about their socio-demographic profile.

The interview schedule for experts started with a “focus”, that is, a brief comment that framed the theme. Experts were allowed to build their own argumentation by producing their own narrative account in their own terms.

The schedule also included “issue reminders” and questions on “wicked problems”. The former ones made reference to issues that should be taken into account although the experts do not tackle them directly. The latter ones proposed a strategy to word potentially sensitive issues.

### **3.4. Coding and analysis**

The interviews were coded according to the analytical guidelines advanced by Corbin and Strauss (1990). In essence, the codes made reference to the questions but left some room for commenting on possible associations within the discourse of each interviewee (Mason, 2002; Richtie and Spencer, 2002). For this reason, the same groupings of codes were defined for all the countries.

The following groupings of codes were analysed in the interviews with young adults:

- Presentation of self.
- Construction of life story.
- Education and learning experiences.
- Life plan, concrete next steps and vocational project.
- Experience with the selected lifelong learning policy.
- Perception of his/ her own skills

The following groupings of codes were analysed in the interviews with experts:

- Objectives, approaches, implementation and evaluation.
- Definition of target groups.
- Living conditions of the beneficiaries.
- Contribution of the policy to the autonomy of the beneficiaries.
- Accountability.
- Issues of multi-level governance.
- Involved policy actors.
- Other relevant themes.

The analysis carefully distinguished between statements about the young adults as they were and as they presented themselves. This allows to distinguish between the life stories of young adults, i.e. the themes young adults are talking about and how they talk about their life stories, i.e., how they present themselves and construct their life stories.

It is indispensable to recognize that the interviews with the young adults were conducted in certain contexts, for instance, in the offices of service providers and employers as well as in public cafes or even in a football changing room. Most of the interviews were four-eye-meetings, but sometimes the situations on sight lead to interviews with more participants, which is without a doubt important for the self-presentation each of the participants. In this lieu, the asymmetry between the interviewer and the interviewee must also be recognized. Hierarchy, age, gender and life experiences underlie many rules of conversation. In addition, lifelong learning policies really became the semiotic frames where respondents talked. Particularly, analysts took care to notice that young adults presented themselves in different ways if either they viewed the policies as an instrument for their own projects or as a 'repair shop' where they had to amend previous alleged mistakes.

Part of the analysis was the production of a 2-page analytic summary per interview. Since these summaries were written in English, they were easily shared with the whole consortium and allowed to analyse the content of the national reports.

The National Report followed a similar structure: Theory and methodology filled the initial sections. Then, a section was devoted to interviews with young adults as well as another one discussed interviews with experts. A further section was expected to look at the interaction between young adults and experts. Some research teams decided to adapt these guidelines to regional particularities, thus writing a section on these themes for each region.

### **3.5. Research ethics**

In order to comply with the main ethical requirements established by the Working Paper on Ethical Issues (Parreira do Amaral et al, 2016a), this sub-study proceeded in the following ways:

*Informed consent*

- No minors were included in the research.
- Interviewees were carefully informed of the project and were asked to sign for consent. An initial presentation told both experts and young adults about the conditions of an interview. They were informed that a interview is like a normal talk with another person about their experiences and their views. However, they were reminded that they would be asked a standard set of questions. An explicit statement declared that their involvement was entirely voluntary. That is, they were informed that they could break up the interview at any time, they could withdraw their participation even after the interview was completed, and they did not have to talk about things they do not want to.
- The letter of consent was read to the interviewees prior to the interview before they signed it, and, if necessary, further explained and elaborated upon specific passages. The letter included:
  - o the interviewer would have to inform the authorities of any reported illegal and criminal actions;
  - o each respondent was involved in the project with a single interview, but could be contacted afterwards for some clarification;
  - o the interview would be recorded and afterwards transcribed into a written document;
  - o their personal data would be private, that is, their name would not appear in public;
  - o the documents would be maintained according to the national data protection requirements; and
  - o they could think of it for a while before starting the conversation.

These steps ensured, that the interviews knew about their rights, the forms and measures taken for personal data protection. All procedures comply both with national and European legislation in force. These measures taken upon for data protection are as followed:

- Collection: The interview transcripts/data and personal information were separated directly at collection. The data is stored securely and is not publicised. All researchers included in the fieldwork received a standardised procedure for the anonymisation of the transcripts ensuring that all personal identifiers are replaced or removed. For instance, codes were used instead of real names. This ensures that no individuals can be identified by using additional information from other sources.
- Storage and protection: The data is stored on secure servers at the partner universities and only authorised project users have access to it. All persons with data access are registered users with their own server I.D. and are briefed on work environment practice, such as no reference to documents on user's desktop (PC), etc.
- Conservation and destruction: After the end of the project, or at any time on request of a participant, all personal data no longer required will be permanently deleted, mobile data devices formatted and original data destroyed (shredded).

Additionally, measures were taken to prevent the risk of enhancing vulnerability, as described in 2.3.

The following sub-chapter describes the empirical results.

#### **4. Self-presentations of young adults**

In the following section, we present the analysis of the self-presentation of the young adults interviewed in the 18 functional regions with regard to the life conditions they refer to, the life plans they develop and the way how they present these in their narratives.

We have to begin with a theoretical and methodological remark. It is important to differentiate between the statements by which the young adults as they presented themselves to the interviewers and our interpretations of how we think they are or their life course trajectories evolved. By self-presentations we refer to the way interviewees speak about themselves in relation to the world (e.g. active or passive, autonomous or dependent). Such self-presentations are always a combination of general patterns of biographical construction and situational factors related to the interview. This is a general problem in interview based empirical social research, while in our research it became obvious when analysing the interviewees' self-presentations.

It needs being considered that the interviews with the young adults were conducted in specific contexts and locations, like in an office of the organisation providing the LLL measure they attended or of a company where they were employed, in a public cafe or even in a football changing room. Most of the interviews were bilateral face-to-face conversations, but sometimes the situations on site lead to interviews with more participants, which has an influence on how the participants presented themselves. An important aspect of this situation is also the asymmetry between the interviewer and the interviewee. What is the image the interviewee makes him/herself of the interviewer, what is the interviewers' image of the interviewee? Different characteristics of hierarchy, age, gender, life experiences and also 'distinctions' in the sense of Bourdieu form the context of the interview and affect the self-presentation (cf. Helfferich 2011). Furthermore, the interviews are framed by a specific research question, a specific stimulus and a specific aim, which is unavoidable – and interview partners were informed accordingly to convince them for the interview - and even desired, because we wanted to hear the life story of the young adults with regard to their experiences of LLL. They presented themselves in the context of the specific LLL policy measure they were attending. And was this a measure providing an accredited qualification and offering a future perspective or a measure aimed at compensating prior deficits and at 'repairing' a ruptured and/or failed trajectory? Inasmuch as this implies different imageries and ascriptions concerning the participating young people, this may be highly relevant for their self-presentation. All this leads us to the insight that we can make rather statements about how the young adults presented themselves to us than about how they are and how their life course trajectories evolved.

##### **4.1. Life conditions**

Focusing on the self-presentations of the young adults interviewed in YOUNG\_ADULLLT leads to the observation that we have to deal with very heterogeneous self-presentations. They differ with regard



to the social and ethnic origins, the life course trajectories and experiences, the education careers, interests, skills and many more aspects the young people referred to in their narratives.

In this chapter we focus on the relevant characteristics of these self-presentations; relevant in terms of following their own presentations and not setting a focus from outside. We will first elaborate different dimensions of young people's self-presentations and then analyse the relationships among them.

A first conspicuous general observation is the socio-economic weak background of the most young adults in the selected LLL policies. The few young adults with middle-class and higher socio-economic backgrounds either struggle with other issues, like Y\_GER\_F\_3 (migration, single-mother), Y\_GER\_B\_8 (bullied, depressions, lost her unborn child), Y\_FI\_K\_4 (health issues), or Y\_SP\_G\_8 (migration) or they attend LLL policy measures, which are in close proximity to the labour market or higher education (e.g. Y\_GER\_F\_7 ('Fachoberschule'), Y\_GER\_F\_9 ('Fachoberschule'), Y\_BG\_P\_1 (Youth guarantee I – Scheme „Youth Employment”), Y\_BG\_P\_7 (Youth entrepreneurship), Y\_CRO\_I\_5 (professional training without employment programme), Y\_CRO\_OB\_3 (professional training without employment programme), Y\_SP\_M\_1 (Comprehensive programme of Qualification and Employment (PICE)), Y\_UK\_G\_2 (CBC apprentice) or Y\_UK\_G\_3 (CBC apprentice). These measures require specific qualifications and/or social skills as entrance requirements like in the cases of (guided) apprenticeships or education courses which prepare for and provide access to higher education institutions.

Most young adults participating in the examined LLL policies reported having or having had to cope with obstacles in their lives in one way or another. Experiences mentioned most often were bullying, health problems (physical and often mental), family problems (e.g. divorced parents), violence/abuse and poverty. Overall, a general picture of young adults in clearly vulnerable positions emerged. A surprisingly high share of young people in Austria, Germany, Finland, Spain and the UK spoke about experiences of being bullied, especially in school. These young people ascribed serious consequences in their lives to such experiences. Y\_GER\_B\_2 and Y\_FI\_K\_8 are two of many examples of a young adult who were bullied and therefore dropped out of school:

*“The situation [of being bullied] never ceased, it continued as in the primary school.”*  
(Y\_GER\_B\_2)

*“So I dropped out of school because I felt like I wasn't going to make it and I got anxious around the other students [due to being bullied for a long time before].”* (Y\_FI\_K\_8)

Y\_SP\_G\_6 is another example of a young person who lost all his interest in education because of his experiences in school.

*“I went to school in order to sit on my chair and spend the time dreaming of my own world.”*  
(Y\_SP\_G\_6).

He says that at the age of 19 years he feels having overcome that problem but he keeps some deep resentment.

Within the group of young adults with experiences of bullying we can distinguish between two types of self-presentation. On the one hand, young adults like Y\_GER\_B\_8, Y\_FI\_K\_7, Y\_FI\_K\_9 or Y\_UK\_A\_2 present themselves as tough and self-assured and give the impression that they have overcome this phase of their life.

*Yes [the bullying has affected the choices I have made]. And they were not good choices. There was for example this, there were many opportunities to accept help, but I didn't. Because umm I suppose I expected that it just wouldn't help anything. (Y\_FI\_K\_7)*

On the other hand, there are not few young adults who gave the impression of being depressed and having lost their basic trust which lead to drastic breaks in their educational pathways followed by other problems in their lives. Y\_GER\_F\_1, Y\_AT\_UA\_1 and Y\_FI\_K\_5 are some of these young people. Y\_GER\_F\_1 struggles additionally with mental illness and experiences of violence, while Y\_AT\_UA\_1 struggles additionally with a lack of self-esteem, with socialising and a learning disability. Y\_FI\_K\_5 also struggles additionally with the divorce of her parents and a lack of self-esteem.

Diseases are another often-mentioned aspect of the self-presentation of the young adults. While physical health problems are not mentioned very often (e.g. Y\_FI\_K\_4, Y\_FI\_SF\_5 or Y\_UK\_A\_7), mental illness seems to be a widespread experience mentioned by the young people as one factor affecting their well-being and their life chances. Depressions were a mental health problem mentioned in several cases (e.g. Y\_GER\_B\_8, Y\_CRO\_I\_8, Y\_FI\_K\_9 or Y\_UK\_A\_2), further reference was made to dyslexia (e.g. Y\_FI\_SF\_4), dyscalculia (e.g. Y\_GER\_B\_1) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (e.g. Y\_UK\_A\_3). These young adults often had to cope with bad school performance, school dropout, stays in hospital, therapies; their lives developed and proceeded at a slower pace than that of their peers and partly outside the regular education system. Among these young people, there are some who present themselves as persons who have gone through many things, but overcome these phases in their lives. They often refer to their families of having supported them. Others describe their life trajectories as affected by their shyness (e.g. Y\_SP\_G\_5, Y\_UK\_G\_6), aggressiveness (e.g. Y\_UK\_A\_10) or their dejection (e.g. Y\_GER\_F\_6). In the sample, there are several young adults who reported experiences of bullying in school or apprenticeships and mental illness, which reveals the negative influence of such experiences on the development of well-being and self-esteem (e.g. Y\_GER\_F\_1, Y\_GER\_B\_8, Y\_AT\_UA\_2, Y\_FI\_K\_9, Y\_FI\_SF\_6).

A further drastic aspect, which influenced emerging from the biographical self-presentation of young adults, is the experience of violence and abuse. Some of these young adults are Y\_AT\_UA\_1, Y\_CRO\_I\_7, Y\_GER\_F\_1, Y\_GER\_F\_4, Y\_FI\_SF\_5, Y\_PT\_AL\_7 and Y\_UK\_A\_2.

*that was a very dark period of dealing with a lot of mental and physical stuff.” (Y\_UK\_A\_2)*

*“I was helpless. I was completely helpless. I was thought to be a good boy, not to insult*

*anyone...I didn't have an attitude...after some time I couldn't take it anymore, I said to my parents that I am afraid to go to school. (Y\_CRO\_I\_7)*

Their experiences had not been without consequences for their life trajectories. Many of them explained interruptions in their school career like school changes, stays in hospitals, therapies and dropouts with experiences of violence. At the same time however, the self-presentations of all these young adults are characterized by the will to overcome those "dark periods". It is striking that especially young parents – mostly young mothers – attribute their children a positive effect on their development and motivation, i.e. significant others who do neither advise, teach or support them professionally but who depend on them:

*I still take detours, but I have initiated a lot by myself and have gone through a lot, but I have a small child sitting at home who calls me 'mother'. That is wonderful and I do not regret anything. (Y\_GER\_F\_4)*

While some young adults refer to their family of origin as the main source of support, not in all cases young adults referred to the family as a supporting instance. On the contrary, the share of parents, who are mentioned by the young adults as not supportive, is quite high. The reasons for the absence of family support are different. Y\_GER\_F\_3 is a typical example for a group of young adults who cannot fall back on the support for reasons of migration (in her case from an African country to Germany) and she explains what this means living and trying to develop a life perspective without her family.

*I could have [a standard apprenticeship]. There was already one [other participant], who left the part-time training [...] and it suits her. But she has her mother, she has her family, who picks up the child, she has got support there. I am alone. And I am happy that I get support here [in the LLL policy]. (Y\_GER\_F\_3)*

In many other cases the reasons for the absence or at least the limitation of support was because of the separation of the parents and young people explain failure in school referring to this constellation (e.g. Y\_GER\_B\_6, Y\_CRO\_OB\_2, Y\_CRO\_OB\_6, Y\_FI\_K\_5, Y\_FI\_SF\_9, Y\_SP\_G\_4 or Y\_PT\_AL\_5).

*In secondary school I wasn't that good student as in elementary school. I had a bad family situation. My father started seeing another woman, who kept leaving him, so I needed to be there for him and for my sister. (Y\_CRO\_OB\_6)*

*I rebelled against my step-dad, but this was because I was younger and I didn't really understand the whole divorce, parents-splitting-up kind of thing. So I did a lot of rebelling against that. So when it came to school work, 'cause I was getting bullied in primary school, school work was put on the back burner a lot. I was like, I put up a big fuss about it. So I kind*

*of blamed that on my step-dad. (Y\_UK\_A\_2)*

At the same time, not in all cases the separation of the parents is reported in terms of absence of support. Y\_CRO\_OB\_2 stands as an example for those young adults who reported that they had good relations to their parents even after their divorce and got support from both or at least one of them.

*My mother has always been there for me in my education. She is still my biggest support. (Y\_CRO\_OB\_2)*

There are also accounts of parents who were not only not supportive but also presented as a real burden due to drug addiction, violent behaviour, abuse (e.g. Y\_PT\_AL\_7, Y\_AT\_UA\_2, Y\_FI\_SF\_5) or simply destructive and demotivating behaviour like the mother of Y\_GER\_F\_2:

*well, I was always, so to say kept small and, so to say, because if the child stays, so to say, dumb, and, so to say, did not make progress, then the child is small and worth less and more stupid than the mother, then the mother feels good. So to say that was what I was for my family. (Y\_GER\_F\_2)*

He traces his negative experiences back through many stages of his life, in the same way as many of other young adults without family support. He presents himself as a victim of authority figures whom he ascribes substantial negative impact on his biography. He struggles with mental illness and needs to learn the smallest things of everyday life as a young adult. Y\_AT\_V\_9 is another example of a young adult who refrains from his parents.

*I just needed time for myself. Everything fell down on me, that for years I have followed the decisions my parents made. I mean decisions in terms of schooling have actually always been taken by my parents, also private ones. I have always let them mind my business and I wanted to stop that completely. [...] now I am in this phase, where I slowly begin to build up everything anew. (Y\_AT\_V\_9)*

However, in this account both young men present themselves also as people who try to locate the problems of their lives not inside themselves but outside and thereby distancing themselves from them.

Many of the young adults are coping especially with the issue of not finding a job (or a place for higher education). Their attendance of measures aimed at supporting them to overcome this special situation (e.g. Y\_CRO\_I\_3, Y\_CRO\_I\_5, Y\_IT\_G\_4, Y\_PT\_AL\_1, Y\_PT\_VdA\_1, Y\_UK\_A\_1 or Y\_UK\_A\_8). At the same time, it creates a situation that poses additional demands young people have to cope with (see below, section 5.).

Some of them locate the core of the problem in educational institutions and express their feeling that

the schools do not provide them with useful skills for the labour market:

*Then... I do not know anything about everything...that is, I did high school, and at the high school you study everything but you do not learn anything at all. (Y\_IT\_G\_4)*

As regards their current situation, most young people refer to the barriers they face in entering education, training or employment and the uncertainty this creates for them. Y\_CRO\_OB\_3 reflects a situation of feeling suspended from a 'normal' progress of the life course trajectory.

*Nothing, I am looking for job. I can only sit and cry. (Y\_CRO\_OB\_3)*

At the same time, almost all young adults insist of being part of the society and have the right of being an integrated part it. For example, Y\_GER\_F\_1 insists explicitly:

*that I as a human being, as an adult am allowed to live and learn and that I as a affected person, I am allowed to work, that I can be normal despite my problems, that I have my place in normal society (Y\_GER\_F\_1)*

What are the resources young adults refer to with regard to their life conditions? Even if there is a high share of young adults who did not receive support from their parents, the family is the most mentioned source of support in the lives of the young adults to cope with the different requirements and expectations in life. It is conspicuous that young adults, who describe their family as a supportive one, mentioned other issues or obstacles in their lives much fewer. Y\_CRO\_I\_7 is a typical example of a case where the family is mentioned as a supportive resource that helps through emerging issues:

*I was helpless. I was completely helpless. I was thought to be a good boy, not to insult anyone...I didn't have an attitude...after some time I couldn't take it anymore, I said to my parents that I am afraid to go to school ... My parents give me everything I need. They are always here for me. I have good parents. (Y\_CRO\_I\_7)*

Family could also be a supportive instance with regard to the vocational orientation of young adults. Some of the young adults mentioned their parents as role models and try to follow their example (e.g. Y\_SP\_G\_8). Others are "naturally" born in an environment that was aligned to certain professional sectors (e.g. Y\_IT\_M\_4, Y\_PT\_AL\_6, Y\_UK\_A\_6, Y\_UK\_A\_8, Y\_UK\_G\_1).

*My Grandpa was a plumber and heating engineer. The two guys he had started with moved on to another company and were still in contact with my Grandpa and spoke to them still. I got an interview with them and they accepted me for an apprenticeship. (Y\_UK\_G\_1)*

*My dad is a technician. He's a big influence and used to take me to work with him. I just thought if my dad can do it I can do it. (Y\_UK\_A\_8)*

Others follow their parents on the higher education pathways (e.g. Y\_CRO\_I\_5, or Y\_CRO\_OB\_3) and had a very supportive environment.

*I think that it is positive that I have older an brother and sister so I've had their experience. And my mother learned with them, so for me everything was easier. When I came to Zagreb, they were also there, so I had their support and leaving home was easier. (Y\_CRO\_I\_5)*

#### 4.2. Life plans

Young adults do not pursue static but dynamic life plans. They express these plans to an interviewer in a certain situation and a certain phase in their life course. Although plans are affected by former experiences and imaginary possibilities, common patterns in the self-presentation of the interviewees were remarkable.

Most young adults have general future plans. This variety of life plans can be located within the frame of a standard life course. The life plans reflect the different sectors of transitions which have to be coped by young adults during their transition from youth to adulthood.

First, the transition into own reside including an independence from the parental home.

*I want to get autonomous, achieving an independence form my parents.” (Y\_IT\_M\_5)*  
*[the parents] said “It’s good you are studying, but you also have to find something for your income”... at the end they are right, and I also feel the need for my independence. (Y\_IT\_M\_6)*

Second the transition into vocational training, labour market or higher education.

*I hope to be working in this area but doing something superior, not only technical skills but if you do a degree, who knows, a graduate in the area or engineering.” (Y\_PT\_VdA\_2)*  
*“I’m going to apply to a university of applied sciences to study [a subject]. (---) I think the employment prospects are good here, I haven’t really looked that up, it’s just something I’m interested in. (Y\_FI\_K\_4)*  
*In ten years’ time I want to build a couple. If I complete my current training, I want to start a business. I want to open a multicultural restaurant. I wish. Let’s see if I can achieve it. (Y\_SP\_G\_11)*

Third, the transition into a couple’s relationship and the transition in parenthood.

*I intend to have my own things by then, and if I am not with someone or married, at least I will already be thinking about it, having a stable life to start creating a family. I think this is everyone’s dream. (Y\_PT\_VdA\_9).*

*I have a positive view of education, although the marriage and child are the first place I decided to graduate at the university. (Y\_BG\_B\_3)*

Many of them narrate simultaneous transitions:

*I don't even know how I see myself tomorrow... anyway I wish I'll have stable life, like a normal person, like everyone else... then married with kids, with a stable work, an house... maybe I could also leave Italy.... (Y\_IT\_M\_2)*

*I hope that I would have a job, and perhaps I and my spouse would have our own house and a vegetable garden and why not. We have been planning that we should get a house with a garden because I would like to have some farm animals. (Y\_FI\_SF\_7)*

*... I plan to apply for working at the police in the office and that they take me on. I want to work my way up, that's my goal; in any case, earning enough money so that I can bring my son and myself through life. (Y\_GER\_F\_4)*

*I wish I had my own flat. A house and a family. I am very traditional on this topic. My girlfriend, a child too. My top professional preference would be working with computers and games. (Y\_SP\_G\_6)*

Beside the group of young adults who can express their life plans unconstrained, a second group is very much affected by current contexts. Y\_SP\_M\_10 is one example for this group. In his case he sees his professional opportunities affected by the labour market conditions and this affects his life plans massively:

*I hope I have a job at least, because I believe that you can live... always in absolute instability. I must keep my current job in the public sector. But you have to accept you cannot work according to your qualification. (Y\_SP\_M\_10)*

Within this group we locate also some young adults who envision migration as a possibility:

*My task in 10 years is to bring my mother and my sister together with me and move to USA, where my friends are waiting for me, also assuring me a job, this is my task!" (Y\_IT\_M\_4)*

*I gave Croatia a deadline. If I won't be able to find a job in Croatia until the end of the year, I will move abroad. My years are passing by, and I am unable to plan anything in my life." (Y\_CRO\_OB\_4)*

While most expressed migration plans are because of not finding a job, in some cases it is more because of experience new things and broaden one's mind:

*At least I would think that I have a job and a husband and perhaps also a child. And an own home. Just kind of basic dreams, but I also dream about moving abroad at some point, to work abroad. (Y\_FI\_K\_2)*

A third group of young adults express that they feel incapable to express a life plan. In the case of Y\_IT\_M\_1 the lack of pathways leads to an unpredictable future:

*I don't know... I've always avoided... the point is that I've always been someone who does not foresee too much, because if you try to foresee too much, then you threaten to realise that you have not accomplished your tasks, and it could be disappointing. Then I always prefer to plan day-by-day, or week-by-week at most, in order to avoid rude awakenings. Because... you know... you might also want to become an astronaut but then in 10 years you find yourself working in a fast-food... (Y\_IT\_M\_1)*

Some of them are struggling with their current situations and all their capacity is bound in the present. Y\_GER\_F\_1 for example, she limited her attention to the nearest future:

*moving out is my focus at present and I started a therapy which is very complex for me It is complex. I have a lot of wishes, but I don't know how to realize them or even if I should realize them. I have to work on a lot of issues and I don't know how to prioritize. I am still confused, that's why this [Policy] is a big help. (Y\_GER\_F\_1)*

Another similar example is Y\_AT\_UA\_2:

*What stresses me extremely at the moment is, that I do not have a plan for my future at all. XY [her coach at PS] and I we are actually thinking all the time about what I should do with my future. (Y\_AT\_UA\_2)*

Independent from concrete (or vague) life plans is the wish for the integration in the society a common motive:

*that I as a human being, as an adult am allowed to live and learn and that I as a affected person, I am allowed to work, that I can be normal despite my problems, that I have my place in normal society. (Y\_GER\_F\_1)*

#### **4.3. General aspects of self-presentations**

What is striking when analysing the self-presentations with regard to life conditions and life plans? We have seen that most young people refer to conditions of vulnerability. Partly they ascribe them to themselves, partly to their family and partly to external conditions. Some have adopted the discourse of self-responsibility completely:

*If we only rely on the university, we cannot get what's needed. It's all about how much you've mobilized, what you want. What is the motivation because without extracurricular work you*



*can achieve a little. You need to do some extra homework, out of the university. Everything depends on the person himself that is the most important. (Y\_BG\_B\_1)*

*I am sure that if you want something, you can get it, and I want that, I want to be like my father, I want that... (Y\_AT\_V\_1)*

Others attribute difficulties to external actors and factors (see above: e.g. Y\_GER\_F\_2 'authority figures' or Y\_IT\_G\_4 'useless skills in school'). Both approaches need to be seen as strategies of coping with adverse life perspectives. The first reflects having internalised and adapted to external individualising ascriptions and attributions of failure, which in many cases imply cooling out of own aspirations. On the one hand, this may lead to de-motivation and damage identity work in terms of producing coherence of the self, on the other hand, the willingness to take responsibility for the own past and future tends to be seen as the entrance requirement as well as the success criterion of LLL policy measures. The second reflects rejecting ascription of failure to own deficits. This rejection may be understood as attempt of protecting the own self-identity against humiliation and damage from outside while marking the distance between one-self and the external actors can secure a subjective feeling of self-efficacy. It is striking that obviously all young people regardless ascribing own failure in the past to themselves or to others accept self-responsibility for the own future. They accept that it is up to them to take decisions – even if they realise that some options are simply not available for them –, they are willing to undergo education and training to fulfil the skill requirements of certain occupations and they take the responsibility for their trajectory from present to future.

*I make a decision almost at the moment. I do not hesitate for anything. (Y\_BG\_P\_12)*

*I started wondering: what will I do if this goes wrong? This is what I do, I can't do anything else. And so I talked to a few friends to see if they knew of some course I could do. I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I wanted to go back to school. And now I am finishing high school, to have some basis. (Y\_PT\_VdA\_8)*

This reveals that the neoliberal discourse inherent to the activating welfare state and to LLL policies are not simply evolving top down but are being reproduced by the young adults themselves. This does not necessarily imply that they subscribe to all demands and impositions but that their way of ascribing decisions in their life course trajectories to themselves and to legitimize them (cf. West et al., 2007; Walther et al., 2015).

Obviously, biographical self-presentations cannot be subjected to a cross-country comparative analysis in a strict sense due to their complex, dynamic and relational structure. It is likely that different sociocultural, institutional and socio-economic contexts imply different normalities of self-presentation. For example, Pfau-Effinger (2005) has analysed different representations of working mothers in different welfare states and has found that female employment and respective welfare regulations are related with different notions of the self in different confessional cultures (protestant versus catholic cultures).

The narratives of our sample do not support such hypotheses. However, some observations have been made:

- in functional regions and LLL policy systems which are less differentiated according to target groups, we find more young people who do not report particular vulnerability compared to policy measures explicitly addressing disadvantaged young people;
- while most young people from regions in Southern and Eastern Europe refer to their families in Western and Northern European regions we find both young people referring to their families as a burden and others presenting their families as resource which is more important than policy measures.

## **5. Experiences of young adults**

In this section of the report, we examine the complexities of young adults' experiences from participation in diverse LLL programmes run by various governmental and private agencies analyzed in WP3 of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. The empirical evidence comes from 150 in-depth interviews situated in two functional regions in each of the 9 project partner countries. The interviews followed a common strategy starting with young people's stories about their own lives and then proceeded with more focused questions about their learning trajectories, encounters with LLL programmes, employers, state and private training institutions and expectations for the future. Here we focus on this second part of the interviews analyzing how young people talk about their experiences and how they see their effect on their educational trajectories and prospects for labour market integration. Our aim is to give young adults voice to express their needs and expectations, which after that we will compare with the views and practices of LLL policy makers, experts and practitioners in order to capture possible mismatches between the aspirations of both groups.

In the first part of this section, we compare and discuss young adults' expectations and experiences from the participation in the LLL programmes and measures highlighting cross-country and cross-case differences. In the second part, we infer similarities for the views and situation of youth engaged in LLL as a whole questioning the data from the three theoretical perspectives adopted in the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. While we focus on young people's perceptions of the policies, we also take into account the social context in which young people's experiences are embedded as the fieldwork was carried out both in countries where LLL policies have long been established and countries where the LLL policy is relatively new and the programmes are little known or unpopular. Participation in a training program is a critical point in young people's learning and life course trajectories in which individual agency and structural factors are at play (Cuconato et al, 2016). The paper considers the impact of the living conditions of young people such as country and regional economic development, family structures, ethnic and religious diversity, educational system, social relationships, and trust in institutions. On this basis, we outline the met and unmet needs of young people for their empowerment in the transition to adulthood.

## 5.1. The challenges of experiencing LLL

As we saw from the previous part of the report, our interviewees are not a homogeneous group of under-achievers lacking basic skills. They display a wide range of differences in terms of gender, ethnicity, family background, learning biographies prior to joining the programs. Some had a linear upward trajectory in the formal educational system including university level before enrolling in a LLL measure. Others are early school leavers who did not have the educational credentials to take on vocational training. While some were from privileged family backgrounds, others had fractured learning biographies, early parenting responsibilities or physical and psychological problems.

### 5.1.1. The expectations of young adults enrolling in training programmes

The first question we sought an answer for was: what shaped young people's decisions to get into the programs and what were their initial expectations? The qualitative data from young adults' interviews highlight the complexity of young people's motivation for further training. Itself a multi-dimensional phenomenon, motivation is a deeply personal consideration of needs and opportunities related to the individual value system and evaluation of the situation for the choice. It should be examined as arising not only from the individual decision-making but also from the contexts in which the individual lives unfold (Katznelson, 2018). Studying the meaningful choices that young adults make about training and jobs and their subjective interpretations, we should not underestimate the wider social processes in the different societies the young are not fully aware of (Cieslik and Simpson, 2006).

Following the widely accepted typology, we can distinguish between two broad categories: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation when the young adults speak about their expectations about the results from the program. The interview data demonstrate the predominance of the latter type - an instrumental attitude to participation in the programs: to receive a formal certificate in order to continue studying or to achieve eligibility for receiving benefits or even to keep yourself busy rather than staying at home doing nothing. Some narratives suggest intrinsic motivation: to achieve competence in order to succeed in a job you like or to help others in the community.

In the Southern European countries Portugal, Italy, Spain, as well as in Croatia and Bulgaria, many young adults talked about the expectation that the program would provide them with a formal certificate which they needed to increase their educational credential and improve their employment prospects:

*Very honestly...in 2017 on your CV you must have at least a high school qualification, even if maybe your qualification does not have anything to do with the job you are applying for, at least you can prove that you had the good will to complete the primary, lower secondary and high school, you can anyway prove your effort. [Y\_IT\_M\_1]*

*The main objective was to take the 9th year, it was not any specific job, it was really to take the 9th year... [Y\_PT\_AL\_9].*

Getting a formal educational certificate was even more important for recent immigrants who did not have recognized school diplomas in the country of arrival. Many local young adults also lacked formal credentials of studying and working as they had left school early and their only working experiences had been from undeclared jobs.

*I'm carrying out this traineeship because, even if I've always been working, I've only get undeclared jobs, and I want to have at least one certifiable experience on my CV. In 10 years I'll also have a diploma, since my son will grow-up and I'll save more time to study. [Y\_IT\_M\_3]*

Some young adults in Bulgaria revealed that their decision was made under a pressure coming from their actual or potential employers. The employers or their representatives urged the young applicants to enrol in programs offered by the Labor Office instead of being accepted with an employment contract. Thus, the two minority men, Y\_BG\_P\_2 and Y\_BG\_P\_6, had been recruited into the Youth Guarantee Program on the suggestion of their employers who in this way would save the money they should have paid for the young employees' wages and social security payments.

*As I decided to apply for the job, the boss mentioned that he had participated in this (LLL) program (...) And if I want to start with them, this is the condition because the program actually requires it. (...) I did not know about this program before. And then I was impressed by the fact that a lot of the companies participate precisely because of the amount [paid] that helps them for the budget later on. [Y\_BG\_P\_2]*

The young woman from an ethnic minority origin with a university diploma had a similar experience to 'choose' the program under pressure:

*I started looking for a new job (...) When they saw that I was of such an age and I had the education, they immediately made the link that they could use subsidized employment for me. They made me wait for the (Youth Employment) program to open, I was appointed by this program and only after that they offered me the place. Still on a very good salary, but it became clear to me that as the program expires, the salary will change again. [Y\_BG\_P\_5]*

In the more differentiated LLL systems in the UK, Germany, Austria and Finland, besides consideration for improving one's CV when applying for jobs, finishing a training program opened the way to return back to the upward educational route – to some post-compulsory-school degree or to the university. For example, a 21-year old man in Scotland who had applied unsuccessfully to several universities to study engineering, like his father, enrolled in a NC course with the Training Centre in Aberdeen:

*So I was thinking about, after finishing the NC itself, I'll do the HND, and maybe after the HND, if I still feel like it, might apply to unis again and get a diploma. [Y\_UK\_A\_1].*

In almost all countries, there were young people who could not find a programme which they liked, but

they still made the choice to enrol in the training schemes in order to have something to do and keep themselves occupied.

*But I thought, yes, instead of just sitting at home and doing nothing and doing whatever, I come here. Because, first because of getting up early, that's great. Because if I find a job, I will already be in that rhythm (Y\_AT\_V\_8)*

Somewhat rarer, young people were attracted to the programs by intrinsic motives to develop particular skills and be able to apply them in a future work that they would love to do. In all countries, the interviews included narratives about young people's aiming at specific skills or more broadly defined as 'practical knowledge'. Thus, the Roma man [Y\_BG\_P\_11] we interviewed in Plovdiv FR had returned from illegal work in Greece and enrolled in the program of an NGO in order to learn how to cultivate vegetables on his own farm. The 20-year-old female interviewee from Glas [Y\_UK\_G\_5] undertook an apprenticeship in small digital marketing company in order to learn and work in what she loved and considered essential for herself. In Italy where one of the studied training programs involved volunteering, the young felt motivated to join by the value of helping others and offering useful service for the community:

*Volunteering ... is an element that one does because it feels to do it... but also for a selfish aspect that I think is natural, not only for personal satisfaction, but, at the same time, also for the search for skills, because they can be spent elsewhere and I think this is an absolutely useful thing (Y\_IT\_G\_7)*

In general, many of the expectations of the interviewed young adults were in line with the official objectives of the LLL policies – to receive the necessary formal certificates and to acquire the skills that would allow them to continue studying on a higher level and improve their chances for integration in the labour market. In some cases, however the young expected immediate employment in the same company where they would train which did not figure among the formulated goals of the programs. In other cases, the programs were used to substitute employment and get employees at a lower price.

### **5.1.2. The 'lived experiences' of training**

The qualitative data from the interviews with young adults who were currently or in the past attending training programs provide evidence about a rather positive evaluation of the involvement in the LLL. Many young adults referred to the programs as “*fun again to go to school*” (Y\_GER\_B\_1), “*a new beginning*” (Y\_GER\_B\_3).

*I think in general that this a chance and a very good project, which could help many people and I hope that more people can participate in such things, that such things get more funding, because I know exactly and have seen that there are enough young people who could not see the light at the end of the tunnel and who need help (Y\_GER\_F\_3).*

Nevertheless, when we look deeper at specific points of the experience, the picture becomes more nuanced. We first examined their assessment of the provision and access to LLL opportunities in each functional region. Young adults' narratives about the availability of training courses varied significantly. In some countries such as Bulgaria the young did not complain about a lack of places and many had taken several trainings with the objective to maximize employment opportunities. For example, the interviewed young women in Plovdiv (Y\_BG\_P\_1; Y\_BG\_P\_7 and Y\_BG\_P\_10) had done three or more internships before finding a job with an employment contract. This was however typical for the more privileged youth studying at universities or already holding a BA or MA degrees and from middle class families. Taking several completely different programs acted as a career guidance service for those who had well-to-do parents able to support them financially while in training. In Croatia in both regions the young also shared a high readiness to engage in further training but some complained from the high fees they had to pay for the schemes offered by private providers. The interviewees from Malaga in Spain shared a similar discontent.

In most countries in the project, the lack of enough apprenticeships was the leading trend, particularly under the conditions of economic downturns when employers reduce training provisions. In the UK the state programs are directed towards the 16-19 age group while there seems to be a 'black hole' of support and provision for young people in their 20s who had to survive the 2008 downturn (Doyle, 2017: 57). In Portugal the interviewees in Alentejo Litoral complained that they were forced to choose from a very narrow range of courses – either gardening or welding. When asked how he decided to enrol in this course, the young man with a working-class origin put it shortly: "*Because it was the only one*" (Y\_PT\_AL\_4).

Another challenge for the young trainees was the lack of enough information about the courses, about their content and teaching methods and their correspondence with the participants' prior skills. The sources that the young used to learn about the schemes were searching on the web and getting information from family members, friends, teachers, officers working in the Labor Offices and other professionals. Many felt that they could not make an informed choice and one young man from Vienna was very critical about the information he was provided by the program officers feeling that the participants had been intentionally deceived.

*We were sort of surprised, among the employees, yes. We were wondering a lot, that we actually have been lied at quite boldly, that, that at the beginning, that they said, that the people will take care of us, will help us, really help us, to find something else. But in the end, it feels more like they are happy, that they have a cheap workforce now (Y\_AT\_V\_6)*

In Germany, the process of selection was found to be very bureaucratic, often the criteria were unclear for the young. The programs often applied a multi-stage access procedure for their potential participants including aptitude tests, personal interviews and criterion of a school leaving qualification. Highly illustrative is the case of a young woman (Y\_GER\_F\_3) who in order to meet the requirements

of the Job Centre to enrol in the VbFF scheme had to quit her temporary job, move to live in Frankfurt and then hire a lawyer to defend her interests.

We then looked into young people's experiences from and evaluation of the learning process in the scheme. Again, the predominant trend was appraisal. The young adults came to the courses/schemes expecting 'practical training' – a practice-based approach – and most were highly satisfied with the type of learning they received.

A major source of satisfaction was the support that the young received during the training. They often compared that with their previous experiences.

*I have learned that I can come to them with every simple and trivial question and I get an answer. And I really found hope here and I have the feeling that I got a perspective. [...] I have the feeling that here are human beings who really support special cases like me (laughs). Yes, and it is the first time I feel safe (Y\_GER\_F\_1).*

*That were two things, three things which are good: First, so to say: I could ask questions. Second: I had someone who listened, because I had never someone who listened. That did not exist. I could never say what I wanted. And he [the professional in the program] has knowledge by his experience, so he could help me in many areas" (Y\_GER\_F\_2).*

The character of the trainer/professional in the scheme/course was most important in young adults' experiences. Similar to Germany, in Austria the trainees found their advice and attention highly supportive.

*And yes, it did not go that well [her first interview]. And then I wanted to give up and my counselor said, that I will not give up, that I shall talk to Merkur [another supermarket chain she was applying for] first. And I didn't want to. I absolutely wanted to leave. But she did not allow it. She said: stay and do that (Y\_AT\_V\_3)*

*It is really much better now, because I got a task to fulfil. Because I think that a task is just, everyone needs a task and for me it is, it just is, I also got a rhythm. (...) I would say it is really good that I am here, because the people just support you. They talk stuff through with you. Also, personal stuff. (...) I think it helps. But I think you have to engage in it. (...) I think you can get really far, but you have to engage, to engage with the people, with the coaches (Y\_AT\_UA\_2).*

In those two countries as well as in Finland the young received a diverse and individualized support from other professionals in healthcare, psychology for example, besides those involved in the teaching. In Spain, the interviews had many descriptions of the close relations between the young adults and the trainers.

*So much companionship, then... the teachers, very close to us. It's not like a high school. I did the courses with less people, because we were ten per module, like they are closer to you, they*

*help you more, you... They reinforce you more... I do not know, like that... You learn more, okay? In my opinion (Y\_SP\_M\_7)*

Another young woman also praised the better opportunities for learning underlining the supporting attitude of the teachers:

*And it's very good, it's very good. They give us enough materials, they give us our clothes too and it's fine, it's fine; We are given facilities and teachers; I like the way they explain and the way they treat us and that (Y\_SP\_M\_10)*

Peer support was also highly valued and the young spoke about being with people sharing the same enjoyment of working with their hands and also having similar problems. In Kainuu region peers proved important not only when making educational choices but also in coping with the demands of life both inside and outside education. If one's family relationships were unstable, the role of peers and friends as significant others affecting one's life decisions were more important. In Spain, the young appreciated the social relationships with counsellors and trainees in the program: *"I found out I enjoyed socialising. That's what this training gave me."* (Y\_SP\_G\_6). In all countries family members, friends and relatives were also a significant source of support for the young adults.

The role of counsellors/trainers did not receive an unanimous appraisal by the trainees. Even in Germany, despite well-established rules and regulations of training schemes, a young man (Y\_GER\_B\_8) reported he had left because his peers and his instructor bullied him. Another young person with a similar experience was interviewed in Austria (Y\_AT\_UA\_1).

What was more common in the Southern countries was the lack of attention and care for the personal needs of the young participants. In Bulgaria and Croatia, but also in the three other South Western European countries, there were many narratives about the trainers' unwillingness to answer questions or readiness to spend time in explanations.

The most common situation was having only formal relations. As a young woman from Croatia (Y\_CR\_I\_3) explained she had *'no expectations whatsoever'* from the counsellor in the Croatian Employment Service. She wished to get an extra training in IT, but the counsellor told her that there were no places with IT, and that she should start training for a cook. Another trainee in Alentejo Litoral, a twenty-two-year-old man (Y\_PT\_AL\_6) described his relationship with the counsellor in the Employment Office as very formal and distant – *'the usual postcard'* inviting him to the office to see the existing offers.

In Germany and Austria the young people did not comment about the role of employers, which might be specific to the chosen schemes. However, it might suggest also a lack of perceived problems in this link, as the young adults from the other countries reported many negative experiences: lack of sensitivity to young adults' insecurity at the start of the training (Doyle, 2017), lack of appreciations of



young people's skills and efforts (Bouillet et al, 2017) or even bullying from the mentor at the workplace (Kovacheva et al, 2017). Thus, the young adults in Bulgaria, who were enrolled in the Youth Guarantee program, criticized employers for not willing to provide training. Instead, at the workplace young trainees were expected to start off immediately doing all tasks:

*Yes, de facto you do not learn anything, because your employer says "I will not deal with you, I will not teach you" because he will waste his time watching you, explaining what you have to do (Y\_BG\_P\_1)*

*Most employers think that when you go, you have to know everything. And there is no way that you have this knowledge, at least from higher education. (...) Employers do not understand that this is an internship program and they have to teach you (Y\_BG\_P\_3)*

Another source of satisfaction from the LLL programs and schemes was their flexibility. The teaching in many of them was adapted to the needs and abilities of the young adults. Such stories came from Austria, Germany and Finland. Some as the mothers in Germany enjoyed the flexibility of the program. Where such adaptability was missing, the negative evaluation prevailed. In all other countries, the lack of flexibility was the leading narrative.

*I didn't know what I wanted. I just knew that I didn't want to cook. But I didn't know what else to do [...] I didn't know which profession, I only knew the direction. And they tried to find out what I actually want with career-choice-tests and such things; and helped me to find a psychologist. We have searched for such things [...] Then he [staff] thought how he could help me. Some things, like going outside, overcoming my fears, seeing that nothing bad happens when I don't speak well" (Y\_GER\_F\_2 – 1271ff).*

*and then they [Job Centre] said at the moment we won't let you work due to your psychological problems and then they said, we have an apprenticeship included in a policy, this could suit you, we can send you there without any hesitation, because you are not in the free labor market and there you cannot be dismissed so quickly, if you do not feel well psychologically. And so, I am there since last year (Y\_GER\_B\_8)*

The interviews showed that the young adults did not have a wide scope of training programmes suited to their interests or to their needs (those who had mental or physical disabilities or had young children to care for). The schemes that provided better conditions were most difficult to get access to by the young due to high requirements and bureaucratic procedures. Once in the program, in general, the participants shared positive experiences and enjoyed the support of counsellors and peers. In the two Balkan countries Bulgaria and Croatia, the young people complained from the unresponsive attitudes of the officers in the Job Centres and even more often from the employers who took up training programs without caring for the adaptation and coaching of the new recruits.

## 5.2. Questioning the data from theoretical perspectives

Drawing on young adults' experiences, in this section of the report we interrogate the qualitative data from the interviews through the lens of three perspectives: Cultural political economy (CPE), Governance (GOV) and Life Course research (LCR). The three analytical perspectives of the project allow us to go deeper into the understanding of young adults' experiences from LLL policies and answer questions with relevance for the whole project.

### 5.2.1. Young adults' discourse on lifelong learning policies (CPE)

The CPE perspective compels a critical interrogation of the policy orientation of LLL, the construction of their target groups and their potential desirable and undesirable effects on young adults (Work Package 2, State of the Art Report, p. 74). Building upon the CPE in this section, we focus on the discourses of young adults in relation to the dominant construction of youth in their societies, their own perceptions and representations of LLL and youth transitions. We formulated the question: what categories and meanings of LLL and their target group are used by the young participants in the programs?

As we saw from the previous analysis the young people value LLL for the more flexible approach to teaching in comparison with the formal educational system, for the focus on practical learning, the personal relationships with the counsellors/trainers and the individualized support in the program. Also, for many the results met their expectations to provide 'hard' and 'soft' skills and valid certificates allowing them to continue with their education or with employment, and more widely to develop self-esteem and skills for managing their life. At the same time, the narratives of the young in some countries contained reference to the fact that the society at large did not value LLL enough and the dominant perception of vocational education was inferior to the academic route. Such discourse was typical for the Southern European countries. Thus, the Portuguese report (p.62) states that the young adults recognized the existence of social stigma around the VET offer and had to struggle for acceptance and recognition of their educational choices. In Italy the young expressed doubts about the public recognition of the experience of LLL programs (p.45). In the same way in Spain vocational education was attributed a compensatory role – only suited for those with personal and learning shortcomings (p. 5, 26).

A common belief among the interviewees was that the target group of the policies were perceived negatively by the public and were attributed lack of skills and low personal qualities and more generally - incapability of integrating in the labour market. According to some young interviewees they were often stigmatized by the society at large and held personally responsible for bearing the consequences of the global crisis.

A trainee from Vienna reflected upon the label of “unemployed young adult” that was put on him:

*Well it is a social, a social descent, if you're just not part of, of the norm-society, I would call it.*

*But that you're one of those, that, you hear and read of them, yes, the Austrian unemployed youth. That's the box, in which you are put automatically. At the beginning, as said before, that didn't make it easy. By now I am over that, I am above that now (Y\_AT\_V\_6)*

A 28-year-old man, enrolled in the Civic Service in Genova also spoke about the terms that were often used for people like him: "professional unemployed" and "forever young". The society attributed those definitions to them as an excuse of allocating present-day youth to precarious jobs or trainings while the secure full-time jobs remained inaccessible to the young.

*It makes no sense to think that at the age of 30 one is still young. I feel like a man and above all the labour market sees me as a man and not as a boy. Except when there is an exploitation, such as a free internship, instead ... that is ... there is a non-communication between what ... I mean... between the propulsive drive that brings a boy of my age to be like that today and that ... the propulsive drive that the labour market requires him to be. Because at the end of the day I find myself young, because you do not know what criteria, therefore 'trainee', exploitable until ... but at the same time too qualified for a salaried job, so I still have a degree, a degree, different experiences behind and so on, so ... that is, a situation in which it is not easy to extricate oneself (Y\_IT\_G\_1)*

The term 'exploitation' was used occasionally by the young in the Southern countries, as well as in Croatia and Bulgaria, to define the situation of low-quality and low-paid jobs the young entries in the labour market were intentionally kept it. For them the employers used the measures to get a cheap labour force. Again, in these countries, the discourse about unfair recruitment mechanisms based on nepotism was very common. In young people's words, these practices of relying on "connections" by employers undermined the value of training. A young interviewee from Portugal (Y\_PT\_AL\_6) put it in this way:

*They do not want anything (certificates), anyone can enter there (in the big companies). That is personal contacts nowadays. Because in these companies here, it does not matter if you're good, it's personal contacts, those who are here (at the training centre) do not learn to work in the sector, they only learn then when they're inside...» (Y\_PT\_AL\_6).*

The young did not speak much about internal differences in the target group of the LLL policies and did not speak about social inequalities among them. In the young adults' interviews, we did not find a clear discourse on migrant status, ethnicity or disability. In some countries, however, the young commented on the existing gender stereotypes. In all countries women were overrepresented in 'female' schemes such as hairdressing or sewing and men in the technical field. While it worked mostly in a hidden way, some counsellors intentionally limited young women's choice of schemes believed to be male. In Finland a young woman explained:

*...our guidance counsellor said to me that now you will go to the [study programme] cause*

*you're a girl, but like I would have wanted to study something related to cars, like auto mechanics, but yeah, that idea didn't suit our guidance counsellor who, like, it's only for boys* (Y\_FI\_SF\_7)

In Bulgaria, young women commented on gender stereotyping in the labour market which worked against young women who were undesired workers as the employers expected them to become mothers and take maternity leaves:

*This means you only need to work, work, work and nothing more. If you're a woman they expect that you will have children one day and take leaves to care for them, so you're a second quality person... it's always like this* (started crying) (Y\_BG\_P\_3)

The discourse of the young adults' interviews constructed the whole group of young adults in LLL as being at risk and stigmatized as incapable of meeting the needs of the new labour market. Many shared the conviction that they were training for precarity (Kurki and Brunila, 2014) and the policies, although giving them occupational and life management skills would not help them overcome the power imbalance in the educational system and the world of work.

### **5.2.2. The governance of lifelong learning policies in the views of young adults (GOV)**

The perspective of governance includes an approach that helps to address issues of actor constellations, the level of coordination between them and the modes of governance that enhance or diminish opportunity structures for young adults (Weiler et al, 2017: 102). Starting from GOV, we asked the question: How are young adults engaged in LLL policies decision-making, design, implementation and evaluation?

In general, it is clear that the young do not participate in the policy process. What is more, neither policy makers nor the young adults themselves expect to do so. None of the interviewed young men and women referred to the EU Structured Dialogue. Previous research has found that this mechanism of consultation between young people and policy makers has been established as a legitimate process through which 'youth are pursued and encouraged to make them active citizens capable, as both individuals and communities, of managing their own risk' (Banjac, 2017: 471). Examining only official documents, the author has found a proliferation of new modes of governance (p. 483). In our research on youth participation in LLL, however, the voices of the young attest to the fact that the process has not reached all groups of youth in risk, at least in the domain of LLL.

Nevertheless, we should not underestimate that there were different degrees of youth involvement in the governance of LLL. As seen from section 2, in the Southern European countries the young people often spoke about the lack of information on the various programs and schemes. It was difficult for them to make informed choice, and no opportunities to influence the design of these policies. In those countries, as well as in Croatia and Bulgaria the young complained of the poor career guidance which to inform them about the ability requirements for and prospects after the training. It was clear for the

young that there was no cooperation between the actors involved in the LLL policies. As we saw in the previous section, the counsellors at the Labor Offices did not interfere when the trainees complained that employers did not provide proper training. Again, when there were cases of psychological harassment at the workplace, the 'solution' the young woman (Y\_BG\_P\_5) found was not to turn to the responsible official at the Labor Office but to quit the program and wait for a new one.

The prospects for youth participation in the governance of the LLL policies were better in Germany and to a lesser extent in Austria. In Rhein-Main for example the young participants were highly involved in the design of the program so that it could suit the individual needs. As a young woman explained:

*I didn't know what I wanted. I just knew that I didn't want to cook. But I didn't know what else to do [...] I didn't know which profession, I only knew the direction. And they tried to find out what I actually want with career-choice-tests and such things; and helped me to find a psychologist. We have searched for such things [...] Then he [staff] thought how he could help me. Some things, like going outside, overcoming my fears, seeing that nothing bad happens when I don't speak well (Y\_GER\_F\_2).*

In one of the studied programs the young participants (Y\_GER\_F\_4, Y\_GER\_F\_5) underlined in their interviews that they could choose activities that were in addition to the program core, as well as the teacher they liked to prepare for the exams. The authors of the German report describe young adults' involvement which occurs on several levels – from setting the agenda through voluntary choices of additional offers to the lack of individualized content – and made the conclusion that participation decreased with the increase in the status of the training scheme. Tailor made counselling in flexible measures was also found in Finland and the UK but was a rare occasional practice in the three Southern and two Eastern European countries.

### **5.2.3. The perspective of life course research to young adults' experiences from lifelong learning policies (LCR)**

LCR understands the life course as age-graded life transitions (Elder 1998) of individuals taking place in the particular social context of a given society at a given historical moment and which are shaped by the interplay between societal structures and individual agency. From this perspective we interrogated our data to answer the following questions: what do the young think about the skills they have developed and what is the wider effect of the participation in LLL on young adults' life course?

In this section we examine the results from the participation in LLL programs as seen and evaluated by the young adults themselves. We first look at the skills that the young consider they have acquired in the training and those that they wished to but could not. Then we examine the wider effects that LLL policies have on the personal development and career prospects of the young women and men who were involved in the training.

---

In some countries it was difficult for the young to define the skills that they had acquired in the

schemes/programs. In Bulgaria, for example they spoke about 'being ready to work' or 'capable of doing the task' rather than about skills and competencies. In Portugal, the interviewers had to translate the questions about skills as to "*whatever you have learned during the experiences in your life*" or "*what an employer values in an employee*" (Rodrigues et al, 2017).

As expected, many young adults reported that they had acquired the competences to work in the field, which the program was designed to prepare them for. Their narratives contained enumeration of the occupational skills that they had developed and provided evidence that their expectations from the courses were met. Such positive assessment was most obvious in the interviews of the young adults in Scotland. In the engineering apprenticeship program an 18-year-old male (Y\_UK\_A\_6) who had emigrated with his family from Poland several years before was confident that he was learning how to use complex machinery. Another participant, a 21-year-old man whose father was an engineer with extensive international experience, was also highly confident in the technical skills the course was teaching him:

*And so, I came here and the first four months over here, I think, was doing our SVQ Level 1, which is pretty much the basic engineering operations and machine usage. So learning how to use the milling machines, and using the lifts (Y\_UK\_A\_1).*

In a similar way, in Germany the young adults from *Werkshule* referred to the fact that they learned many practical skills in the workshops. In Bulgaria, the young man who took the one-year training program in a large logistics company explained what he achieved as occupational skills:

*Everything is complex - client-facing (...) perfect Excel for shipment handling. In a second, you have to do 10 things at once, but you need to know what's most important. You have to satisfy the interests of both the company and the client. Because if there are no customers, there is no company (Y\_BG\_P\_12)*

An issue that was raised in the German National report was the transferability of the practical skills (Verlage et al, 2017). The programs were valued not only for the perspective to be retained in the company where the training took place but mostly because they could be young people's assets to work in other companies as well. A young man in Bremen saw the most positive result from his training at the *Werkshule* in the following way:

*I learned far more than basic skills, because we really learned a lot and lots of processing methods that can be transferred one to one to almost all crafts and trades and I think this brought me very fast forward in the craft of goldsmith (Y\_GER\_B\_1)*

Besides the concrete occupational skills, in the programs targeting early school leavers the focus was on developing basic skills such as maths. Learning the local language was also a competence that was focused on young adults with immigrant status. For those with severe health problems achieving functional abilities was the most appreciated result (Tikkanen et al, 2017). Nevertheless, most participants felt that they were building upon these skills and saw a progress in their learning

trajectories up to more complex levels. A young person in Scotland explained how his skills had improved as a result of the apprenticeship he was in:

*So, I've done my Level 1, so that's basic, really basic stuff. , they just to get you to know all the basics, getting trained up. You do your Level 2, which is a similar thing. Apprentices who have got signed on from their company, , who didn't come through (this training company), they all still come here and get training for the likes of your health and safety, all that sort of thing. It's pretty similar, Level 1, 2, and 3, but it's just more complicated, add more layers to it (Y\_UK\_A\_2).*

In all countries the interviewed young adults enumerated other competences that were normatively assigned to the 'good worker' and they thought would be useful for their integration in the labour market. Among these there were productivity, tidiness, responsibility, respect, commitment to the job. Even more traditionally oriented sounded the assertion of a young trainee in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria: *"to be disciplined and accurate are the most valuable skills"* (Y\_BG\_B\_9). In other countries however more precious were considered skills that were more liberally oriented and more suitable to the flexible labour markets such as autonomy, creativity, ambition, *'the opening towards others in a sense of adaptability, openness of mind, desire to discover, to get involved'* (Y\_IT\_G\_4). The effect of the experience from working in the civic service in Genova, Italy, was summed up by a young participant in the following way:

*Being proactive, being enterprising, another ability is to know how to be a bit 'multitasking, that is, to know how to do many things together, because now there are many inputs and ... you need to know how to manage them. To be organized to be a little flexible, flexible at the level not only of movement, because that is not a competence, that is more a personal availability ... flexible just in the sense of being able to quickly understand how you can solve a question (Interviewer says "Yes, yes"), almost as a sort of problem solving (Y\_IT\_G\_7)*

In all countries communication skills were highly valued and used interchangeably in the reports with the terms of 'soft', 'interpersonal' and 'relational' skills and 'social competences'. Mastering foreign languages, first-hand experience from different cultures and teamwork were mentioned by the young everywhere.

In contrast to those positive evaluations, a few young participants in some programs gave negative assessment of the results from their participation. Some found the training in occupational skills not enough – for example, three of the participants in the Youth Guarantee in Plovdiv considered that they did not really learn anything new from the program. In Spain, there were also some accounts that the young felt overqualified for the scheme they were in. Even those young people who appreciated some aspects of the training and gave an overall positive evaluation of their experiences in the programs, underlined that they had more skills which they had developed outside of the programs and felt that the counsellors did not appreciate these enough.

*We-e-ell, in this field it is pretty much like you learn most of these things by yourself, there is so much new information coming all the time. I've pretty much been learning these things in my free time. There weren't really anything special that I would have learned at the vocational school either (Y\_FI\_K\_4)*

In the Osijek-Baranja County in Croatia, a 20-year-old woman considered that “*More of my skills I have developed with help of my sisters then in elementary and secondary school.*” Similar accounts gave young participants in Italy, Spain and Bulgaria who perceived that they had acquired competences in accounting, farming, steel processing and car repairs through the Internet or from previous undeclared jobs:

*I have administrative and accounting office skills, since until I attended school (where I got excellent evaluations) I've learned everything I could, afterwards [her drop-out] I've learned by myself, by making undeclared services of tax returns compilation for some friends (Y\_IT\_M\_3)*

In Italy, the young trained in the Civic Service raised the issue about the problematic validation of their competences after the course. While the majority recognized the utility of the system of skills certification system, some reported difficulties related to the bureaucratic aspects of the process, in particular the construction of the “dossier”. They felt that even the trainers were not prepared to support them in this task.

*In my opinion, the path of the validation of competences has been poorly structured, the dossier of the competences in my opinion is a nonsense document, structured as it is now, in the sense that it was proposed ... it's just bureaucratic, it is very confusing...even my tutor at the time did not have clear ideas, but not because he was incompetent, but simply because he did not have the means. There was no upstream preparation. This is something that we have suffered a lot (Y\_IT\_G\_1)*

Besides listing the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills, the young reported other results from the training. Some of their expectations were not met. In Croatia and Bulgaria, the young participants expected proceeding from the program/scheme into employment. This was perhaps one of the rarest consequence from the LLL. Many young people hoped that they would stay with the employer with whom they took the training. Instead, they often had to register with the Employment office again or take another training or shot fixed-term job. They felt that such fragmented experiences would give negative signals to employers:

*Now I am a little bit ashamed to submit my CV because it has been torn, torn, torn with these (LLL) programs ... (...) I did not imagine my career like this or at least I did not want it. It's like a history, I cannot hide it.” (Y\_BG\_P\_5)*

Nevertheless, there were also success stories of a trainee in the Youth Guarantee in Plovdiv being promoted to a better-paid position and another one started self-employment in farming after finishing a scheme of an NGO. For some, while not providing employment, the experience from the LLL schemes



served as career guidance, which was particularly effective for those without definite career plans. The orientation through training worked in both directions - the young finding out that they wanted or did not want to continue in the same field. Another consequence that increased young people's employability was that they established useful contacts with employers and older and younger colleagues that could work as 'weak' ties for new applications.

Finally, for many the most significant effect of the programs was that the experience contributed to the young person's identity development. As a participant in Portugal put it: *'We not only learn the necessary skills to apply in the labor market but we also learn on a personal level (Y\_PT\_VdA\_3)*. In Spain one participant associated the wider effects of the training with becoming able to make decisions on his own (Y\_SP\_G\_2). For the young Roma man in Bulgaria the program of the non-governmental organization gave him not only money and skills to cultivate the land but also knowledge *'how to become a better person'* (Y\_BG\_P\_11). The experience was associated with increased self-confidence and self-esteem, fun and love for learning and working.

*It's a lot of fun. It's so much fun. I enjoyed it. I really did. They really make you bring out the person you didn't think you were. Like, you feel a lot more confident, speak a lot better. It just really brings out the true you. They try to focus on making you come out of your shell. Really good (Y\_UK\_A\_3)*

Many young people discovered that they gained not only higher self-confidence but also prestige in the eyes of their parents and friends. A 23-year-old woman in Italy explained that her parents who had been very disappointed by her dropping out from school, felt *'happy'* for her traineeship, saying *"You are finally awake!"* [Y\_IT\_M\_3].

In the countries in the project, the young talked about their skills in varying terms and length. All could list what they had learned in different settings, not only from the LLL schemes in which they were taking part currently or in the past. All reported valuable gains even if only in basic skills or functional abilities. Definitely, they did not consider themselves incapable and unsuited for the labour market. The young saw and appreciated much wider effects of their enrolment in the schemes besides the hard occupational skills – soft skills, abilities to plan and manage the course of their life in a better degree.

### 5.3. Conclusions on the views of young adults

In this part of the report we have seen that the young were commonly willing to take the challenge of further studies and training for their successful integration in the labour market. They evaluated their experiences from the schemes/programs positively and considered that they had developed new skills and abilities that would be useful in their future phases of their life course. Our analysis also showed that there were some mismatches from young adults' perspectives.

First, due to a lack of enough information about the programs there were mismatches between young people's expectations and the objectives of the LLL policies. When applying for the programs, many young people had expected to get an employment contract after the training but this was a rare occurrence.

Second, due to a lack of adequate career orientation mismatches occurred between young adults' interests and the skills provision in the programs. In some schemes, the young considered the training poor and claimed that they were not learning anything new. Many felt that their skills from previous experiences were not appreciated and not upgraded by the program. The young disliked being stigmatized and their abilities devalued.

Third, in many cases the young adults felt that their individual needs were not catered enough during the measures and the programs did not achieve the stated effects. Most programs were not flexible and did not allow young people's participation in their design and implementation which resulted in young people's demotivation and drop out.

In countries such as Bulgaria and Croatia, where youth transitions to employment had been clearly structured and strictly controlled during the communist regime (Kovacheva, 2001), at present young people, their families and professional advisors found that they had to pass through a whole new life stage of training and insecure jobs before settling down in more stable jobs allowing them to make the other significant life transitions such as moving to an independent housing and forming an independent family.

## 6. Views of experts

This chapter analyses the responses of the interviewed experts on lifelong learning policies in the eighteen regions. Each section draws on one of the theoretical perspectives of YOUNG\_ADULLLT<sup>1</sup>.

The first section draws on the cultural political economy (CPE) in order to explore how lifelong learning is understood on the ground. This analysis suggests some insights on how target groups are constructed through social interaction.

Although young adult interviewees are much more informative about the conditions of their life course

---

<sup>1</sup> Certainly, all partners did their best to answer as many research questions as possible in each region. However, it was not always possible to really posit a well-grounded answer in all the regions. For this reason, instead of each one, the report answers more general questions as they were condensed in Weiler et al (2017). Firstly, the lens of CPE inspired two general research questions: What are the antecedents, objectives, expected impacts and evaluation strategies of LLL policies? How do these policies construct their target groups? Do they entail some gender bias? How do these policies recognise social categories? Secondly, the LCR perspective posited these other general questions: How to LLL policies take into account the living conditions, family responsibilities and civil engagement of young adults? Do LLL policies foster the autonomy of young adults and help them to reduce their biographical uncertainty? Thirdly, GOV inquires to what extent these issues were observable: Which actors are involved in LLL policies? How do these actors coordinate their activity? To whom are LLL policies accountable? How do LLL policies deal with multi-level "wicked problems"?

(LCR), the experts' responses account for the impact of policies on those life courses. Properly, this is not an analysis of impact. By scrutinising how experts speak about impacts, it is possible to spell out the official expectations regarding the life conditions and the autonomy of the beneficiaries.

The interviews also report on the importance of governance based on hierarchies, markets, networks and communities in the regions (GOV). Some diagrams illustrate a variety of governance networks in four of these regions. As a rule, lifelong learning policies have been deployed on the lines of hierarchical governance, but networks are crucial in many regions. It is noticeable that in Finland governance also relies on community-based participation.

The EU member states are clustered into three groupings in order to answer some questions. In Austria, Finland, Germany and Scotland (UK) lifelong learning policies<sup>2</sup> are mostly implemented by a scheme of apprenticeships. A further set of programmes caters for young people with particular needs. In Italy, Portugal and Spain, the authorities did not develop such a core of apprenticeships so far. Since some incipient apprenticeships seem to be in the making, lifelong learning policies eventually aim at both strengthening these apprenticeships and responding to special circumstances. Finally, in Bulgaria and Croatia the experts basically state that they comply with official guidelines, which mostly attempt to reform previously established school-based systems of vocational education and training.

These clusters are instrumental to highlight varying connections between the objectives of the policies, the professional knowledge of the experts, the social construction of the target groups, the mainstream expectations on young adults' life courses, and the building of governance networks. Remarkably, the exercise of exploring clusters unveils how the rationale of policies, the views of professionals and the arrangements of governance are related in different ways. The findings suggest many questions for further analysis, and generally speaking, outline policy alternatives for decision-makers.

Nonetheless, despite these heuristic and pragmatic contributions, the groupings do not aim at distinguishing different institutional regimes that align the member states of the EU. Neither this is the goal of the analysis, nor any research question pointed at any distinction of possible regimes.

### **6.1. How do authorities understand lifelong learning policies in eighteen EU regions?**

YOUNG\_ADULLLT qualitative analysis attempts to answer some questions on how authorities understand lifelong learning policies. A first set of questions point at how they make sense of the antecedents, define the objectives, envisage the desirable effects, and evaluate the effective impacts.

---

<sup>2</sup> YOUNG\_ADULLLT adopted a wide definition of lifelong learning policies. However, experts did not label active labour market policies, education policies and social policies in these terms according to a consistent rule. The gap is particularly important in Scotland for two reasons. First, there training and employability are associated to finding jobs in a short term, while lifelong learning is identified as a type of action in a much longer term. Second, both experts and young adults are concerned with specific problems regarding school-based guidance and availability of apprenticeships. They feel these problems are more imminent than the longer time horizons of lifelong learning suggest. Despite these significant national qualifications, the report uses 'lifelong learning' in the same way for all the countries.

Roughly, the evidence collected through interviews with experts suggests that in some countries the regional authorities have a 'theory of change' about the links between all these components (Pawson, 2006). A second set of questions inquire how the experts coin an image of the target groups. Their perceptions and their routine practices certainly impinge on how the beneficiaries of the policies are represented (Lipsky, 1969). Apparently, YOUNG\_ADULLLT experts emphasise the diversity of target groups when lifelong learning policies are underpinned by a theory of change. However, experts construct more simplified images when this is not the case. Then, a number of them engage in some stereotyping.

In Austria, Finland, Germany and Scotland (UK), the authorities have elaborated a systematic theory of change of lifelong learning policies. Many experts working for the Austrian Federal, Länder and local governments share the view that vulnerable young adults must have an initial experience of employment before undertaking any measure of lifelong learning. Finnish authorities label their approach as 'public- private- people- partnership'. The German experts assume that apprenticeships open meaningful pathways for most youngster except those who live certain special circumstances. Albeit in a different vein, Scottish authorities have explicitly worded their theory of change as the Employment Pipeline. That is, these four authorities draw on a theory of change made of a systematic set of factual claims on the expected outcomes of lifelong learning policies. These approaches lead experts to emphasise the diversity of the target groups lifelong learning policies are catering for.

In Austria, the experts argue that some innovative strategies are necessary to guarantee that young adults enter the labour market and cope with job requirements in the middle term. They point out that course-based teaching is not effective to keep vulnerable students involved in their apprenticeships and vocational education. In their view, the evaluation of antecedents clearly indicates that hands-on approaches are more promising. Instead of making the beneficiaries feel comfortable, professionals are now required to confront them with the unpleasant reality of work so that they envision their future if they quit VET.

*We moved away from the concept to just place people, or young people, in the usual courses organized by the AMS [the Austrian PES]. Thus away from the theoretical. Because that does not work at all, to take the seventeenth AMS course. But to place people concretely in employment, yes (...) It's really close to reality, because it almost is, I don't know, a brutal way of showing young adults quite plainly: I am now, I don't know, 20 years old, I did not train for anything, I have never worked before, I have not attended any proper school and these are my possibilities on the labor market right now and this is actually shit, yes. I was thinking yesterday (...) There is a cooperation with the company 'Easy', they produce cream machines. A machine cannot assemble them. This means that the single parts are delivered and then they are assembled manually. And that's what they [young adults] are doing there. You have to imagine that, at the age of 20 (Expert, Vienna, AT)*

Finland developed a Youth Guarantee Scheme before the European Council adopted a legal

Recommendation on this topic in 2013 (Council of Europe, 2013). The Finnish approach follows a cycle including participation as a key milestone.

*The youth guarantee promotes inclusion of the young people through three approaches: help these young people back into education, training or employment; develop youth services to promote social inclusion; and create a context for collecting feedback from young people [on] how the services work for them, and how the measures adopted function, and in addition what needs to be improved (Ministry Education and Culture - Finland, 2012).*

The regional authorities attempt to develop services that accomplish some intermediate, necessary outcomes for the final goal. These services aim at empowering young adults, improving their functional abilities and self-confidence, facilitating civic participation, and teaching them life management, study, and social skills.

*I mean everyone has difficulties in admitting their own problems and challenges in life. And when you talk and talk and talk about them, they become something you don't have to be ashamed of. (---) Finding them and talking about them has in a way influenced the fact that this young person finds it easier to accept themselves and get experiences of success and so on. So that all kinds of support and help are incredibly important there. (Expert, Southwest Finland, FI).*

In the rural region of Kainuu, the experts add a further concern with social inclusion. Lifelong learning policies face more difficult operational and social problems in this context. One of the selected measures particularly endeavours to equip early leavers of apprenticeships with the basic skills they will later need to pursue their training in any speciality.

*Here the young person has an opportunity to think. For starters, many have a chance to get control of their lives, because we have these school drop-outs and underachievers who have skived off through comprehensive school or haven't found their own right place. So for them this is the right place, because here they have a year to think [about choosing a field of vocational education]. (Expert, Kainuu, FI)*

The German researchers of YOUNG\_ADULLLT interpret that the lifelong learning policies rely on an informal theory of change. In their view, lifelong learning policies constitute an institutional system in Frankfurt so much so that different measures cater to different needs. In the view of the expert interviewees in this region, while basic skills posit a baseline, the compensation of individual deficits equips the beneficiaries with more elaborate instruments. Then, empowerment and qualification foster their employability. In Bremen, each policy tackles different needs, and eventually, employability is the cornerstone of the system. Actually, in Bremen the main policies are designed in order to address youth unemployment and drop-out rates.

In Scotland, the Employability Pipeline illustrates how a theory of change patterns lifelong learning. The Pipeline maps out a series of actions that are expected to underpin the work readiness, the skills and the employability of beneficiaries. A first type of actions foster engagement. Then, a second type conducts needs assessment. The conclusions of this assessment lead to vocational activity, which is the third step instead of a single action in response to unemployment. The forth action is employers' assessment. Afterwards, in-work support is also deployed as a fifth step (Minister for Employability and Training- Scotland, 2018).

Thus, in an interview project manager insisted that young people should become aware that there are many different ways into the workplace. A colleague reminded of the need to ensure young adults' aspirations make sense in the labour market. This expert conveyed these views in an expressive way:

*(Young adults) are looking everywhere for role models. They've just got to try and pick the right role model and they (will want) to achieve* (Expert, Glasgow, UK)

Each of the analysed programmes qualifies this general framework in its own terms. One aims at improving industry links with education and getting more young people into work. Other programmes want to 'get them into work' and 'to try to engage with people (who have) a very challenging set of barriers'. In order to engage with the community, Scottish programmes write clauses into public contracts signed with firms so that they include training and employment obligations and other benefits for the local communities where the work is taking place, 'to create employment opportunities'. Some beneficiaries attend on a voluntary basis, while other ones referring to these programmes by welfare services. However, all programmes expect to keep motivation high. This is a novel approach in the country. Experts claim that many previous strategies have to be reviewed. At the same time, they require the business community to undertake a similar cultural change.

*Employers are not yet sufficiently committed to training and employing young workers, even with these subsidies. A cultural change is needed in their attitudes* (Expert, Glasgow UK)

In all these countries, experts insist that the target groups are extremely heterogeneous. In Austria, they claim that target groups are very diverse. While some beneficiaries lack a compulsory school certificate and suffer learning difficulties, others have upper secondary certificates and a lot of work experience. Correlatively, some programmes struggle to attract their target group, while others normally match with the strategies of better-educated young adults quite smoothly.

Finnish interviewees report on how they provide support to youth who experience a wide variety of difficulties.

*The biggest problems are social issues, but then there are economic problems, and simply matters of becoming independent, like when you have moved in your own home and then you can't cope there, you can't cook or take care of the bills. I process these issues with them and*

*often help to sort them out. And I remind them and push them on to take care of their business, and guide them to see the right people; I help the young people to cope with life. And we often talk about all kinds of other problems with these young people as well. Some may have boyfriend trouble and then they cry over breakups. And then there are also economic matters. We just talk these things over with a young person and guide them and say that hey, you are not the only person to struggle with those problems, and now you simply go out there and take care of this* (Expert, Southwest Finland, FI)

In Bremen and Frankfurt, an encompassing apprenticeship scheme includes most young adults. However, German experts elaborated on the contribution of programmes, which are tailored to potential apprentices who are going through some special circumstances. Besides social exclusion, teen pregnancy or recent arrival as a refugee, are particularly visible circumstances.

In Scotland, most young adults either undertake an apprenticeship or go to university. However, a number of them cannot meet the necessary conditions for many reasons. The pathway of many was disrupted by the 2008 economic downturn. Either they did not find a place or the company closed before they completed it, or they were made redundant. Experts also report that some young adults are resented because there are many programmes for the 16-19 age group but the 20-29 group is overlooked.

In contrast, employment services have recently decided to frame their training programmes within some understanding of lifelong learning in Italy, Portugal and Spain. The interviews capture reiterative comments of many experts regarding the weakness of previous programmes who had exclusively conveyed training. They argue that compensatory education of early school leaving, counselling, guidance and supervised job experience should not be overlooked.

Neither the interviews nor the official documentation provide enough evidence that policy designs convey systematic theories of change in these countries. That is, in order to conclude that either the programmes are or are not inspired on any systematic set of factual claims, a further analysis of experts' views, programme outlines and evaluation reports should be carried out. Any further interpretation would not be reliable without this extra content analysis.

On the other hand, the qualitative analysis finds out a tendency of professionals to deploy deficit approaches in these countries. Although many vacillations are quite noticeable in the six regions localised in these member states, it is plausible to observe that some experts indirectly hinted or even explicitly emphasised that vulnerable young adults are somehow responsible for their own adversity.

In Italy, regional institutional differences are more noticeable than in the other countries. In Milano, all young adults are endowed with an number of vouchers ("*Dote Unica*") they can use to pay for any training they need. Although some causal beliefs on competition between providers are likely to ground this scheme, it is extremely hard to highlight specific statements from the interviews. Actually,

managers were really aware of this scheme, but street-level professionals and young adults barely referred to the vouchers. In Genoa, YOUNG\_ADULLLT researchers analysed how vulnerable young adults were enrolled in the civil service, which previously mostly attracted middle-class young adults. This scheme provides an income benefit for a fixed term in compensation for some community work. Once again, it is not easy to spell out a general, underlying theory of change.

Italian experts regretted quite explicitly how demotivated the beneficiaries of both the vouchers and the civil service were. Some of these professionals even said that these youth were 'lazy'. The following excerpt illustrates these views.

*If there is a little effort... They collapse! [...] Because young people are like that... I've noticed that... they have no flexibility (Expert, Genoa, IT)*

*Sometimes there are great successes, and we are happy for those who get better ... but there is a percentage that at the end of the project turn back to its former status ... there is no way to make him understand that ... I'm a bit spoiled, they give me the feeling of being a bit spoiled, a bit empty..., they do not have big interests or hobbies, even when you ask them what they do in the afternoon, if they have a sport activity, if they have something to do, a passion .. no, no they trend towards to see friends and anything else. They live in a low socio-cultural level and actually they are not stimulated at home, in no direction. Then I have the cases... few ones, but someone I had, young mothers.. about twenty years old with children, many foreigners, actually it makes a little 'impression to see a twenty year old girl with two children and them ... but that is a bit of a separate discussion... (Expert, Milano, IT)*

In Portugal, lifelong learning policies are allegedly universal but eventually target the most vulnerable young adults. Since an overwhelming majority of middle-class youth undertake tertiary education, only those who struggle with their secondary education apply for training related to employment. Professionals are quite doubtful on how to account for their situation. On the other hand, they refer to poor coordination between areas of social policy in order to notice that some external factors constrain the opportunities of these youth.

In Litoral Alentejano, experts often ended up with responses that blame the beneficiaries of the programmes for their language, demeanour and clothing. However, it is remarkable that this was not the case in Vale do Ave. No interviewee posited this argument in that region.

*Now we always do prep sessions. I do prep sessions where I not only tell them what behaviour they should have, what is expected of them. The type of language, what ... is the language they use, cannot be the language they use with each other, when we are talking about how they greet the intern tutor or how they greet fellow interns, how they behave in the workplace, receiving orders with humility and simplicity, these are always things I ask them to be careful about, not using the mobile phone, because it is always a temptation, the kind of*



*clothing they take to workplace. This type of advice is important not only for the internship but also for the future when they are working (Expert, Litoral Alentejano, PT).*

In Spain, vocational training was institutionalised at the same time as the country entered the European Common Market in the eighties. Unions and local governments were funded to provide course-centred training to many low-skilled and unemployed people, many of which were youth looking for their first job. The amount and the type of courses eventually depended on the availability of funds. In addition, some private providers and some regional governments have been charged with fraud because they misused these funds in several ways. Therefore, currently employment services are not only piloting new designs of these schemes but also reinforcing budget tracking and transparency. The point is that the undergoing fiscal constraints and the general concern with fiscal inspection often curtail decisions to scale up these reforms.

YOUNG\_ADULLLT researchers investigated a new training programme in Girona. This programme not only provides counselling and job experiences besides training but also lengthens the period of attention from the usual extension of a few months up to two years. The Catalan Employment Service opens regular calls so that non-profits gather in larger joint ventures that submit their projects. Although the on-going reflection on the need to broaden the range of activities clearly hints the need to define some rationale based on previous evaluation, so far it is extremely hard to pinpoint a set of specific claims that may constitute a theory of change.

In this vein, it is quite telling how a manager of the programme described the target group. Although she argued that diverse profiles of young people were catered for, the point is that she was mostly portraying the most vulnerable categories of young adults. Her argument strongly suggests that many social services welcome TP24 as a new solution for their beneficiaries, who are affected by the most serious social problems.

*The programme caters to very heterogeneous types of young people. Only a few of them live with their parents. The majority shares a flat with friends. Some of them grew up in foster care homes. A few of these youth are homeless. Sometimes I am told an eighteen- years- old girl will have a leave, I ask why, and I learn she is pregnant. Besides, I am continuously contacted by other public services that want to send their beneficiaries to the programme. For example, they may ask for a place for youth who have been extremely disruptive either in previous trainings or in their family life. They may also ask for places for youth with mental health problems or youth on probation. But we can seldom admit these ones, because we are mostly an employment rather than a health or a social service (Expert, Girona, SP).*

These observations cannot be automatically projected over the experts that were interviewed in Málaga. There, YOUNG\_ADULLLT researchers mostly interviewed in a vocational school that teaches courses leading to official qualifications. Therefore, experts were not involved in these pilot projects but in specialised courses that equipped students with recognised certificates to join established

professions. Despite this strong support, it is noticeable that these experts were quite sceptic on the possibility that their students would eventually avail from these qualifications.

*To be honest, firms exploit this cheap labour. These youngsters enter the labour market with a public guarantee because they did not have any job previously. So, the firms know that if they do not fit, eventually we will provide another young worker* (Expert, Málaga, SP)

Finally, in Bulgaria and Croatia experts did not respond to YOUNG\_ADULLLT interviews by elaborating on the rationale of lifelong learning policies. Apparently, the social and economic transition that took place in the recent decades shaped different social conditions in these countries. The available evidence cannot underpin a proper policy analysis of the rationale and the definition of target groups.

In Bulgaria, most respondents simply glossed over the discourse of the incumbent administration. The only exception incurred in sheer denigrative references to the Roma population when explaining why vulnerable young adults were eligible for a social benefit.

*(We work with) young Roma, in the sense of young mothers, single mothers, uneducated mothers, because they are between 14 and 18 years of age and you should know that the young Roma already at the age of 27-28 they have 5-6-7-8 children, some of them... So, ... they have been granted rights for years, and their consciousness is that ... they have the right to everything but have no obligations. They do not have a duty to study, they have no obligation to give anything to society* (Expert, Plovdiv, BU)

In Croatia, since experts were not at all familiar with the jargon of public policy and European governance, they did not deal with the details either. At most, they hinted some features of the target population, which once again remit to an ethnic order.

*We took into consideration the fact that we have to investigate what vulnerable youth groups are and to encourage their involvement with society. The problem is that those young people don't gather, they are in the Roma People Council of Pula and the Roma People Council of the Istria FR, they are followers of the older, their involvement doesn't get noticed* (Expert, Istria, CRO)

## **6.2. How do lifelong learning policies affect the life course of young adults in eighteen EU regions?**

The qualitative analysis of YOUNG\_ADULLLT research project answers questions about the life conditions and the biography of the beneficiaries of lifelong learning policies (Heinz et al, 2009). To start with, expert interviewees show a wide-ranging consensus on the possible effects of these policies

on young adults. Experts share informed views on their life courses, not least because they realise the youth make their way through different spheres of activity. Vocational training is the main space where both social actors meet, but as a rule, professionals are well aware of the importance of previous education, other work experiences, opportunities in the labour market and other aspects. On these grounds, they normally claim that the policies make a positive contribution to the autonomy of the beneficiaries in many ways. For instance, they argue that lifelong learning reinforces the self-esteem of the beneficiaries, teach them how real work is, challenge some ethnic prejudices, and push them towards psychological maturity. They also state that these policies endow the beneficiaries with some necessary tools for coping with biographical uncertainty. Learning about the labour market is one of these tools.

In the whole European Union, public opinion continuously transmits news on the bleak life conditions of the cohorts who suffered the financial crisis in their adolescence, their twenties and even their thirties. Unsurprisingly, experts are well informed of the life conditions, the risk of unemployment and the precarious prospects of these age groups in many regions. This is a common place not only in the eight regions of the sample where lifelong learning policies respond to an explicit set of causal beliefs. Even those experts who sometimes blame the vulnerable youth for their position admit that the general circumstances are hard for all of them. This statement of fact raises a general consensus regardless of the mainstream approach and the economic conjuncture of the countries.

However, the connections between education and employment are not the only spheres of life that experts take into account. In the same way as this consensus is quite telling, it is remarkable that in any country experts focused on the leisure of young adults extensively. This thematic ordering was not at all imposed by the interview schedules, which openly asked for the respondents to choose their particular topics of interest. Probably, it makes sense to frame this lacuna within a comparative perception of minors and grown-up students. While schools and leisure education initiatives are increasingly concerned with the personal relationships, the sport activity, the creativity and the digital literacy of minors, a sense of prudence leads experts in lifelong learning not to intrude in these aspects of the life of the above 19- years- olds that were interviewed by YOUNG\_ADULLLT.

Moreover, it is important to write down that some programmes take care of issues depending on family conciliation. Although fertility normally is common at later ages in most European societies, the point is that early motherhood is a well-known situation for a group of female young adults. Compared to teen pregnancy, it is unjustified to deal with this circumstance as a bad experience that should be strongly prevented. In fact, for some of them it is a trait of important and very meaningful cultural differences. Experts commented on this topic in Austria and Frankfurt (Germany). They did not in Finland, but researchers understood other services and facilities were available (and compatible) beyond the realm of lifelong learning. The point is that, although some young adult interviewees declared to be mothers, in other regions, conciliation was not openly associated with lifelong learning.

A crucial finding of qualitative analysis has to do with the potential of young adults who undertake

lifelong learning. As a rule, experts commonly answer general questions about their biography with encouraging observations. Despite adversity and many institutional predicaments and some stereotypes, experts are generally satisfied with the effect of lifelong learning on their eventual autonomy. Certainly, this is not a conclusive finding on impact, but the following excerpts of experts' responses strongly suggest that policy evaluation should look for more fine-grained evidence of these effects.

Many interviewees highlight that lifelong learning experiences significantly strengthen the self-esteem of young adults. The reader can simply go through the list of quotations presented below. Many references are quite expressive. They realise that 'learning does not have to be painful'. Social exclusion can be prevented by showing what they are capable of: 'when they start to open up and discover that' they can do satisfactory things, 'the courage comes out a little bit'. They 'gain the taste for study'. 'One thing that has emerged (...) is that everybody is happy to do something'. An extremely shy boy ended up becoming a volunteer in community activities. The quotes were proposed by researchers working in Austria, Croatia, Finland, Italy and Portugal. The geographical, socio-economic and cultural diversity of these countries is extremely significant, but the experts came to a very similar conclusion.

*Since „Du kannst was!“ I know, that I can learn. No one had expected this from me, that I know something. But now, I proofed it, the feeling of self-esteem has increased. (...) We have one guy, who trained for two occupations via 'Du kannst was!' and he's studying law now, because he also did his university entrances exam. people often experience during the participation in 'Du kannst was!' that learning does not have to be painful. And for me, the final exam is not that important. The almost most important thing is that people start learning. Because then they acquire a taste for it (Expert, Upper Austria, AT)*

*Our goal is to solve how to activate young people, to wake them up and get them motivated about their own lives, whether it is a case of going to school or work or rehabilitation, or strengthening their self-esteem. Our objective here is to solve these problems that young people have. (---) I feel like we are pulling these young people away from social exclusion, and it is no longer a question of preventive work. Especially now, these young people have in their own words been socially excluded for a long time, but maybe we can prevent (...) They already evaluate themselves and what they are like and what they can do, but when they start to open up and discover that hey, I can do quite a lot and I am actually a good guy, it is a big deal. (---) The courage comes out a little bit when you get to tell people about yourself, and when we practice job interviews we videotape them if that is what the young person wants. We record it on video, do the job interview and then watch the tape. The young person then watches it like an employer would and considers if they would hire themselves (Expert, Kainuu, FI)*

*As you know the modular structure allows the pedagogical differentiation and different teaching methods and techniques, giving much more attention to the students. A much more*

*personalized teaching, which gives us immense work, to teachers, but also gets better results. (...) and there are many students who need this to continue, to gain the taste for study, to do something. Here, therefore, the student has much more attention. One knows exactly ... of course the classes are smaller, one can know exactly, make the correct diagnosis of some problem, if it is at the cognitive level, if it is at the socio-affective (Expert, Litoral Alentejano, PT).*

*One thing that has emerged and that I find so nice is that everyone or almost everyone, even if there are difficulties, is happy to do something... They say: "finally I do something" and it is the thing that they scared, the thing that makes them a bit 'out of that catatonic state, "I get up in the morning I leave about 8 am.. because the majority, apart from a couple who have done full time, have only 4 hours per day, 4 / 6 hours, it's a regular appointment, I get up in the morning and I go, I do, it's nice. The thing that really change them it is they can be out of that very negative circumstances, they can prove themselves they are able to do something because in my opinion they also have the doubt about themselves to be unable to do anything (Expert, Milano, IT).*

*I think the biggest results are the personal feelings that the young people have learnt or received something. I do not deal with numbers, but we see the improvement in the behaviour and life perspective of a person that has been using our services for a while. One boy came to one of our workshops and wanted to leave in the middle of it, but ended up staying as a volunteer. He had some personal problems, however, he was closed off as a person. With time he made such a big change in himself. I cannot explain this to anyone or measure it, there isn't a very big number of such situations, but every such person is a personal best for me (Expert, Osijek-Baranja County, CRO).*

A very broad conception of functional literacy also posits another argument on the potential impact of lifelong learning in the European Union. Functional literacy can be measured as basic cognitive skills related to reading, numeracy and problem-solving, as the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) does. However, other correlative aspects cannot be measured but must be taken into account too.

For instance, in Frankfurt PmP professionals start with teaching such skills as using the public transport system and putting bills in order. Other examples come from the reaction of Roma women in Vale do Ave, practical teaching in Málaga and telling the story of one's own expertise in Genoa. These illustrations are not so easy to estimate as the OECD statistics, but all of them indicate how interactive, malleable, creative and promising functional literacy may become.

*For example, the people who for many years stood at the door of the school and are now adults can return, perhaps, to school's external offer. This is the case of women, who have a lower certification rate (...) [or the] Roma ethnic group, of which there is still a large group here*

*in Guimarães, who do not know how to read or write, and therefore a way to reduce this discrimination is to make them literate (Expert, Vale do Ave, PT).*

*They change a lot, it's more, you see the change... You see the difference very much like... any professional can tell you:" In a year and a half, in two years, the boy who entered is... he totally changes his mind. " Eh... you find a kid, when he comes in aggressively, but we're talking in general terms, or... I mean, every single... Each individual is... It's different... There are... Kids who are aggressive, kids who are very shy... With very mu... Almost all with very little self-esteem, training in workshop-school and who daily realize that they are able to do something, they are learning something, especially practical, what they need is practical, and see that... what they do, and see, they have built it [...] That, motivationally, at the level of individual self-esteem. [...] At the level of personal growth, there is an incredible change in that... in that year and a half (Expert, Málaga, SP)*

*The proposal was to support the path of Civic Service 6 months with a path of construction of a dossier, where you can tell the service you are doing... it was aimed to identifying one or more skills, obtained during the Civic Service. [...] but, about knowledge, if you don't have an educational qualification, it is impossible to prove them (Expert, Genoa, IT).*

Finally, a third set of excerpts from interviews reports on the employment opportunities that lifelong learning policies also open. In Glasgow, an expert highlighted the contribution of training to the opportunities of young adults.

*The expansion of modern apprenticeships is probably the thing that we do that impacts most on the learning and training opportunities for young people. That is where our focus is just now. So we support employers to recruit young people and where we can we try to influence them to do that with some level of training, learning and development (Expert, Glasgow, Scotland)*

Comparatively low unemployment also posits favourable circumstances in Finland, where experts may foresee a stage of personal resilience before entering the labour market.

*There are many things related to on-the-job learning and employment. For example, if on-the-job learning isn't going well or you can't find a place there, or you have many challenges with working life, then we might think that this person may have problems with life management in general, because these things go hand in hand. In these cases they may need more extensive support and we can be in contact with different parties. So if a worklife coach sees that a student is facing a huge amount of different challenges, for example, regarding their health, they will certainly guide the student forward to see a public health nurse or a social worker. Or if it comes up that they have challenges at home or something, then of course we will start to work things out; there is no way the student is ready to enter working life if he or she is facing*

*a ton of challenges* (Expert, Southwest Finland, FI)

In Bulgaria, lifelong learning is a valuable option for young adults who live with their relatives because their parents emigrated. There, they 'learn to work'. Even in countries that are suffering hard economic crises, experts think that policies teach 'the stuff that helps you advance in your professional life'. 'Practical courses' yield 'better results'. Students learn to figure out what employers think of them.

*I think that the people who participate motivated in such a project have quite good future prospects. Why? Because this is just the stuff that helps you advance in your professional life. It's not just about education and training. It's also about how you present yourself. It's also about, does someone seize an opportunity or not? The future prospects of the people here who just participate without some sort of intrinsic motivation, I don't think that their prospects are particularly good* (Expert, Vienna, AT).

*As they are more practical courses, we necessarily have more interested kids, so we have necessarily better results, because these kids, as they have a very large practical dimension, end up filling in practice the difficulties they have in the theoretical or any difficulties they have in the theoretical part. They are enthusiastic about the practical part, the practical part is for them a stimulus* (Expert, Litoral Alentejano, PT).

*Yes, the problem is that we want to climb the mountain but we don't know how. We'd better deliver strategies to them. "If you do this course, you will take the certificate you need to do that". Some people see that. But for me, it is often difficult to put myself in their shoes. But someone has to tell them because they don't see it. Maybe a 16 years old kid will look for a job in a storage and he won't be conscious that he is not going to be hired because he has not the training, he has not the experience* (Expert, Girona, SP)

To wrap up, in the view of the interviewed experts, lifelong learning policies make a difference in the life course of young adults. These experts are aware of the multiple dimensions of these life courses, which navigate not only vocational training but also previous education and job opportunities. Crucially, experts are confident that these policies contribute to the well-being of the beneficiaries to the extent that strengthen their self-esteem, identify new ways to foster functional literacy, and eventually underpin their employability. Although this section does not estimate the 'real' impact of the policies, certainly these findings suggest interesting questions for further, fine-grained evaluations of the policies.

### **6.3. How are lifelong learning policies governed in eighteen EU regions?**

Lifelong learning policies are delivered by an array of public services. A quick comparison with education is enough to notice that not all students enrol in lifelong learning at the same point in their life. As a result, people take different routes where they have previously contacted many public

services. At the same time, if lifelong learning policies are to contribute to employment through some vocational education and training, it is obvious that the business sector must eventually play a role.

The coordination of such a heterogeneous set of stakeholders is defined as governance. Governments pass and enact laws in a top-down way but cannot gather the contributions of the inevitably diverse stakeholders of lifelong learning policies by command. Therefore, complex articulations of political actors are woven at national, sub-national and supra-national geographical scales (Mayntz, 2009).

YOUNG\_ADULLLT interviewed experts in eighteen regions within the European Union. The European Council (2013) has been influential in the design of lifelong learning policies in these regions, not least because it passed a Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee Scheme in 2013. Significantly, this is a piece of soft law for a good reason, since both command and persuasion are necessary to implement such a scheme throughout the EU. The governments of the member states have also a say, not least because they sit in the Council and will eventually be accountable to their own peers in that forum. Regional and local governments are at stake too. The business sector normally voices its own messages on what lifelong learning should be and how it should be governed. It is a necessary component of any scheme if students are to undertake apprenticeships, but additionally, it also campaigns for imposing its own projects. Businesses are publicly visible through institutions such as the Chambers of Commerce in many EU countries.

Civil society organisations are normally engaged too. Unions, community associations, youth associations, churches, sports clubs and voluntary organisations often claim they contribute to lifelong learning. In most regions, they also endorse particular projects on how it should be.

How is this wide array of stakeholders coordinated? YOUNG\_ADULLLT aims at getting some insight by looking beyond the national scale. There, legal developments and institutionalised policy actors are quite visible, but decisions are not always sensitive to the complexities of the local context. However, students look for lifelong learning precisely at this level. For this reason, the interviews with 100 experts in eighteen regions inquired how regional policies are governed at varied sub-national scales. The following paragraphs highlight a few regularities and portray a brief description of governance in four regions, namely: Bremen (Germany), Girona (Spain), Plovdiv (Bulgaria) and South West Finland.

The analysis finds out that hierarchical governance prevails in a variable degree. Although the governance of lifelong learning does not only rely on this mode of governance, in fact, hierarchical governance is quite decisive everywhere. Unsurprisingly, the main problems of implementation are rooted in some inevitable features of bureaucracy.

It is necessary to remind that all modes of governance contain their own mechanisms to wreak havoc. Sometimes markets lead to systemic failure. Networks may either link or isolate people. That is, governing lifelong learning with hierarchies provokes a given type of dysfunctional effects in the same



way as each mode of governance does. An observation of these effects is extremely helpful to assess what is happening in EU regions. However, this observation does not at all suggest that other combinations of hierarchical, market and network governance would be more effective.

According to the interviews, three main problems hinder the smooth implementation of lifelong learning policies in the eighteen functional regions studied by YOUNG\_ADULLLT. Each of them is rooted in the functioning of bureaucracy in a particular way.

- The first problem is the extreme difficulty to design programmes, which are tailored to a specific circumstance of life. That is an inevitable predicament if the programmes have to guarantee a social right, since the growing diversity of life courses necessarily multiplies these circumstances. In Austria, Finland, Germany and Scotland (UK), the experts elaborate on this issue. A mere list of these circumstances clearly illustrates how complex the problems are. While risks of social exclusion have been often noticed to put some pressure on lifelong learning, eventually mental health, asylum- seeker status, motherhood and Circadian rhythms currently posit huge challenges to many European young adults.
- The second problem derives from the institutional grounding of local governments. Municipalities are the main political arena for many youth. These levels of government are quite active in building innovative forms of regional and local governance of lifelong learning in countries such as Finland or Scotland. They are also crucial components of Federal systems such as the Austrian and the German. However, the institutional grounding of municipalities is much weaker in Bulgaria and Croatia. In Portugal, their action is subordinated to the central government. In Spain, they have pioneered many initiatives of youth work, but their power is severely weakening due to structural reforms deployed to counteract the fiscal crisis.
- The third problem is conflict. Most experts state that coordination is really cooperative in their region, since stakeholders work together almost as a team. Nonetheless, some exceptions are noticeable. In Andalusia, corruption scandals shook vocational training a few years ago. Consequently, the array of policies has been under rigorous surveillance afterwards, and innovation has become extremely hard. Underground, hidden competition between private providers was detected in Girona. There, experts regretted that some organisations really hoarded the local candidates to any policy related to the Youth Guarantee Scheme. Finally, a conflict between NGOs and local authorities emerged in Bulgaria and Croatia. In these two countries, local experts are not fully confident of their position at the same time as NGOs continuously insist on the need to overhaul the national approach to lifelong learning. Coordination seems to suffer in the midst of such strain.

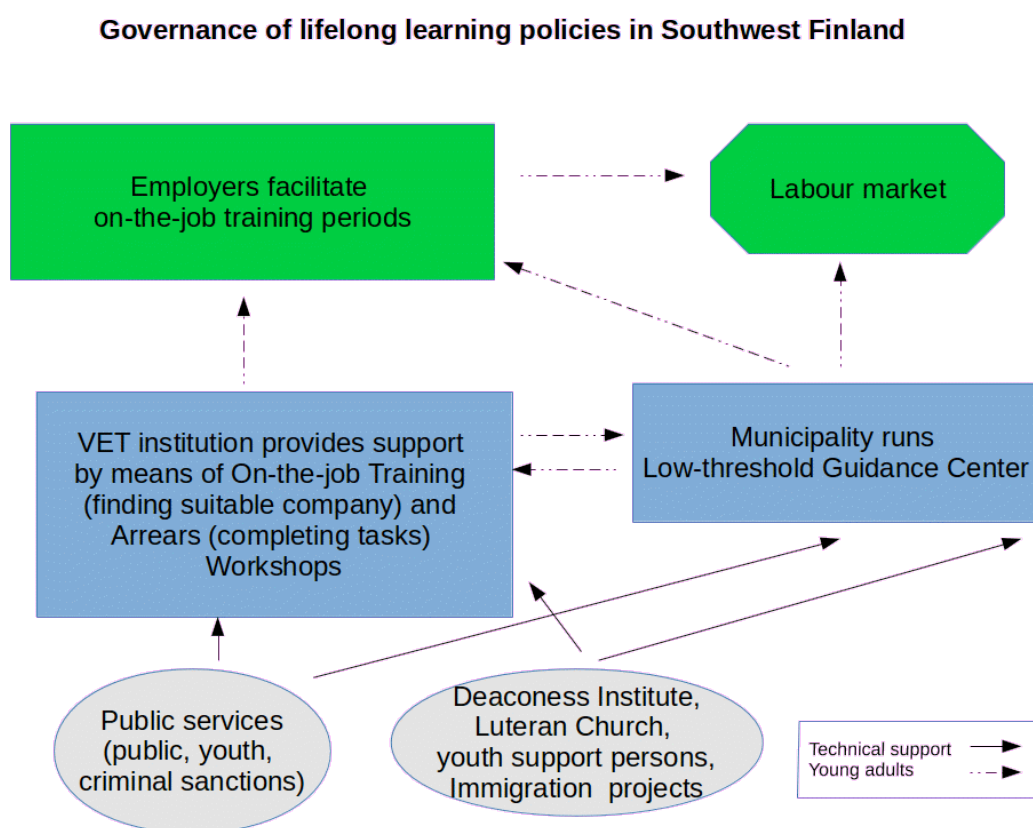
Besides hierarchies, networks are a crucial component of governance everywhere. Drawing on the national reports, it is plausible to notice that network governance is established in Austria, Finland, Germany and Scotland (UK). It seems to be changing in Italy, Portugal and Spain, where experts wish

some sort of paradigm shifts. Networks are weak in Bulgaria and Croatia too. This point can be significantly qualified by more detailed portraits of a few regions. Thus, Figure 1 plots the relevant networks in Southwest Finland, Figure 2 in Bremen, Figure 3 in Girona, and Figure 4 in Plovdiv<sup>3</sup>.

In Southwest Finland, lifelong learning policies mostly aim at guaranteeing on-the-job training to all young adults. It is remarkable how varied and meshed the network of stakeholders is. In addition, it is reasonable to conclude that community governance is also at stake in both this region and Kainuu. The young adults who benefit from some lifelong learning policies have a clear say on how these policies should be. Not only the official theory of change but also experts are explicit about that:

*And the third essential objective is tied to one of our themes, which is youth participation, in that young people are involved in developing this operation (Expert, Southwest Finland, FI)*

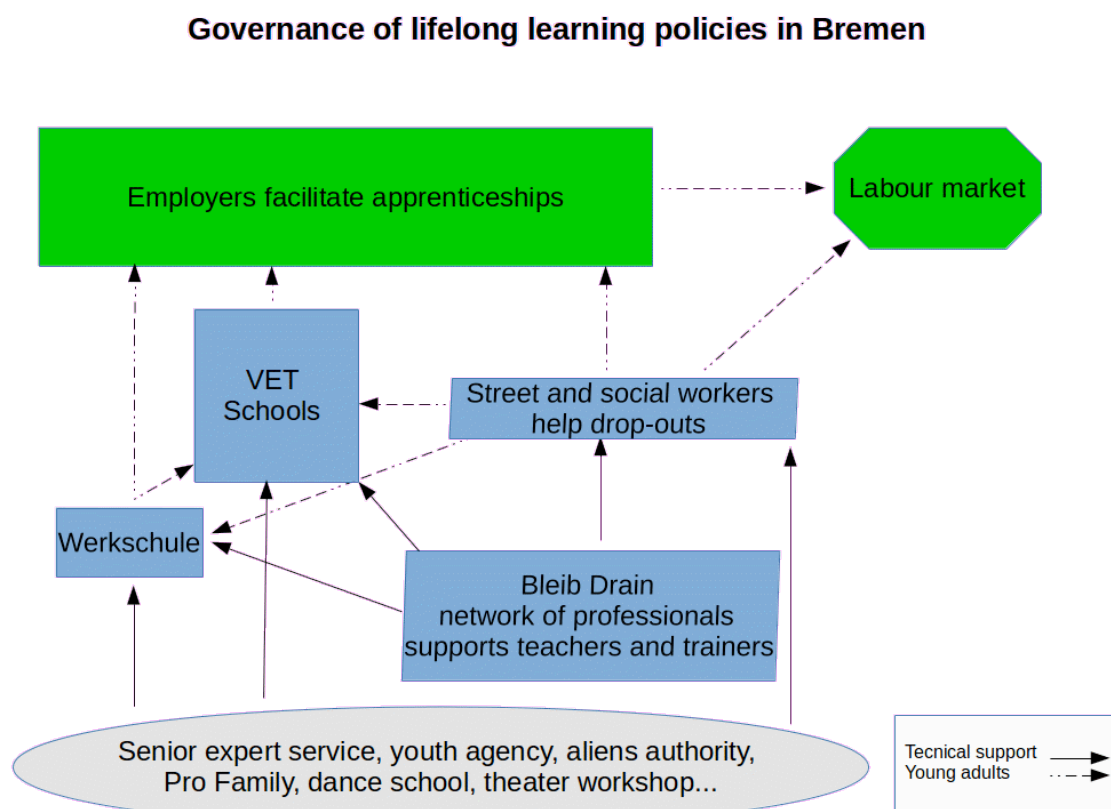
**Figure 6.1.**



<sup>3</sup> These diagrams were drawn with the same nomenclature. The legend defines the arrows. In addition, the form and the colour of the figures are also homogeneous. Thus, rectangles stand for lifelong learning policies as analysed by YOUNG\_ADULLLT. Circles represent other contributions by public, private and civil society actors. Trapezoids make reference to the labour market. As to colours, blue stands for educational policies, green for labour market policies, and light grey for other components.

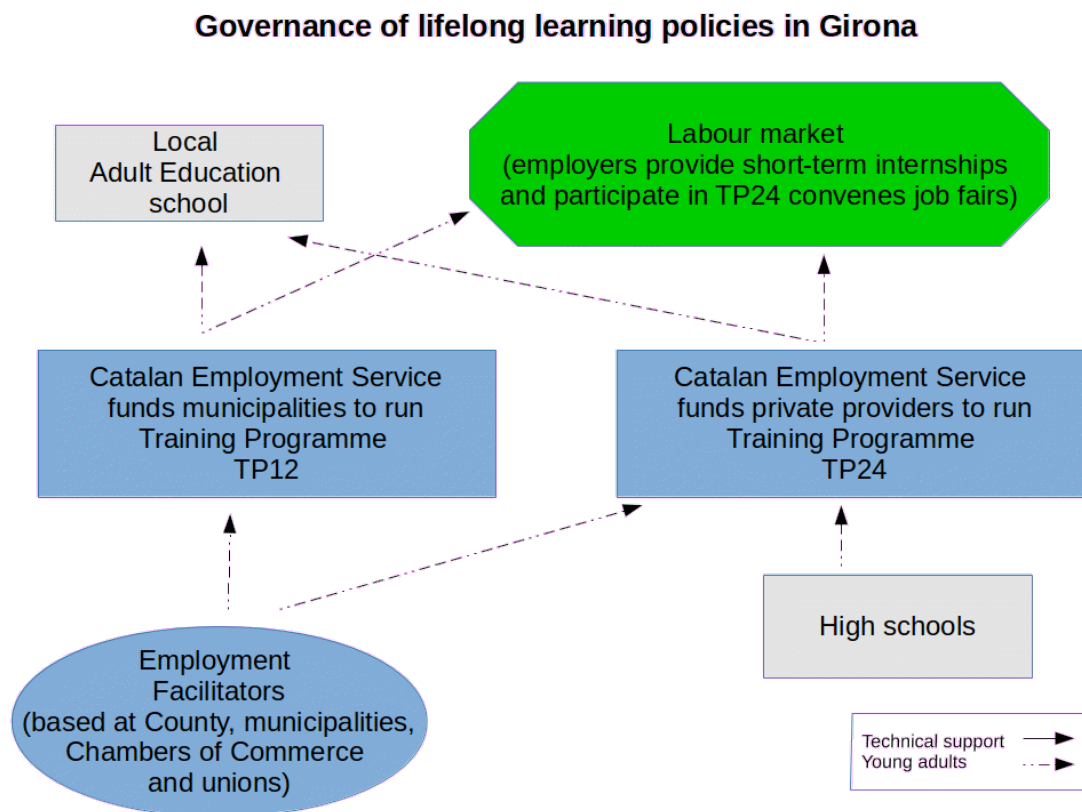
In Bremen, YOUNG\_ADULLLT researchers analysed policies that cater to the youth who dropped out from either a school course or an apprenticeship. The Chambers of Commerce and the unions are active stakeholders of the apprenticeship system. In this context, lifelong learning policies draw on previous knowledge on the social conditions in which young adults live. Thus, some policies were created bottom-up by experts who looked for innovative solutions to low-skills equilibrium in some economic sectors. In addition, an agency has been created in order to strengthen the policies by mediating between young adults and private providers.

Figure 6.2.



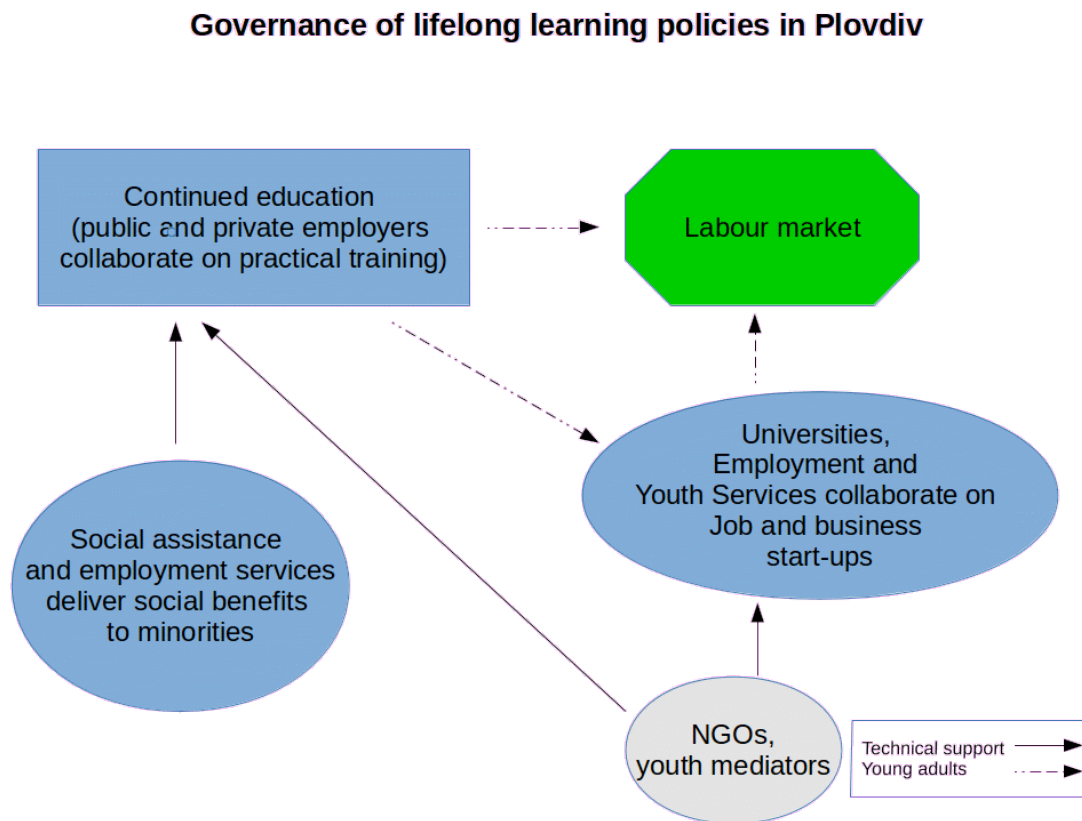
In Girona city and the neighbouring counties, the Catalan Employment Service has decided that non-profits are only eligible for running a new training programme (TP24) if they create a joint venture. Compared to most vocational training programmes, TP24 strengthens counselling and extends time horizons from a few months to two years. The Catalan Employment Service also funds YGS Facilitators, who are based in counties, municipalities, unions and the Chamber of Commerce. In Girona city, the Municipal Council of VET is in the making too. Therefore, non-profits and public authorities are building an incipient network.

Figure 6.3.



In Plovdiv, educational institutions are improving their programmes for continuing education, including innovative schemes of students' practices. The Employment Agency caters to many young adults by means of trainings and entrepreneurship initiatives. Vocational training is also linked with a social support scheme that has been in place for decades. Many Roma youth benefit from this social support.

Figure 6.4.



Looking at these four illustrative cases, it is noticeable that the regional governance of lifelong learning policies varies along two lines. Firstly, lifelong learning policies constitute an articulate scheme in Bremen and South West Finland to the extent that many youth undertake on-the-job training or apprenticeship in order to get qualifications and jobs. There, YOUNG\_ADULLLT researched lifelong learning policies that aim at helping the most vulnerable to enter these schemes. In contrast, in Girona and Plovdiv lifelong learning policies aim at creating these schemes at the same time as they help the most vulnerable to find a suitable pathway.

Secondly, the networks gather more diverse stakeholders in Bremen and Southwest Finland. There, clusters of non-profits, religious groups, private sector initiatives, professionals, unions, artists and civil society projects (which support immigrants) collaborate on lifelong learning policies. In Girona, the employment service contracts civil society organisations for some services. In Plovdiv, education and employment departments are the main players, while NGOs support some of the programmes.

In a nutshell, the analysis of the regional governance of lifelong learning policies in eighteen regions has produced two main conclusions. On the one hand, while horizontal relationships and synergies

are important everywhere, hierarchical governance is essential too. Albeit diverse, vertical command raises the main predicaments everywhere. These predicaments have to do with specific targets, the powers of municipalities and conflict. On the other hand, while lifelong learning systems are well established and governance networks are quite interlinked in some countries, in other countries lifelong learning systems are in the making and governance networks have not generated so diverse and interconnected links.

The main take-away is that these networks are there. In very different regions, some modes of complex governance seem to be in the making. This trend has a potential, since networks can broaden official perspectives by including new stakeholders. However, if networks remain too closed or too fragmented, this mode of governance may also provoke some perverse effects in the middle term.

#### **6.4. Conclusions on the views of experts**

This chapter analysed how regional experts understand lifelong learning, interpreted to what extent they notice that lifelong learning impinges on the life course of young adults in their regions, and explored how regional policy networks are built. These analyses lead to the following conclusions.

- In Austria, Finland, Germany and Scotland (UK) experts share a theory of change on the enablers and the outcomes of lifelong learning. It is hard to extend this claim to other regions. But further case studies could probably qualify this point.
- When they have a theory, experts normally elaborate on the diversity of the target groups. When they do not, they are sometimes on the brink of stereotyping. It is important to stress that the key seems to be that they 'have' a theory. If they appropriate it and embed this theory on the routines of street-level professional work, they are able to overcome the biases of prejudice.
- Experts are well aware of the many dimensions of young adults' life. They also realise that the policies are capable to make some important differences. Employment is relevant for these self-assessments but the self-esteem of the beneficiaries and their functional literacy are crucial issues too.
- The key predicaments of governance derive from the normal procedures of bureaucracy. Unsurprisingly, defining who must be eligible is a very difficult task. In addition, since lifelong learning policies pay attention to the local scale, the power of municipalities may also posit unexpected challenges. Like all political relations, conflict erupts sometimes.
- Lifelong policy networks draw varying patterns in the eighteen regions. A general conclusion is that either they are well established or they are in the making almost

everywhere. But further research should carry out a more systematic comparative analysis of these networks.

In short, a general conclusion is that some correlation between theories of change, accounts of target groups and patterns of network governance is noticeable. Explicit theories of change and well-established networks of governance are observed in Austria, Finland, Germany and Scotland (UK). Apparently, in these countries experts associate target groups with an explicit emphasis on social diversity.

This correlation is simply that, a sort of correlation. That is, there is no basis to make any causal claim on the evidence of this report. Moreover, since the basic institutional arrangements are different in these countries, it would be unjustified to conclude this regularity constitutes a regime. Neither it would be plausible to conclude that it indicates any hallmark that the other countries must achieve. The three elements of this regularity (i.e. theory of change, view of target groups, and policy networks) have to be carefully read in the context of the specific regions. The most advisable conclusion is that this point simply opens questions for further research.

Finally, this rough correlation hints a pragmatic recommendation. If these elements may vary in some significant ways, it is reasonable to open public debates on what can be done. Regional authorities may elaborate their theory of change. Professionals may review their opinions on target groups. These two possible developments may trigger some synergies. The current stakeholders may also establish new relationships and invite other regional actors to participate in the making, implementation, evaluation and discussion of lifelong learning policies.

## **7. Concluding remarks**

The intention of this *International Qualitative Analysis Report* is to bring together and compare the main results and conclusions on the policies' fit and potentials from the perspective of the young adults in order to explore hidden resources of young adults building their life projects. Based on the information gathered in the nine national reports - including two FRs per country – we identified patterns of similarities and differences across the FRs that helped us to identify the different perception of social expectations underlying policies and initiatives, their compatibility with personal interests and orientation, and thus gauging the possibility of individuals to create subjective meaning and continuity.

In order to do so, this report analyses 168 interviews with young adults aged between 18 and 29 years-old who live in eighteen regions located in Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Scotland (UK). These young people were exposed to some factors of social vulnerability and were attending vocational courses or taking counselling or similar services, and some were in socio-economic precarious situations receiving social benefit.

The policies that delivered these measures are conceived as lifelong learning policies in the vein of a long tradition in the EU policy-making. For this reason, a sample of 128 experts who worked in these policies were also interviewed. Drawing on the discourses of these two social actors, the report aims at answering a set of research questions inspired on three strands of scholarship, namely: life course research (LCR), cultural political economy (CPE) and governance (GOV).

The former chapters discuss the theory and the methodology of this research. Then, three more chapters scrutinise the significant details of young adults' self-presentations and their experience with the policies as well as the views of the experts (or professionals) in this field. The main findings are listed in the Executive Summary, but the chapters argue for the validity of each finding on the grounds of the available evidence. The concluding remarks are going to close the whole analysis by pointing out why the findings are important and in which ways the LCR, the CPE and the GOV perspectives shed light on lifelong learning policies.

The self-presentations of the young adult interviewees clearly indicate that mental health, family conflicts, violence and school bullying hurt many of them. Currently, they are vulnerable because many signs of their social status coincide with the standard indicators of social exclusion. Early school leaving, lack of job experience and very low incomes are quite common among them. These self-presentations also reveal a harsh aspect of social vulnerability — remarkably, their parents also faced some of these extreme conditions. In fact, the social reproduction of inequalities across generations has significantly contributed to shape the contours of social vulnerability that social researchers find among young adult Europeans nowadays. In terms of the LCR perspective, these men and women attempt to carry out their life course in a new sphere of social activity as the labour market. However, many are enduring the scars of previous negative experiences with families and schools. Sometimes poor mental health intermingles with these complex circumstances.

Even though this initial observation invites to pessimism, the analysis of both these self-presentations and their experience with lifelong policies induces to qualify possible self-defeating conclusions. Despite their hard lives and the difficulties of their social background, these young adults do not tell a fatalistic story of themselves. That is quite visible in two of their common themes.

One of these themes is their life projects. Certainly, many interviewees stated they wanted to wait before deciding their next step and figuring out what they would do. Therefore, it is not possible to realise if they felt like overcoming their immediate adversity. However, many others elaborated on a quite explicit life project. In this way, they told stories of reaction and resilience.

Their view of the policies is also telling. Most of the young people who engaged in the interviews of this research thought that lifelong learning policies were eventually helping them. To say it in a nutshell, either they found a more suitable pedagogic approach than the one in the schools they had attended, or they were learning how to work in a service economy where low-skilled workers face huge uncertainties. The point is that most of them said they were actively looking for a job, they were



strengthening their basic skills, and they felt they were capable to cope with the challenges ahead.

This delicate balance between constraints and opportunities is not constructed from scratch. It is the outcome of biographies but also the effect of socio-economic transformations and institutional contexts shaped by certain policies. In the interviews, the experts raised a final set of issues that affect the potential of lifelong learning policies at the macro-scales of social activity. To be precise, a couple of institutional variations invite to reflection, further debate and political debate.

On the one hand, the 'theories of change' that underpin lifelong learning policies are explicit in some member states, but the evidence seldom notices the influence of these theories in other cases. The point is that some tension between these explicit approaches and the prevalence of the deficit orientation was identified. Certainly, lifelong learning policies may have no effect, or worse, may provoke perverse effects, if professionals blame vulnerable young adults for their problems. For this reason, it is worrying that some experts actually made denigrative claims in some interviews. However, it was not the case in many other interviews, particularly in the countries where the approach of these policies has been defined in a more systematic way.

Anyway, this finding should not be interpreted as a silver bullet but as entry point for democratic deliberation. Having a clear general framework is helpful for planning, managing and evaluating policies. It may also be helpful for preventing the perverse effects provoked by stereotyping. For sure, the contribution of these theory-based frameworks may be seriously weakened if they are automatically translated from one language and one setting to other ones. Professionals need to appropriate them if they are to be effective.

On the other hand, the governance of lifelong learning policies lies in a combination of hierarchies and networks everywhere. Hierarchies are instrumental to guaranteeing rights and redistributing resources. Networks gather diverse stakeholders in common endeavours. Despite varying density and complexity, the point is that networks are widely present. Once again it is clear that transferring these institutional arrangements automatically would not make sense. However, it is also clear that these networks settle a very favourable basis for the above mentioned democratic deliberation. The point is even stronger if young adults themselves participate in the making of lifelong learning policies. It was the case in some policies in Germany, but mostly in the systematic approach adopted in Finland. Therefore, the room for debate is large.

The report underpins a cursory statement of the contributions of each theory to current debates on lifelong learning in Europe. Since further details may be read in the theoretical chapter 1, here the insights of these theories will be simply stated. But governance requires an ultimate paragraph for caution.

- LCR highlights how problems in one dimension of life put pressure on the behaviour of people in other dimensions of life. The physical, contiguous context is not enough if

the projects and the experiences of vulnerable young adults are to be taken into account. Moreover, this strand of research also asks how the experiences of young adults match with the views of experts. The question is not only if they do but also why and how.

- Then, CPE scrutinises how policies are selected among many alternatives, and sometimes, how target groups are constructed in accordance with that selection. So, vulnerable young adults are expected to respond to social norms that have been established by somebody else. This is really a complex semiotic process whereby policy-makers define routes, professionals develop their expertise, and institutions constitute daily routines. By realising how complex the process is, anybody who is interested in lifelong learning will also find the clues to understand many problems that inevitably emerge.
- GOV argues that social interaction shapes the coordination between public departments and other stakeholders. The outcome is an array of combinations between hierarchical and network governance. Since lifelong learning policies operate in the interfaces of education, labour market and social policies, it is obvious that their governance should not be overlooked.

A final caution is important. As a rule, this report shows that lifelong learning policies convey training to young adults in the nine sampled member states. In addition, the policies provide counselling and some special support in some countries. Most young adult respondents told they availed of the policies for a number of reasons, namely: overcoming previous problems, elaborating on a life plan, looking for a job and others. However, it is plausible to conclude that some signs of uneasiness are also notorious. Thus, significant numbers of young adults are not eventually making their life plan, complain because training options are narrow in their region, see themselves as a stigmatised group of people, and do not have a say in the institutional arrangements of the lifelong learning policies that they are using. Therefore, envisioning large schemes of lifelong learning is a two-edged endeavour. While these schemes may articulate many piecemeal policies, they also risk becoming a too detached solution that may trigger frustration and opposition.

## 8. References

- Banjac, M. (2017). 'Youth, risk and the Structured Dialogue: governing young EU citizens', *Journal of Youth Studies* 20(4): 471-486.
- Bouillet, D.; Pažur, M. & Domović, V. (2017). *Qualitative Analysis- National Report: Croatia. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Zagreb: University of Zabreb.
- Butler, R. & K. Muir (2017). 'Young people's educational biographies: family relationships, social capital and belonging', *Journal of youth studies*, 20(3): 316-331.
- Cieslik, M. & D. Simpson (2006). 'Skills for Life? Basic skills and Marginal Transitions from School to Work', *Journal of Youth Studies* 9(2): 213-229.
- Corbin, J. & A. Strauss (1990). 'Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria', *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1): 3-21.
- Council of Europe (2013). 'Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee'. *Official Journal of the European Union*. 2013/C 120/01-06.
- Cuconato, M; K. Majdzinska, A. Walther & A. Warth (2016). Students' decision-making strategies at transitions in education. In. Walther, A.; Parreira do Amaral, M.; Cuconato, M. & Dale, R. (eds.) *Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe: Pathways, Policy and Practice*. 223-245, London et al.: Bloomsbery.
- Doyle, L. (2017). *Qualitative Analysis- National Report: Bulgaria. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow.
- Elder, G. (1998). 'The Life Course as Developmental Theory', *Child Development*, 69(1): 1-12.
- EUROSTAT (n.d.) People at risk of poverty or social exclusion. EUROSTAT Statistics Explained. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/> Retrieved on February, 15<sup>th</sup> 2018.
- Helfferich, C. (2011). *Die Qualität qualitativer Daten. Manual für die Durchführung qualitativer Interviews*. Wiesbaden: VS-Verlage, 4. Auflage
- Katznelson, N. (2017). 'Rethinking motivational challenges amongst young adults on the margin', *Journal of youth studies*, 20 (5): 622-639.
- Kovacheva, S. (2001). 'Flexibilisation of youth transitions in Central and Eastern Europe', *YOUNG*, 9(1): 41-60.
- Kovacheva, S.; Petkova, B.; Madzurova, B.; Stoyanova, D.; Raychev, S.; Milenkova, V.; Apostolov,

G.; Stoikova, P. & V. Lendjova (2017). *Qualitative Analysis - National Report: Bulgaria. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Plovdiv: University of Plovdiv.

Kurki, T. & K. Brunila (2014). 'Education and Training as Projectised and Precarious Politics, *Power and Education* 6(3): 283-293.

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (2009). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Heinz, W. R.; Huinink, J.; Swander, C. S. & A. Weymann (2009). General Introduction. In: Heinz, W. R.; Huinink, J. & Weymann, A. (eds.). *The Life Course Reader. Individuals and Societies Across Time*. 15-30, Frankfurt/M. & New York: Campus.

Jessop, B. (2010). "Cultural political economy and critical policy studies." *Critical Policy Studies*, 3(3-4): 336-356.

Kotthoff, H.-G., Bittlingmayer, U., Carrillo Gáfaró, J. F., Boutiuc-Kaiser, A., Parreira do Amaral, M., & R. Rinne (2017). *International Report on LLL Policies and Inclusion in Education and Work. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Paper*. University of Education Freiburg.

Lipsky, M. (1969). 'Towards a theory of street-level bureaucracy'. Paper to Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Commodore Hotel, New York, September 2-6, 1969.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching* London: Sage.

Mayntz, R. (2009). *Über Governance. Institutionen und Prozesse politischer Regelung*. Frankfurt/M.: Campus.

Minister for Employability and Training- Scotland (2013). *Employability Pipeline*. Edinburgh: Government of Scotland. Retrieved from <http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/>

Ministry for Education and Culture- Finland (2012). *The Youth Guarantee in Finland, Helsinki: Government of Finland*. Retrieved from <http://minedu.fi/documents/.../The+Youth+Guarantee+in+Finland>

Pawson, R. (2006). *Evidence-based policy. A Realist Perspective*. London: Sage.

Pfau-Effinger, B. (2005). 'Culture and Welfare State Policies: Reflections on a Complex Interrelation'. *Journal of Social Policy* 34(1):1-18.

Palumbo, M.; Benasso, S.; Cossetta, A. & V. Pandolfini (2017). *Qualitative Analysis - National Report. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Paper*. Italy. Genoa: University of Genoa.

Parreira do Amaral, M., Weiler, A., & S. Schaufler (2016a). *Working Paper on Ethical Issues. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Paper*. Münster: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster.

Parreira do Amaral, M., Weiler, A., & S. Schaufler (2016b). *Quality Assurance Plan. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Paper*. Münster: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Pot, M.; Alexander, L. & R. Cefalo (2017). *Qualitative Analysis- National Report: Austria. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Vienna: University of Vienna.

Radaelli, C.; Dunlop, C. & O. Fritsch, (2013). 'Narrating Impacts Assessment in the European Union.' *European Political Science*, 12: 500–521.

Raffe, D. (2011). Cross-national differences in education-work transitions. In: London, M. (eds.) *The oxford Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. 312-328, New York: Oxford University Press.

Rambla, X.; Jacovkis, J.; Lorente García, R.; Guerrero, L. & A. Luzón (2017). *Qualitative Analysis - National Reports: Spain. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Cerdanyola del Vallès: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Rhodes, R. A. W. (1997). *Understanding Governance. Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Ritchie, J., & L. Spencer (2002). Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In: Huberman, A. M. & Miles, M. B. (eds.). *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. 305–329. Thousand Oaks et al.: SAGE. Rodrigues, M.; Ribeiro, A. B.; Neves, T. Alves, N.; Queiroga, R. & António Almeida (2017). *Qualitative Analysis - National Reports: Portugal. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Porto: Universidade do Porto. Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa.

Rogers, P. J. (2008). 'Using Programme Theory to Evaluate Complicated and Complex Aspects of Interventions', *Evaluation*, 14 (1): 29–48.

Simoes, F., A. Meneses, R. Luis & R. Drumonde (2017). 'NEETs in a rural region of Southern Europe: perceived self-efficacy, perceived barriers, educational expectations, and vocational expectations', *Journal of youth studies*, 20 (9):1109-1126.

Tikkanen, J.; Järvinen, T; Eskola, A. Rinne, R. & H. Sivennoinen, (2017). *Qualitative Analysis - National Reports: Finland. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Turku: University of Turku.

Verlage, T.; Boutiuc-Kaiser, A. & S. Schaufler (2017). *Qualitative Analysis - National Reports:*

Germany. *YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Papers*. Münster: University of Münster

Walther, A.; Parreira do Amaral, M.; Cuconato, M. & R. Dale (eds) (2016) *Governance of Educational Trajectories in Europe: Pathways, Policy and Practice*. Bloomsbury.

Walther, A.; Warth, A.; Ule, M. & M du Bois-Reymond (2015) '“Me, my education and I”: constellations of decision making in young people's educational trajectories'. *International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education*. 28 (3-4): 349-373.

Weiler, A., Schaufler, S., Parreira do Amaral, M., Ganter de Otero, J. P. & F. Wutzkowsky (2017). *Launching and Research Design. State of the Art Report. YOUNG\_ADULLLT Working Paper*. Münster: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster.

West, L.; Alheit, P.; Anderson, A.S. & B. Merrill (eds.) (2007): *Using biographical and life history approaches in the study of adult and lifelong learning: European perspectives*. Frankfurt am Main: Lang

## 9. Annexes

### 9.1. Interview schedule for young adults

This sub-section sets the basic instructions that all interviewers should follow. Each team must translate it and use the document to train the interviewers beforehand. Be aware that field notes, interview notes and socio-demographic questions must be systematised according to the templates (available in the BSCW server).

The „starting point“ of the biographical interview is an open question:

*„We are interested in the learning histories of young adults in [city/region xyz]. That is why we have got into contact with [institution abc] and in the end also with you. I/We would like to ask you to tell me/us your life story. Start from the very beginning, tell me everything that you remember and that you find relevant. Take all time you need, I will not interrupt. I will just take some notes and eventually ask some questions in the end“*

After the end of the spontaneous narrative, the interviewer goes on with „internal questions“, that is, questions relating to things that have been told but where we expect more detail and potential. These questions must follow the issues mentioned in the interview in the chronological order of the narrative so that the narrator keeps a personal narrative logic to get deeper in the details. Please, use formulations like the following ones to ask the internal questions:

*„You told about ... Could you please tell something more?“*

*„How did it continue from there?“*

*„Do you remember the situation when you first realised that?“*

*How did you make this choice? What were your expectations/ aspirations at the time?*

At the end of this round, the interviewer can pose „external questions“ that respond to the logic of the research. These questions may cover a few themes that have not yet been addressed enough. Some exemplary illustrations could be:

- Family life. Relationship with parents. Interest of parents on the education of the interviewee Partners. Children.
- Educational trajectory. Well-being, memories, interests and subjects, problems, support, friends, teachers etc. in primary and low-secondary school. Transitions within educational trajectories (primary-lower secondary, lower-upper secondary, education-training/work).
- Acquisition and use of skills. After discussing this point with WP6, the WP5 core team proposes to ask the following questions:
- You learnt many skills along your life. Which ones have been more valuable for your employers?
- How did you acquire these skills (at school, on the job, with your family, with your peers)?
- Do you have other skills you cannot apply to your job?
- Experiences with education LLL policies such as the ones included in WP3 mapping.
  - *Do you have any experience with support and guidance services, apprenticeship, vocational training or other policies in your region?*
  - *Are you aware of the Youth Guarantee Scheme?*
  - *Did this experience influence on other spaces of your life (e.g. family, friends, leisure, health, legal problems)?*
- Time line and outlook for future lives.
  - So the main events of your life were this... this and this?
  - *What next steps do you plan to take?*
  - *How do you see yourself in ten years' time?*

Finally, the interviewer asks a set of *socio-demographic questions* that outline an individual profile. Although many surveys ask whether interviewees are male or female, obviously it does not make sense to ask this question at this point. The following questions replicate the formulation of the questionnaire that was used for the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC). Please download and use the corresponding template from the BSCW server:

- *Can you please tell me in which year you were born?*
- *Which level of formal education is the highest you have obtained?*
- *Were you born in \*Country? If not, in which country were you born?*
- *Was your mother or female guardian born in \*Country?*
- *Which level of formal education is the highest she has obtained?*
- *Was your father or male guardian born in \*Country?*
- *Which level of formal education is the highest he has obtained?*

## 9.2. Interview schedule for experts

All interviewers should start by framing the theme with the same „focus“. The core team suggests the following paragraph.

*“We are interested in the variety of policies that affect young adults' life conditions, subjective experiences and opportunities in [this region]. We mean 19- to- 30- years- old men and women. Since you are engaged in [a policy that relates to this group], could you tell us what is this policy about? ”*

If convenient and relevant, you can ask some contextual questions that may induce the interviewees to start with their comments. These are some examples:

- *What are the beneficiaries of this policy required to do?*
- *What are your task in this policy/organisation? Which role do you have here as a professional?*
- *How long do you work in this profession / in this organisation?*

A few tentative questions can be instrumental to raise the following issues. Interviewers must only ask these „issue reminders“ if the interviewee did not tackle the issue in his/her spontaneous reply to the focus. These questions are either addressed to “street-level professionals” (STREET), “managers” (MANAGER).

- *What are the objectives of the measure you are working in? What are you doing concretely? Was there a previous project? Which outcomes it is supposed to provide? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *What problems do you tackle with this measure? How were these problems tackled before the project was implemented? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *Who participates in this policy area in this region? What do they claim about the project? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *Who else do you cooperate with?" (STREET)*
- *What does this cooperation look like? (STREET)*
- *What problems do you tackle with this cooperation(s) (STREET)*
- *Did this policy provoke any conflict between the participants? What happened? (1) (2)*
- *Did the policy fit with local needs? (1) (2)*
- *Do the involved actors know the impact of this policy? How do they think the policy can be successful? ? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *Did you notice any changes among the young adults during the measure? (STREET)*
- *How does this policy contribute to the economic and social development of the region? (MANAGER)*
- *How did policy-makers decide which skills had to be targeted by this policy (i.e.: skills demand analysis, references to eventual official professional figures repertoires, references to eventual guidelines defined by local institutions)? (MANAGER)*
- *Do you provide actions of recognition/validation of skills acquired by the policy? Do you somehow monitor the match between the supply and demand of skills in the region? (MANAGER) (STREET)*
- *Did you conduct a previous analysis of the previously existing skills and competences owned by young adults living in the region that could be validated and formally recognised? (MANAGER)*
- *Might these actions contribute to the eventual (re)entering of the addressees in professional or training paths? How do you know? (MANAGER) (STREET)*

Some topics may be particularly sensitive, for instance, young adults' everyday life and personal experience or the institutional construction of target groups. These are „wicked problems“. Wicked problems are either addressed to “street-level professionals”(STREET) or “managers” (MANAGER).

- *In this region, does this policy help young adults to carry on with their everyday life?" (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *In this region, does this policy induce young adults to make their own decisions on their future? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *In this region, can this policy tackle inequality and discrimination? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *How is the target group defined? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *How do young adults come into the policy? (STREET)*
- *If you had enough power and money to change this policy, what would you change? (STREET) (MANAGER)*
- *Is there any other important topic we did not speak about? (STREET) (MANAGER)*