



Deliverable report for

**YOUNG\_ADULLLT**

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**Deliverable 7.1**  
**Case Studies reports regional/local level**

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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)	

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## 1. Description of task

### **Task 7.1: Case selection and development of research framework (months 11-14):**

This includes the definition of the criteria for the selection of case studies and the construction of a shared research framework. A common grid of data collection will draw from the results of WP 3; in the WP7 we will pay particular attention to: a) mechanisms and context aspects that can modify the impact of the policies (also using the preliminary outcomes of WP6); b) frame of reference of decision-makers, implementers and addressees (paying particular attention to the degree of overlap of different frames); c) implementation aspects that can improve or weaken the policies; d) direct and indirect costs of policies, face to their effectiveness; e) costs for “success” cases; f) transferability and reproducibility of “success” policies. Role of participants: the WP leader (UNIGE) and the WP core team (SWU, ULisboa) circulate drafts; all other partners read and give feedback on suitability to their country contexts.

### **Task 7.2: Definition of a set of indicators (months 15-16):**

The task involves the definition of indicators for description and comparison of case studies and will include objectives, process, output, outcome and outreach of the chosen policies; these indicators will be designed considering their coherence and complementarity with the set of indicators defined in WP3. Specifically, the indicators defined in WP7 will consider both a common set for all involved countries (based on key variables that enable comparisons between partners) and specific indicators for each country (when necessary to draw deepest descriptions of single countries and contexts). These indicators will be designed through a participatory process (Bezzi et al., 2010; Palumbo et al., 2012, Palumbo & Torrigiani, 2013) involving the research team and a representative group of stakeholders (identified through the analysis carried out in the WP5 and WP6). This indicators design method allows to integrate experts' visions with the ones of the social actors actually involved in the policy networks and with the same participated method indicators will be hierarchized, using the “obliged priorities scale” method (Bezzi, 2011). Role of participants: WP leader and WP core team, under consultation with all other partners, propose a set of indicators. Partners give feedback on availability and feasibility in relation to their country cases.

### **Task 7.3: Mapping and synthetic analysis of case studies at regional/local level (months 17-22).**

This task involves conducting analysis at case level in the selected regions and includes the integration of data and results from WPs 4-6. Role of participants: All partners involved conduct analysis of their case studies according to the shared framework provided by the WP leader and produce concise reports on the cases (month 21). These reports will increase (in a deeper perspective) the analysis carried out in the WP3.

## 2. Description of work & main achievements

All partners have submitted the WP7 national reports corresponding to the case study analyses of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. Due to the specific features of WP7, which did not imply further fieldwork, these reports have been constructed by integrating the research materials gathered in the previous WPs (see WP3 for policy mapping and analysis, WP4 for quantitative macro analysis of the structural contexts and living conditions of the young adults, WP5 for qualitative analysis of the experts' and young adults' perspectives, WP6 for the skill ecologies description and analysis). The main task was analysing the selected policy measures (2 per country) within the context of their unfolding. The YOUNG\_ADULLLT case studies have been culturally constructed, giving particular attention to the interactive and relational dimension among different actors and across levels (from local to transnational level). Furthermore, in order to yield a detailed account of the local/regional landscapes of

policy-making in LLL, also considering their embeddedness in local infrastructures (education, labour, social/youth policies), a narrative approach has been applied to writing the national reports. The so-called “storytelling” produced in these part of the national reports were meant to (re)construct different typologies of networks and patterns of LLL policy-making, taking into account their different degrees of integration with the biographies they come across (and by which are crossed in their turn) and implementation contexts (e.g., economy, labour market and education systems). In addition to this, analyses were conducted along the three main theoretical perspectives of the project (CPE, GOV and LCR) as well as a cross-case analysis.

## 2.1. Workflow

Given relation of WP7 with the previous “fieldwork” WPs mentioned above, substantial preliminary “synchronization” has been necessary before the official start of this WP in Month 13. Specifically, the synchronization and coherence of the WP7 research questions with those deriving from the other WPs has been pursued during devoted methodological workshop held in Barcelona (January 2017). Moreover, considering the relation of the selected case studies with the definition of final interviewee samples of WP6 and, above all, WP5, the WP7 leader (UNIGE) circulated a “Case studies selection criteria” document, asking partners to select – within the bulk of LLL policies analysed in WP3 – 2 specific LLL policy measures. In order to support this process of selection, three main criteria have been set, asking partners to take into account:

- the possibility, for the local research teams, to easily “access” the action/intervention framework, in terms of information gathering, interviewee selection and stakeholders mapping;
- the need for case studies constructed on measures, whose addresses are clearly and unambiguously identifiable, in order to facilitate the WP5 samples definition;
- the preference for measures, which involve diverse types of actors in their realisation, in order to have the possibility to connect a wide range of points of view concerning the same process (along with the non-mandatory, yet strongly advised choice of avoiding the selection of measures, whose implementers coincide with their policy-makers/designers).

All partners shared their reflections and doubts about the case studies selection and circulated their case studies selection – including a short description of each case/measure – within the expected timeline (late February 2017).

Following thorough deliberation about the main aims of WP7 with the Core Team members (GUF and SWU), the Coordinator (WWU) and the Italian National Advisory Board, the first plan of the WP7 proposal has been set, and a WP7 draft proposal circulated among the Consortium immediately before the Consortium meeting in Granada (June 2017). Furthermore, during the Granada meeting the first version of the so-called “heuristic table” was presented in a workshop, sharing thoughts and comments about its usability in the process of case analysis. Specifically, the heuristic table is a tool meant to integrate the research materials from the previous WPs, composing complex ‘pictures’, which constituted the core of the storytelling of each case study (one per Functional Region). Thus, the structure of the heuristic table aimed to display the intertwinement of the three main theoretical perspectives, the multilevel approach adopted for the analysis and the stock of information and data gathered throughout the research process. Then, the heuristic table set a common strategy for data integration, which was carried out by compiling an Excel data matrix – the structure of which mirrored the one of the heuristic table – for each case study. Furthermore, in the WP7 workshop in Granada, a first version of the structure for the WP7 national reports has been introduced and discussed.

Following the integration of partners’ feedbacks and reflections about the WP7 draft proposal, the final version of the document has been circulated in September (2017),

including the final version of the excel data matrix.

During September 2017, partners were invited to participate in the WP7 online workshop, which consisted in periodically uploading the updated data matrixes, eventually asking the Core Team for support in their fulfilling. Due to the very specific nature of the data matrix tool and its close relation with the different research materials gathered in the previous WPs, the Core Team was not always able to provide country-specific feedback about their compilation.

In order to share a deeper knowledge about the selected case studies, partners have been asked to upload the WP7 Milestone 1 by mid-October 2017. Specifically, WP7 Milestone 1 consisted in the final version of the two compiled Excel data matrix (1 per case study) plus 2 pages of synthetic introduction of the story of case (short overview of the general tendency of the story of the case – 1 per case study). In accomplishing this task, partners were advised to revise the document they wrote for the case studies selection, giving particular attention to potential changes and deviations from the original selection, and updating it according to the information gathered through the empirical WPs.

All partners uploaded the WP7 Milestone 1 within the expected timeline, and Core Team provided specific feedback about it to each partner.

In preparation for the Consortium Meeting in Genova (early November 2017) and related workshops, partners have been asked to upload the WP7 Milestone 2 by the end of October 2017. WP7 Milestone 2 set the first version of one concise national report (based on the two case studies analysis and narrative introduction). Specifically, the task consisted in circulating a draft of the introduction to both case studies, and a first draft of the analysis of the cases according to CPE, GOV and LCR.

The Core Team required that all partners bring their latest versions of the data matrixes to the Genova meeting as well as short presentation of one case (essentially deriving from the WP7 Milestone 2 documents).

During the meeting in Genova – and the Early Career Researcher Workshop planned the day before the “official” meeting – writing the WP7 national report constituted the focus of the discussions related to WP7. The Core Team has introduced the narrative approach to the cases storytelling, and diverse issues about its integration within the general frame of the WP7 structure were discussed. Consistent with the acknowledgement of the complexity deriving from the requirement to integrate narrative and more “standard” analytical approaches to the WP7 national report writing, during the Genova meeting the Core Team decided to propose a partial revision of the WP7 national report structure, also indicating two potential “narrative entry point” for the storytelling paragraphs. Specifically, this revised structure has been discussed in Genova and circulated immediately after in a “WP7 national report revised structure” document. This document highlighted the changes in the reports structure, also indicating how to make the document written for WP7 Milestone 1 and 2 fit with the new structure. Furthermore, the suggested narrative entry points consisted in:

- a “biographical approach”, which was not meant as a strictly biographical perspective, rather a reconstruction of the biographical constellations from which the young people came into the measure/case, the access procedures and how these trajectories continued in and eventually after the measure
- an “history of the policy approach”, which focuses on the evolution of a policy (in terms of main objectives, target groups, governance patterns and so on) in order to highlight the intended and unintended effects of the “current version” of the policy within its context.

In addition, in order to further support partners in managing the presented revisions, one short example per different narrative approach has been circulated by the WP Leader within the end of November.

Immediately after, the WP Leader sent specific feedback on the WP7 Milestone 2 documents to each partner, also indicating potential outlines for the finalisation of the first draft of the WP7 national report documents, which was due on December 22, 2017.

All partners submitted their first draft of the WP7 national report document on time, and the Core Team circulated specific feedback to each partner by mid-January 2018. The uploading of the final version of the WP7 national reports (internally due on January 22, 2018) has been accomplished by all Consortium members.

### **Emerging issues from the WP7 national reports**

This paragraph yields a recap of the main conclusions deriving from the case studies analysis reported by each partner. It also provides a first grasp of heterogeneity of the selected cases, which will be clustered and described in the WP7 international report, also paving the way for comparative analysis in WP8.

#### ***Austria***

The Austrian context is comparably favourable for young people, as shown by secondary data on education attainment and achievement, as well as on labour market participation. Moreover, looking at the support provided by public institutions, social welfare standards are still high overall. This makes up for better material conditions of living than in many other EU countries.

The first case, related to Vienna Functional Region is Back to the future. This initiative was designed as a response to the rise in the number of young adults dependent on basic subsidies, experienced by the city of Vienna in the last years. Its target group are young people from Vienna aged 18-24 and dependent on financial public support. It has been set up by governmental institutions and it is characterized by strong cooperation between different actors at different levels and by a high degree of formal institutionalization. The initiative is funded with 10 million Euro and provides 200 transitional work places for young adults in socio-economic employment projects that have been funded and made available from December 2016 onwards.

The Viennese economy has gone through structural changes during the last decades: approximately 86% of the Viennese gross product is created in the tertiary sector, while approximately 14% in the secondary sector. The idea to the Back to the future project has been developed in February 2016, half a year before it was implemented. The initial motivation behind the policy was to reduce the number of basic income subsidy recipients, to get young adults used to regular employment, leading therefore to young adults' integration into the first labour market or reintegration into the education and training system.

The action Du kannst was! (You can something!) was implemented in Upper Austria in order to facilitate the official recognition of informally acquired professional skills. Its target group are people who are 22 years or older, who are employed and have acquired the skills of the respective occupational profile but do not hold an apprenticeship or have not been employed in the trained profession for more than five years. The action is also directed towards immigrants whose educational attainment has not been officially recognized in Austria. Although it does not specifically address young adults, we consider it strongly relevant for them. Since 2008, almost 600 people have successfully participated in the program (one third of the participants is under 29, 59% are male and 41% female).

The most important success criterion for DKW is the number of participants attaining their apprenticeship certificate. Currently, the ratio of successful participants is between 70 and 80%, which is close to the success rate of standard final apprenticeship tests.

The policy has been also classified by policy managers as very successful and has been transferred to other Austrian regions, although as "reduced versions". Its success seems

however to be related to Upper Austria's economic structure, particularly the strong industrial sector. The general idea was to provide educationally disadvantaged groups with formal qualifications, who are excluded from further training in companies and don't show motivation to improve on their own. The target group of the measure is described as quite motivated. Some young adults state that the reason for them to participate is social pressure.

The lack of qualification is considered a major risk factor in young adults' working careers and life courses, both for those who are engaged in difficult school-to-work transitions and for those who are employed but face a risk of precarisation of their working position. Young adults' plans for the near future and their long-term plans were quite similar, even though the young adults interviewed partly were in very different stages of their lives. If they were still participating the policies, their main goal was to complete participation successfully. Regarding their private lives and plans for the future, the young adults mainly referred to moving out from their parents' places and finding a partner.

### **Bulgaria**

The Bulgarian case studies relate to participation of young adults in two large scale policies in the selected Functional Region: "Students Practices" in Blagoevgrad and "Youth Guarantee" in Plovdiv. The first case relates to the measure "University Students Training Practices" implemented by South-West University "Neofit Rilski" from the FR Blagoevgrad.

The measure targets young people between 18 and 29 years old, aiming at increasing students' capabilities for employment, competitiveness and efficiency in various industrial fields and creating prerequisites for facilitating the transition from educational institution to the workplace, as well as increasing the number of students who find job immediately after graduation. One feature of the project is that it aims at improving the opportunities for practical training during the course of university studies (Boyadjieva et al., 2013). The traineeships are carried out in different organizations and enterprises along with university classes, in order to increase students' competitiveness and create prerequisites for employment of young adults immediately after obtaining their Bachelor's or Master's degree. The project has been implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science in partnership with all 54 universities and high schools in Bulgaria. It is funded by the European Structural and Investments Funds under the "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020" Operational Program of Bulgaria. The opportunity to benefit from it is opened to all students enrolled in the Register of current and discontinued students as well as all PhD students.

From the discussions with the members of the management, it appears that the major outcomes of the project so far have been: 1) improved practical skills of students corresponding with the needs of the labour market; 2) building of strong partnerships between the university and the local and regional business establishments from different spheres of industry; 3) created working habits and developed personal qualities by the students; 4) adapted and updated curricula as well as new study content related to specific needs of the labour market; 5) created opportunities for employers to select students who have demonstrated appropriate skills and attitudes and well prepared to be immediately involved in concrete workplaces and job positions.

The main problem the program addresses is the lack of practical experience and skills of young adults who study at universities and who possess actually no practical competencies (Milenkova, 2015). Another problem is the improvement of curricula in terms of their practical orientation and relevance to the labour market conditions, real human resources needs and necessities. On this basis, the link between the training process and the realization of young adults is intensified and the number of graduates who find work immediately after graduation is increased. Regarding the evidences emerged from the interviews with young adults, they have said that the program enables them to benefit from working at an organization or a company; they feel happy participating in real work processes and be part of the communication within the community of all employees; be able to perform different real tasks assigned to them. All these are important conditions for gradual accumulation of practical

experience, which establish a solid ground for their future work as employees. All interviewed young adults have expressed considerably high level of satisfaction with their participation in this project. Finally, in the interviews majority of respondents expressed similar opinion that the main challenge for most of the participants were “limited opportunities for effective participation in decision-making processes”. Thus, the young people feel “unheard” of their community and “with limited opportunities and exposure” to meaningfully participate in inclusive decision-making processes. Therefore, there is a need for supporting and participatory structures as well as measures to ensure greater level of trust between youths and institutions, including provision of more capacity building opportunities.

The second Bulgarian case relates to the measure “Youth Guarantee” implemented by Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” from the FR Plovdiv. It targets young people up to 29 years old who are not only unemployed but also not being well educated. The main aim of the measure is to activate the inactive youths, including the discouraged people who remain out of youth unemployment statistics. It tries to provide different kinds of options in several areas – vocational guidance for young people, training for obtaining vocational qualification or key skills and competencies, subsidizing temporary employment, encouraging employers to open new jobs, etc. The implementation is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Young people can register through the Labour Offices with the assistance of labour mediators working with unemployed young persons.

According to the perspectives of the interviewed managers and experts, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the functional region of Plovdiv is more or less successful due to its positive effects: increasing the employment among young people, reducing the number of people at risk of falling into poverty and the number of early school leavers, helping young people to enter the labour market. According to the interviews with experts, managers, street-level professionals and young adults the program is facing several challenges. First of all, young people have an unrealistic assessment of their own qualities. On one hand, their expectations about a certain job and employer are too high, and on the other hand, their skills are too low. Secondly, there is a need for much higher wages for young people to gain greater self-esteem and be satisfied with the efforts they have made. Thirdly, more support is needed for young people without education or very low education. Another problem is the unrealistic expectations of employers, who require young people to get quickly into work. The still remaining challenge in the region is the high share of NEET. Despite the efforts of the stakeholders in the Youth Guarantee a large majority of NEET remain inactive, thus indicating structural problems in the inclusion of young people in the labour market or in education. The NEET rate among ethnic minorities is very high, particularly for girls. It is necessary to make greater efforts as to empower the most deprived young people and facilitate their inclusion in the program. In order to increase the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee project, it is necessary to improve the quality of the services offered by this programme and increase the duration of its measures. Moreover, although the Youth Guarantee as a European program does not have a discriminatory effect, equal pay for participants in different regions of the country leads to discrimination, because of the different socio-economic development of each part of Bulgaria.

### **Croatia**

Two functional regions and two case studies were selected by means of a detailed description that integrates all information, material, and data that were gathered in previous project's activities. The first case study (LLCG Centre Osijek) is located in the Osijek-Baranja functional region and in the labour market policies, while the second case study (Open public university Dipter) is located in the Istria functional region and in the educational policies. The purpose of LLCG Centres is to achieve a joint goal: enhancing user competences in order to increase competitiveness and restore the balance of labour supply and demand. The LLCG Centres' objective is to increase the availability and quality of lifelong career guidance services to all Croatian citizens and to provide appropriate support to different target groups at local and regional levels. The LLCG Centre Osijek provides information on educational



and employment opportunities, enabling independent search of published job vacancies, as well as the use of different online tools. In cooperation with partners and other stakeholders, through counselling, thematic workshops, lectures, presentations, seminars and panel discussions, they provide necessary information about education, employment or lifelong career planning and development possibilities. However, these activities do not lead to the alignment of the labour market needs with the education of young people. Three persons are employed in the Centre. Approximately 4.000 people use the Centre's services during a year. The main challenge for career guidance counsellor is that of aligning personal ambitions of young people with local labour market opportunities and mobility possibilities, which present them with limited or unattractive choices. Even though the LLCG Centres are available to all Croatian citizens, the focus is directed to young people. Improving the work of the LLCG Centres is needed, because the insufficient capacities and infrastructure cannot meet the demands of all interested citizens in a high quality manner. The first step in that direction is to ensure that all youth can access career guidance. The second step is to develop programmes that will allow all young people (including youth in NEET status) to develop skills needed to manage their progression in learning and work through their lives.

The third important step is to improve the connection between youth and labour market - career guidance programmes need to be closely and actively linked to the world of work and to post-school educational options. The purpose of the Open Public University Diopter is to enable adults' personal development and to develop the capability of their participants so they would adapt to changing circumstances in their personal lives, in the workplace and in the community. Diopter is one of the main stakeholders in the field of transition of young adults from education to labour market and its goal is compatible with goals of other stakeholders in that field, and that is to raise young adults' employability. It is one of the 15 public open universities in Istria County founded in 1995 as a private institution. Nowadays, the Diopter is the biggest private open public university in Istria functional region that have had more than 20.000 participants since 1995 (around 100 participants per year). The Diopter has 5 persons employed and more than 50 external experts. At the moment, the Open public university Diopter is offering 40 professional training programmes and 12 programmes of re-training 2 and acquisition of vocational qualification. The most often type of users who come to the open public university Diopter are young women and young man who have finished vocational school, already have some working experience, even family life, and now they want to finish something more in order to get a better job. Another type of the users are people who are already working at some places and they just need a certificate to continue to work there. Programmes provided by open universities are financed by the students themselves. An exception are programmes carried out within some European projects or programmes financed by public funds designated for active youth employment policy measures. Exactly this circumstance significantly hampers the access of youth in NEET status to education, as they do not possess the resources to finance those programmes. Another problem that the Diopter is facing is a lack of cooperation between different stakeholders in the field of young adults' education and labour market. The lack of cooperation is not existing only between county and local institutions but also between different open public universities. Because the offer of programmes of different open public universities is mostly the same, the competition instead of cooperation raises between them.

The cooperation between the Diopter and other stakeholders is mainly limited to the cooperation during the realization of EU projects or specific programmes. So far, the Diopter has implemented 6 projects, and all of them have included young people as a target group. The Diopter is using those projects to find funds for programmes of participants who are unable to pay for their training or retraining but also to start some new-methods programmes that would be interested to young adults.

The main conclusion of the analysis of two case studies is that the mismatches between education and labour market and a lack of coordination between different institutions are important reasons that the analysing policies do not answering needs of young adults. Moreover, the slow operationalisation and implementation of strategic documents greatly contributes to the fact that youth will go on depending mostly on their parents in their life

possibilities and choices, since the process of finding adequate and well-paid employment, which would contribute to their independence, is still burdened with many obstacles.

### **Finland**

In order to examine how an EU-level policy, the Youth Guarantee, is interpreted at a national level in the Finnish Youth Guarantee, and how the regional and local implementations of this national level policy, the Finnish team selected as case studies the Ohjaamo low-threshold guidance centres for young people in both the FRs. Despite the significant budget-cuts made to its financing, the cross-administrative Youth Guarantee Programme is one of the top programmes of the Finnish Government, and its aim is to ensure that young people have access to education, training and employment, and to prevent them from being excluded from the society. The European Social Fund has a key role in funding the regional/local Ohjaamo Centres, which have a target group that includes all young people under 30-years-old living in the region or municipality. In the launching of the national Ohjaamo Programme and the regional/local Ohjaamo Centres, an important starting point has been the trust in that the regional and local actors are the ones who know best the situation and needs of their own area. Definitions of activities have been intentionally broad in the national policy, so that they have left enough room for regional or local interpretations.

There were clear differences in the policy emphasis between Southwest Finland and Kainuu. While the main focus of the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku was on employment and education, the respective policy measure in Kainuu, the NUPPA Centre, emphasised increasing the overall wellbeing of young people and tackling social exclusion as its main goals. Whereas Southwest Finland confirms the idea that young adults' life courses should follow a linear path by focusing more on giving individuals responsibility and helping them become productive in the labour market, the Kainuu region is committed to a policy that includes more human and social perspectives, looks more to improve the wellbeing of each young person, and, therefore, to think more about biographical and de-standardised life experiences. Despite the changing economic structures implying de-standardisation of life courses and significant regional differences in opportunity structures available for young people, the societal expectations related to standardised 'normal' life course are strongly present in Finland. Facilitating smooth and linear transitions from compulsory education to further education and finally to working life is seen as a key LLL policy priority. Quick transitions and unfragmented trajectories are seen as an economic necessity as years not spent in education or employment are years wasted in the economic sense. When looking at the LLL policy measures analysed here in relation to young adults' life course construction, one can emphasise several aspects. One of the main objectives of the LLL policies is to strengthen young adults' social participation and their agency by including them in the decision making about things that concern their own lives. For that purpose, the holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults has been adopted by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. Despite this, the main goals of the policies usually are related to education and employment, and career guidance is a central element of these policies. From the life course perspective, career guidance can play an important role in many people's lives, helping them make more control over their own futures. However, increasing employment should not be the major rationale for such provision, and managing career guidance through performance outcomes without understanding complex processes related to career decision making and dynamics of career construction, can have unintended effects on individuals' life courses.

The case studies analysis showed how In Finland, one finds many critical notes on the implementation of the LLL policies. The criticism is composed of several strands, but the most important one is voiced against a concept of education, which "is increasingly seen as a private good" (Rinne et al., 2016, 35). This has not only led to a situation in which "young citizens are primarily seen as members of the labour market" (op. cit., 34), but also to structural quality changes. In this context, it is important to notice how "the education network has been streamlined, which means that institutions have been merged and closed down"

(ibid.), at the same time that “skills that are essential in terms of the functioning of civil society and democracy make way for skills that increase productivity” (ibid.). Compared with the other European countries, the LLL policies in Finland earn the forceful criticism of an increasingly labour market dominated education system including LLL policies (Kotthoff & al., 2017). Finally, taking into account the key aspects exposed in the Finnish LLL policies as well as the different criticisms presented in national reports, at least two potential unintended effects can be observed related to the intended improvement of educational opportunities for young adults. The first one has to do with the tendency to prolong the learning processes of young adults simply to prevent them from falling into unemployment and to be seen in the statistics on the number of unemployed persons in a given region. This does not only give the impression that learning in this case could be meaningless, but also that the LLL policies developed do not really meet the needs of young adults. If we add to this that in many cases such LLL policies respond mainly to macro-economic objectives, Biesta's rather provocative question, “what's the point of lifelong learning if lifelong learning has no point” (Biesta, 2006, 176), does not appear that provocative anymore, when comparing some severe critical comments of the LLL project concerning Finland. (Kotthoff & al., 2017.) In interests of the subjects and objects of governance do not match. The second unintended effect, related to the previous one, is to create the exaggerated expectation that young adults can be offered the same educational opportunities. This is even more unlikely if there is a tension between “learning to be” and “learning to be productive”, which “overshadows” the objectives of the LLL policies (Lowden, Valiente, & Capsada-Munsech 2016). In this sense, LLL policies related to issues such as migration or social background should be regarded as a priority when developing LLL policies, which are consistent with the idea of providing young adults with the same opportunities, especially those in situations of greater vulnerability. A similar effect of creating exaggerated expectations can be observed with regard to the financial funding of LLL policies; that is, there must be a coherent approach between the expectations generated in LLL policies and their funding, because in some cases what could be expected in theory cannot be developed and implemented in the field because of dwindling financial resources. (Kotthoff et al., 2017.)

## Germany

For the Rhein-Main FR, the German team focused on part-time vocational training for young mothers. The provider of this training is the Verein zur beruflichen Förderung von Frauen (VbFF), which is located in the City of Frankfurt. The VbFF, founded in 1978, is an example of an independent service provider offering a LLL policy measure mainly directed at the labour market. The VbFF has a history in the women's movement and still refers to a feminist perspective. In accordance with its self-conception the VbFF traditionally did not refer to discourses like securing workforce or training maturity. They are much more related to the gender equality discourse, which was long time located in oppositional circles. One of the reasons for the selection of this policy was the observation of the intertwining of those discourses. For the VbFF staff the transition into work is no end in itself and not synonymous for the integration in the society, but a condition for being able to lead their lives autonomously both in economic terms but also in terms of individual choice. The measure addresses the problem of reconciling work and family life. The project addresses young mothers up to the age of 25 years living in Frankfurt and having a school leaving qualification. It offers a thirty-hours per week part-time vocational training for young mothers. That means young women are being qualified to conclude successfully a vocational training who would otherwise not have the chance for an apprenticeship according to the dual training system combining vocational school and practical training in a company.

The policy measure is well-established and implemented since 1998 and funded by the Jobcenter, which is exemplary for the “skills ecology” in Rhein-Main. The VbFF staff work in multi-professional teams and take different aspects of a guided part-time training into account. On the one hand the professional aspects and on the other hand social-pedagogical aspects of support. The analysis showed that VbFF is eager to offer a broad range of support

for their participants. This could be seen first of all as rooted in the feminist tradition and approach of empowering women to live independently. At the same time the analysis pointed out that this tradition and the neoliberal ideal of an individualized life of independent and self-optimizing humans fit together very well, at least in this constellation, inasmuch as competencies like time-management and self-organization are functional for the adaption to company-based expectations of a good employee. Furthermore, codes of individualization like independence and living an “own” life are expressed in a feminist perspective as well as in the neoliberal activation regime. Based on this case the German team came to the conclusion that the feminist approach of providing holistic support is functional for the activation regime in ‘producing’ a self-organised workforce while at the same time the organisation has to adapt to the specific principles and conditions of the Jobcenter according to which autonomy is not an end in itself but only a means for labour market integration. The dominance of the aim employability, already identified in the previous WPs, is here again verified.

In Bremen FR the German team selected the Werkschule as case study. The policy was implemented since 2009 and localised at the VET schools, focuses on the education policy sector. Its aim is to support the transition process of young adults in the VET system. In 2012, the Werkschule was integrated as a regular school of the Bremen education system (§ 25a Bremisches Schulgesetz). The Werkschule started with six vocational schools; meanwhile, more than 1000 students are attending one of the ten Werkschulen in the FR Bremen. Young adults who completed the 8th grade of secondary school education can apply for the Werkschule. Most clients of the Werkschule have a diagnosed Lernbenachteiligung (‘disadvantages in terms of learning’) – an umbrella term encompassing all kinds of difficulties which put the pupils affected at a disadvantage. Since its foundation in 2009, the Werkschule has not only followed the main four national discourses in Germany<sup>1</sup>, but also one of the central goals of the school plan of Bremen focused on how to develop all students’ skills and knowledge. For this purpose, the policy was conceived for those students having trouble with theoretical learning (and needing more time for learning), and willing to have a more practical experience related to finding a job. Werkschule symbolizes a bridge for those students who “lost faith and hope” (Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft, 2004, p. 12) in the traditional school system. However, it is difficult to assess to which extent this function is still an important part of the policy today, or whether the described ‘holistic approach’ could be considered in this case as simply necessary to achieve the expectations of the activation regime, which “involves a policy of producing individuals and identities that conform more readily to industry’s new rules” (Serrano et. al., 2007, p. 12).

The analysis by the CPE approach showed that a particular relationship based on trust and confidence emerges at the individual level, which becomes, seen from the LCR perspective, a reduction of the biographical uncertainty towards employment and the appropriation of specific skills. Here the interviewees evoked how they felt comfortable in their school for the first time in their life. Moreover, they also appreciated the interaction and support they seem to receive from the team working at the Werkschule. There are in fact true synergies in terms of social capital, the results of which become visible once the students have finished the Werkschule in terms of faster access to VET schools, direct contact to companies, recommendations for better apprenticeship positions, etc. At the same time, when it comes to the analysis of the policy implementation its interpretations revealed potential weaknesses, specifically regarding the participant’s drop-out. On the one hand it is possible that the policy follows a clear set of rules and if participants in this measure for “some reasons” (like violent behaviour for example) do not obey these rules, they are expelled from the school. On the contrary, it could also be to find a weakness of the socio-pedagogical and psycho-social care function of the Werkschule. This means that the activating function of the ‘holistic’ approach allows individualising failure and at the same times shows the others what happens, if they

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<sup>1</sup> Namely: the academisation of VET (at least between 2000 and 2010) and its institutionalization; the discursive concept referring to a diagnosed lack of skilled worker (Fachkräftemangel); the debate whether the individual skill and competence base of young adults acquired at school is sufficient to enter the VET system; the visibility of (informal) learning and modularisation.

do not comply with this specific approach. This is perhaps more related to a narrow idea (male employable young adult) of a holistic approach, which comes rather close to a more utilitarian vision of education (mostly related to a neoliberal ideology focused not only on a lack of employment and the development of work capacities, but also on labour competitiveness). From a general point of view, the policy points out an institutional regulation of individual lives following a standardised life course and it is difficult to assess to what extent the individualization and destandardization of young adults' life courses is considered. However, it is worth noticing how the Werkschule takes account of the young adults' living conditions and has been able to reduce the biographical uncertainty of some young adults by integrating the specifically social-pedagogical and psychosocial care function into its approach. Thus, young people who are struggling in the regular school system are not only supported by extending their competences for a specific vocational field to improve their 'employability', but also by providing general life skills). Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that sometimes "staying on the right track" can simply mean imposing a standardised life course on young adults, which answers to a specific demand of the labour market.

### **Italy**

For the Milan FR, the Italian team analysed as case study the NEETwork project. It is targeted towards a particularly vulnerable group, focused on 18-24 years-old NEETs, with a level of education below or equal to the lower secondary level, unemployed for almost six months and not yet enrolled (or having already concluded their experience) in the Youth Guarantee plan. The goals of the NEETwork project are to engage or re-engage youngsters, motivating and helping them to return to education/training and transition into employment, thus increasing NEETs labour market engagement rates. Moreover, it aims to increase the understanding of the NEET phenomenon and to test new ways to engage young people. Aiming to compensate for the Youth Guarantee lacks in terms of the actual engagement of the most vulnerable targets and the weak connection with the Third Sector area, the project NEETwork, integrated within its scheme, represents a peculiarity of the Lombardia Region Youth Guarantee realization. Thus the tasks of the NEETwork project are to engage or re-engage youngsters, motivating and helping them to return to education/training and transition into employment, thus increasing NEETs labour market engagement rates. The target was reached through different channels in respect of those provided by Youth Guarantee: the lists of unemployed people registered with Public Employment Agencies, as well as the lists of candidates registered with a Private Employment Agency (which is a project partner) and through the interaction on the Facebook page of the project. Youngsters are oriented to paid traineeships (€400 per month, 4-6 months lasting) at one of the Third Sector organizations involved in the project network.

In the Genoa FR, the case study is the Civic Service measure within the regional Youth Guarantee scheme. Indeed, in 2015 the Italian Government inserted Civic Service as one measures of Youth Guarantee. Italy is the only one that integrated the CS within the range of its measures. In Liguria Region CS has strong activity by the Region (in fact it is not National Civic Service, but Regional Civic Service with a duration of six months instead of 12 months of National CS but in the same sectors: training, knowledge and commitment on caregiving, civil protection, environment, cultural heritage, education and cultural promotion), giving particular emphasis to the professional skills and its recognition, as an important tool to improve the competences and the employability of the young participants. At this point the Regional Government experimented a skill recognition programme, which tries to involve young adults in defining a personal skills portfolio in order to explain which abilities and competencies can be validate. Until September 2017 young adult effectively involved in RCS in Liguria were 333: half of them has a high and very high distance from labour market and only few were in a very low and low distance. This "distance" is the result of an individual screening and profiling made by the Public Employment Agency, consisting in a first personal interview, personality tests, and a skills analysis. Concerning the match between the CS paths and the local labour market, the focus on the non-profit sector is deemed by the

interviewed managers as particularly suitable for young adults, who can experience a 'soft' approach to work, thanks to the alleged greater potential of the Third Sector organizations (compared to firms) in hosting and supporting apprentices.

Both cases design and implementation have been run through the collaboration of public and private institutional actors, but in the case of NEETwork this is consistent with a well-established pattern of participation of the stakeholder involved in the LLL field, with the new addition of the Third Sector organizations. The Third Sector organizations confirmed to be an adequate environment for the most vulnerable profiles in terms of market integration and available resources. Then measures like our cases actually improve the potential employability of their addressees, yet not providing real integration on the market. As a consequence, once they have positively concluded their paths, the addressees with greater resources are advantaged in job seeking, while the most vulnerable ones threaten to experience further exclusion. Thus, the taking over of the addresses should also provide a follow-up, supporting the paths toward market integration; otherwise, further inequalities may be reproduced. On the other side, we should also wonder until what extent the customization of measures might entail distortions, as well-fitting measures according to the youths' specific needs might not necessarily improve their employability. Hence, an effective guidance should mediate between the customization of the LLL paths and the changes of subjective attitudes and behaviours needed for an actual market integration, because a good match requires a complex triangulation among market opportunities, implementers' ability and youths' awareness.

### **Portugal**

Professional courses and Adult Education and Training Courses (EFA) courses are two of the many training provisions integrating the national VET offer. We find similarities regarding the policies' aims as both intent at the attainment of the Portugal 2020's benchmark of generalization of secondary education as the lower qualification level of the population. Policy discourses mention these as measures to defy high levels of ESL, school failure and youth unemployment. Additionally, both offer evidence on the linkage between education, training and the regional labour market, being characterised by a vocationalist approach, also aligned with the EU guidelines. However, differences allow us to stress target groups that are different as Professional Courses are targeting young people (15 or more with 9 grade) choosing for a fast labour market insertion, over an academic path towards higher education. On its turn, the EFA courses target underqualified young adults over 18 years old, employed or not, as an option to those who are illegible to re-enter / continue in school by being over its age limit (18 years old).

EFA courses delivered by the National Employment and Professional Institute (IEFP) have their target-group redesigned, focusing the unemployed over 18 without compulsory education. Due to the Institute's main function of managing the unemployed population a side with assuring professional training, EFA courses, in this particular setting, behave as an active labour policy and Professional Courses as an education sector policy. Therefore, EFA courses end up concentrating unemployed young adults with incomplete school paths and Professional Courses host students accomplishing their vocational education, in a parallel path to the regular education.

Another similarity can be found in the top-down vertical approach of these two policies, applying locally the guidelines set by national law. The state rules on target-groups, certification, course structure, teacher/trainer profile and subjects' evaluation, holding also the function of monitoring and main funder. Although the VET offer is defined according to the regional labour market with more or less control from the state, the course's curriculum and the national skills framework is centralized.

Considering differences, from the WP6 National report description (Alves et al., 2017; Ribeiro et al., 2017), the governance of the skills' ecology in both regions is antagonistic. On the one hand, the local coordination in Vale do Ave is a notably example of a good practice. CIM

AVE and the ADRAVE are the main institutions bridging the several stakeholders and structures in the sub-region. The main role of both institutions is to recognise the region's needs and the available instruments, mediating the work between all the several elements of the network, in order to reach the region's aims in the several social areas. Despite the ANQEP's intention to encourage a skills needs' diagnosis at the regional level, it still centralizes the definition of courses' curriculum. It affects both Professional and EFA courses, as previously mentioned. On the other hand, in the AL sub-region, where the EFA courses are one LLL policy priority, it is visible the disarticulation and the absence of a coordinator element and an active networking between the different stakeholders involved. The state plays a central role and CIMAL, by not assuming its responsibilities in taking an active role in the regional skill system, gives room to the state to define the regional skills agenda (WP6 National Report). Therefore, this situation puts in a marginal place, municipalities, business associations, civil society associations and trade unions. Contacts between providers in order to build a relevant training offer are mainly informal, spontaneous and dependent on personal contacts, mainly with big or small enterprises. Additionally, these contacts do not consider the workmanship needs of microenterprises, which are the main element of the Portuguese economic sector. If not organized, which is commonly the case, their training needs stay unknown.

In what refers to differences, as seen in the data brought forward to illustrate both policies' attendance numbers, Professional courses show figures with an impressive regularity, in all NUTS' levels in comparison to the EFA courses. This occurrence can be given to the fact of a more stable funding trend to the Professional Courses. As seen in VdA, Professional Courses can be totally funded by private corporations with interest in specific qualifications or when national funding is not enough. Such does not happen with EFA courses, as funding is totally dependent from the ESF, compromising the actual training in times of fund freezing, due to the ESF inner rhythm. Another similarity is found in the interviews to young adults. The vocationalist dimension of both policies is highly recognised and highlight a significant difference between regular school and Professional or EFA courses. These come as an alternative to those young adults with less aptitude to academic education, which have experienced failure in regular schools or even dropped out, feeling more at ease with a practical approach. Differences can be found as to the social attitude towards each policy. Professional Courses' students seem to suffer from stigma, as regular school's teachers and the students' families and friends mistrust this offer's quality in assuring professional success and an eventual higher education pursue, so much socially valued. This high social recognition is a consequence of an educational system structured to democratise and massify higher education's access, since 1974's democratic revolution. Until then it has been an option closed to the popular and working classes. Only in 1989, Professional Courses were finally established in the law as a legitimate educational path option, and not as a strategy to deal with school failure. Also, by the labour market characteristics, Professional Courses for long time were mainly aiming at qualifying the industrial workforce. This sector seems to offer unattractive working conditions and according to the salary tables, wages differ and are higher according to academic certification. On the contrary, EFA courses come as a real option to make a life change, therefore receiving recognition from friends and families of the trainees. This provision is seen as the only available offer. It is recognised as an opportunity to complete compulsory education and get a professional qualification, or to realize a professional vocation with low cost, not available elsewhere.

Finally, in this line of ideas and regarding young adults' life projects, again, it is a similarity among both cases to find the majority anticipating an immediate entry in the labour market. For these young adults, it is the only way to a stable economic situation and to accomplish a family life, rather than pursuing academic studies in higher education. Although we can find a significant difference between those attending a professional or an EFA course. For some experiencing Professional Courses, this path is mentioned as a dream that might come true later or it is already happening in one of the cases. On the contrary, some attending the EFA courses have already failed at regular school, aiming at higher education and a few refer to higher education but as an unreachable dream.

## UK-Scotland

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is the main education, training and employment national policy in Scotland. The principal objective is to better prepare young people (16-24 years old) for the labour market, ensuring that all who leave school continue to be engaged in any kind of learning activity. Its strategy is to be as inclusive as possible, providing flexible educational pathways that facilitate a long term educational strategy for every young person by strengthening the vocational and training education system and improving the work experience of young people starting from school. It is steered by the Scottish Government (SG) and provides a clear 7 year programme plan (2014 to 2021) with specific objectives for different institutions (schools, colleges, employers) with concrete targets to be achieved. In the DYW policy document all objectives, milestones and measures are set at the national level. However, the production and setting of strategies translate into a local/regional implementation and this provides an interesting framework for comparison across Scottish regions. Two Scottish regions have been selected: Glasgow City Region (GCR) and Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region (ACAR), which differ in their main economic activities, socioeconomic structure and composition of young people with regards to their qualifications and socioeconomic background. Moreover, both of them were early starters in the implementation of DYW at the regional level, so the analyses and results will only take into account part of the process and results that are being undertaken.

The main findings, also in terms of similarities and differences with regards the development and implementation of DYW in GCR and ACAR and the influence on young people's lives could be summarize as following. In both cases the DYW regional teams have prioritized the task of connecting schools with regional employers; this was a way to strengthen already existent connections between schools and the world of work and initiate new ones. In both regions there is a rational approach to educational and labour market transitions from DYW managers. Even if in the case of GCR it is acknowledged that some disadvantaged young adults might have more difficulties in building their learning journeys, it is quite assumed that the main education and career routes are not affected by other life domains. The fact of focusing on the 16-19 age group strengthens even more this assumption, leaving aside the rest of the targeted group by DYW policy (20-24). Practitioners in GCR who have a direct contact with young adults have a less standard approach to learning journeys.

Although the policy analysed is the same in both regions, there are an important number of differences. First of all, policy managers and practitioners have to deal with quite different realities. In GCR the involvement is mainly with disadvantaged youth coming from socioeconomic vulnerable families and deprived areas with a multiple number of barriers (n=4), in ACAR the youth interviewed (n=3) come from working class or immigrant background, but they do not show social and health barriers that difficult their educational and labour market transitions. Youth in GCR mentioned a number of personal situations (e.g. health problems, pregnancy, childbearing, elder care, financial constrains) that deviated them from the standard and smooth educational and labour market transitions considered in DYW policy document. This was not the case in ACAR, where the youth interviewed could easily fit into the definitions considered in the national policy. While in GCR the discourses of managers and practitioners are focused on equality issues and in working on the barriers that prevent young adults to get back into education or into the labour market, in ACAR they focus on identifying the key influencers of young adults and how to further support them to make their own educational and career decisions. In GCR the key influencers mentioned by youth are all family members or close friends, whereas in ACAR they have mainly mentioned career advisors or activities related to DYW (e.g. job fair).

Employer engagement with the school and providing information about the existent choices might work for non-disadvantaged young people, but not for disadvantaged ones. In GCR, DYW managers and practitioners have developed mechanisms to retake these disadvantaged young adults who left school if they get in touch with any local authority institution. While in GCR the DYW team seem very proactive in looking for employers, regional employers seem to have a more passive role. Conversely, in the case of ACAR it



has been noticed a more active role from the employers side in engaging with schools and other educational institutions. The different economic sectors, the amount of vacancies, the size of the firms and the scarce of young people with vocational education and training probably form part of the equation to explain these differences.

In sum, DYW national policy seems to fit to a better extent in ACAR. Its actions and ambitions might work to strengthen vocational education and training in Scotland among young people who are not highly disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms and that do not have difficulties in other life domains beyond education and training. Therefore, more efforts and resources should be directed to rethink the policy for the most disadvantaged young adults, who might need early intervention before they reach the last year of compulsory secondary education.

### **Spain**

The Girona Functional Region presents as case study a Training programme (TP12), an emergency plan launched by the Catalan Employment Service (SOC, in Catalan) in 2012 to tackle youth unemployment throughout Catalonia. However, this programme did not start from scratch, but adopted many of the characteristics of a previous programme.

The story of this case study affirms that, since 2012, the Youth for Occupation programme (JPO, in Catalan) has responded to many vulnerable young adults in many parts of Catalonia by providing them with short-term training and apprenticeship experiences along with counselling and guidance for improving their opportunities in the labour market. TP12 selects young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither studying nor working. It is addressed to young people with a “low level of qualification” (Catalunya. DOGC, 2016) – mostly early school leavers who at most achieved their Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate.

The lack of both vocational training and formal education is a relevant problem for the young people. A quick glance at some socio-demographic indicators reveals some of the most important features of the city, and also most of its potential challenges. In 2016 the immigrant population represented 37.39% of the total.

TP12 measures are focused on intervening on young adults' qualifications and training, and there is no consideration of the impact of the reforms that have relaxed and liberalised the labour market and young workers' conditions in Catalonia (Lopez-Andreu & Verd, 2016). In fact, lack of qualifications and the rigidity of the labour market are the central arguments used to explain high youth unemployment rates. TP12 is funded by the SOC and the European Social Fund (ESF) (50% each for most of the expenditure). For 2017, its budget in Catalonia was €13,552,970. Briefly, the ESF, as stated by interviewees at all levels of the administration, imposes several bureaucratic measures that are highly time-consuming and are not perceived as effective for tailoring the programme to the local needs. About skill ecology in the local context there is a lack of coordination between the different public authorities operating in the region. This is exacerbated by a lack of effective and collective mechanisms to detect matches and mismatches between education/training and labour market needs.

What is common to many of their generation (unemployment, lack of opportunities, difficulties accessing housing) is seen as a personal failure. In spite of being aware and recognising their personal and social difficulties, the solutions proposed allow us to state that the individualisation of vulnerability is the most powerful explanation for political action. Even though it is nuanced at the local level, the strong emphasis placed on motivation and individual effort to overcome young people's situation reveals the prevalence of a discourse of individual responsibility that underlies the management of the trajectories.

The case study chosen in the Malaga Functional Region is the project called Workshop Schools – a programme falling within the framework of the broad plan of action of LLL policies, but which differs from other youth training and promotion of youth employment

programmes (mainly between the ages of 16 and 25 unemployed with deficits in basic education, or especially vulnerable collectives or at risk of exclusion). The aims of the Workshop Schools, including the five dependent on the Malaga MITE, had a very specific particularity in the first stage, which was the development and promotion of activities related to the recovery of the artistic, historic, cultural or natural heritage. Rehabilitation of urban areas and the environment was also considered, as well as the recovery and conditioning of publicly owned infrastructures to serve as the basis for centres of entrepreneurial initiative, and any other public or social activity leading to insertion of the young participants through professionalization and acquiring experience (García Valverde and Serrano, 2009).

In Malaga, as in the entire Autonomous Community of Andalusia, as a result of administrative dependence, all training courses for employment including the Workshop Schools have been suspended since 2011, because of irregularities detected in their execution. In all these years, Andalusia, with a mean unemployment rate of 34.3%, has not had training for employment in accordance with the needs of the region. These anomalies in policies of training for employment have meant the loss of European Union grants, with the ensuing suspension of different programmes and projects for training for employment, including the Workshop Schools. It has dealt a severe blow to the future of many excluded young people and at 2016 the youth unemployment rate was even 46.5%.

It has been established (Muñoz, 2013, Carvajal, 2015) that the policies of training for employment, including Workshop Schools, combine the values of the salaried society, focused on job placement, with the need for training for personal promotion. For many young people this experience has become an opportunity to get their first paid job, albeit for a short time, and the work is attractive, free and creative in some cases, which leads to the creation of future expectations in training and the acquisition of skills in a professional field.

Both cases agree, that the most important objective is the improvement of employability for unemployed young people, granting them qualifications and professional competences which are necessary to steadily enter the working market. On the other hand, it may be also useful for those young people who want to start in the formal educational system again. In both cases the future of the young people seems to be restricted after finishing those training courses (TP12 y WS), but they feel that they will encounter new chances to conform their life course thanks to the training and support that they have received through their participation in these policies.

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

The delivery of the WP7 national reports was delayed, which is mainly due to the overlapping of the conclusion of the previous WPs (4-6) and their integration within the WP7 case analysis, which created some complexity for each partner as well as for the Core Team. Despite the delay, the research could be accomplished according to the Grant Agreement.

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

All partners fulfilled their tasks in satisfactory quality. Delays were necessary to ensure both quality of the outputs and the practical accomplishment of the different concurrent tasks.

### **5. Conclusions**

The Steering Board deems this deliverable to be fulfilled satisfactory.

### **Annex – all national reports**

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## **Work Package 7**

### **Regional/local Case Studies**

#### **Austria National Report**

**University of Vienna (UNIVIE)**

Ruggero Cefalo, Yuri Kazepov, Ralph Chan & Lukas Alexander

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## 1. Executive summary

The objectives of WP7 is to conduct case studies on specific LLL measures in the selected regions of Vienna and Upper Austria by identifying policymaking networks and recognizing strengths and weaknesses of different patterns of LLL policymaking at regional level. By doing this, we focus our analysis on the intersection between the social and economic dimensions, trying to understand how they shape scenarios of opportunities and limits for young people. The two case studies chosen for Austria are: *Back to the future* (BTTF), in Vienna, and *Du kannst was!*, (You know something!, DKW) in Upper Austria.

We are interested in young adults' and experts opinions and perceptions about LLL policies. WP7 builds on previous packages WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6 of the YOUNG ADULLLT project in order to tell the story of LLL policy making in the two selected Austrian regions.

This report is structured as follows: In the remainder of this introductory section we present contextual information on the living conditions of young adults and on the common institutional framework in Austria, in order to provide the base for further case analysis. In section 2, we investigate the policy *Back to the Future*, in the region of Vienna. First, we focus on the identification of correspondences, implementation and originalities, in order to tell the story of the case. Second, we carry on the analysis from the different perspectives of CPE, GOV and LCR. In the section 3 we investigate the policy *Du kannst was!* in the region of Upper Austria. As in sections 2, we first construct the case narrative, then we analyze it from the theoretical perspectives of CPE, GOV and LCR.

We combined a multi-level and multi-method analysis methodology. First, the analysis considers different supranational and especially subnational levels. Second, it is carried on through the intersections of the three theoretical approaches, which represent the analytical foundation of YOUNG\_ADULLLT: Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Life Course Research (LCR) and Governance (GOV). The complex corpus of data used consists of statistical document analysis on data at NUTS0 and NUTS2 level, lifelong learning policies and skill formation systems analysis; semi-structured interviews conducted with experts involved in the management or implementation of the policies; biographical-narrative interviews conducted with young adults participating in the selected LLL policies.

The main objective of the report is to explore policies and programmes at the regional and local levels, identifying policy-making and implementation networks that include

actors and institutions involved in lifelong learning policies directed to young adults. On the one hand, the experts interviews allowed us to show how the selected policies are embedded in a broader regional and national institutional framework, as well as influenced by economic and demographic trends shaping the characteristics of the regions where the programmes are implemented. On the other hand, the interviews of young adults shed some light on the way participants experienced the policies, as well as on the impact on their future. All in all, the young adults interviewed were very positive about the policies they have participated in or are currently participating in. Most of them expressed the feeling that participation will help them to achieve their professional and wider personal goals.

The main focus of this analysis is to understand how the interaction among policies, institutions and context, cutting across education, labour and other social realms, and impacts young adults' life courses by building a complex structure of opportunities and constraints that orient individual agency.

### 1.1. Context and institutional framework

In the Austrian federal state, education and labour market policies are subject matter of federal state, while social policies are partly matter of regional states, with an important role played by municipalities. Beside this, the Austrian political system in general and the policy field of labour market and education and training are characterized by a strong involvement of interest representatives and social partners into political decision making and implementation processes.

The Austrian education system is characterized by the early tracking of pupils. The first division, into two tracks, takes place after the fourth grade, at the beginning of lower secondary education. The early tracking into different school careers of the Austrian education and training system has a deep impact on life courses of young people, channelling them into school careers that are strongly influenced by pupils' social background, gender imbalances (horizontal/vertical inequality). Upper secondary education is made up of four main tracks: the pre-academic education and the VET system, made up by dual apprenticeship training, schools for intermediate vocational education and colleges for higher vocational education. The various branches and school types within the formal Austrian education system are managed and funded by different institutional actors. Educational policy in general is responsibility of the federal administration (Ministry of Education). Besides the Ministry of Education, the second relevant institutional actor on federal level is the Ministry of Science, Research and

Economic Issues. However, all types of compulsory schools, are managed by regional administrative bodies, while AHS, BMS and BHS (respectively *Allgemein bildende höhere Schule*, *Berufsbildende mittlere* and *höhere Schulen*) are managed on federal level. The municipalities play a minor role within the organization and management of the school system. Social partners and private actors (firms) are involved in the development and management of the VET system, especially through the Economic Chamber and the Chamber of Labour. Vocational training is characterized by the competition between apprenticeship and school-based vocational courses (Lassnig, 2011; Bliem et al., 2015). However, it is highly diverse with many different programmes and institutions offering access to different social groups, and with range of options for students to access higher education. The higher education system (HE) combines post-secondary and short-cycle vocational courses with bachelor and master courses offered by universities and universities of applied sciences.

Skills formation supply within the formal education system is predominantly funded publically. This includes all kind of upper secondary schools, colleges and public universities. However, the costs for in-company training as part of dual VET is mainly covered by the respective training companies. The various types of comprehensive and vocational schools within the formal education system in upper secondary level and the tertiary education institutions are the most important actors on the supply side in the Austrian skills formation system. Adult education providers also convey a broad range of skills through LLL measures, ranging from basic skills like reading, writing and calculating to very specific vocational skills, also German language skills, application skills, basic ICT skills but also much more specific skills. In Vienna, an additional actor, the WAFF, specifically acts in the field of funding further vocational education.

As we saw from results of WP6, on the demand side of skills formation system we find local/regional authorities and employers. Local and regional authorities have interest in fostering young adults' skills formation. Young adults with high-level skills are less likely to be dependent on social benefits as their risk of becoming unemployed is lower in comparison to young adults with low-level skills (the second social security net is administrated and funded by the regional state). Upskilling of young adults is considered a strategy of reducing public spending for social security at local/regional level. On the skills demand side we also find public and private employers who employ young adults' skills in form of payed employment. Private actors engaging in skills formation are companies and private adult education providers. First, companies engage in skills formation in their role as employers through which they provide the opportunities for an informal on-the-job acquisition of skills. Second, companies engage in skills formation



as they engage in regular dual apprenticeship trainings. Third, companies engage in non-regular apprenticeship training and workplace-based qualification, if they have a specific skills demand that cannot be met on the labour market. Employers express their skills demand within the skills use system, and it is in particular a demand for vocational skills.

The Austrian context is comparably favourable for young people, as shown by secondary data on education attainment and achievement, as well as on labour market participation, as stated in WP4. Moreover, looking at the support provided by public institutions, social welfare standards are still high overall. This makes up for better material conditions of living than in many other EU countries. For instance, the proportion of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion is one of the lowest among EU Member states. However, the living conditions of the population were negatively affected by the economic crisis, both at the individual and at the households' level, and started to recover with fluctuations after 2008-2009. Besides this general picture, some groups must face greater vulnerabilities, in particular older women and children of foreign-born parents.

There is a strong connection between low formal education and training attainments on the one hand and the risk of unemployment and poverty on the other hand. Overall, the percentage of low-educated young adults is decreasing and employment has been increasing, but the economy cannot fully absorb the growth in the labour force. This has led to recent increases in unemployment, especially for the low skilled, even if it remains low. Moreover, the gain in employment since the crisis has mainly been driven by part-time jobs rather than full-time work, with worst working conditions (income, duration of employment) for those employed in low-skilled activities. This goes together with two main trends characterizing the transition from education to employment. First, the rate of students in tertiary education is increasing in Austria, following the pattern of many European countries. Second, the data show a decrease in company-based apprenticeship positions. These trends create less working opportunities with young people without or with low formal educational qualifications. However, regional variations are relevant.

All in all, young Austrians enjoy on average better conditions than their European peers, but previous analysis on WP4 showed relevant differences between the selected functional regions of Vienna and Upper Austria. These regard especially specific contextual economic and demographic features that are associated with different educational and labour market patterns.

## **2. Case study 1 – *Back to the future* - Vienna**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The initiative *Back to the future* was designed as a response to the rise in the number of young adults dependent on basic subsidies, experienced by the city of Vienna in the last years. Its target group are young people from Vienna aged 18-24 and dependent on financial public support. It has been set up by governmental institutions and it is characterized by strong cooperation between different actors at different levels and by a high degree of formal institutionalization.

The initiative aims at fostering the sustainable and active integration of the target group into the first labour market, by increasing their “employability” by means of transitional employment, coaching and training. In order to reduce individual obstacles to labour market integration, young adults engage in specific public-funded employment projects. During this transitional employment, young adults benefit from regular social security standards and receive additional payment according to sector-specific collective agreements. The participants are employed via part-time contracts. The limited duration of their contract is intended as an incentive to search for employment on the regular labour market. This allows them to also engage in further training and job-seeking activities.

We selected the policy *Back to the future* for our case study on Vienna as it addresses a relatively high number of young adults within the Viennese context of LLL policies and it implies a complex governance regime involving various public institutional actors, with an implementation role for private actors too. The initiative is presently running its first edition, and it has a time horizon of 2 years. This is why reports and evaluation activities are planned but not yet available.

This policy has only been implemented in Vienna, so that its investigation is relevant in drawing a distinct picture of LLL policies in the selected functional region. Due to the peculiar role of Vienna in the Austrian institutional structure, it has both a regional and a local dimension. Moreover, the Vienna region has peculiar characteristics that stands out with respect to other Austrian regions. This has to do with contextual features related to economic and demographic developments, while the federal institutional framework is coherently structuring school to work transition and LLL policies, so that regional and local patterns of policy making and policy implementation tend to refer to the same institutional architecture.

The Viennese economy has gone through structural changes during the last decades. Its leading role in Austria's economy is confirmed by the high GDP per capita, closer to some of the richest European regions. Approximately 86% of the Viennese gross product is created in the tertiary sector, while approximately 14% in the secondary sector. Accordingly, the region presents a growing amount of people working in the service sector like accommodation and gastronomy, but also in more knowledge-intensive fields like finance and insurances, ICT, Life Sciences and R&D. In addition, Vienna is the capital of Austria and at the same time one of the nine federal states (Bundesländer), so that the local job market benefits from the fact that the city offers a relative high amount of public employment in education, health and social services.

The densely populated Viennese context is also specific in terms of demographic trends. As reported in WP3, more than 20% of all Austrians live in the region, and the population is increasing at a faster pace than the country's average, reaching 1.8 million inhabitants in 2014. This is mostly due to increasing migration flows. Currently, 42% of the population has a migration background, while more than 20% of the Viennese inhabitants are non-Austrians, having mainly Serbia and Turkey as country of origin. Moreover, in June 2016 approximately 21,000 refugees were living in Vienna and seeking for asylum. One of the consequences is that the weight of young people on the overall population is higher than the Austrian average.

## **2.2. Telling the story of the case study – *Back to the future***

In the interstitial parts between governance levels and actors, a joint project like *Back to the future* started with an idea, which emerges from daily work, forerunner projects or through international exchange (in the Austrian case, Germany is often referred as an example). After assessing the need for a new initiative, the financial and political aspects had to be settled: administrative organization, agreements and approvals, financial aspects, the involvement of different organisations. Subsequently, the information about a new project was communicated to the street-level bureaucrats. The idea to the *Back to the future* project has been developed in February 2016, half a year before it was implemented. As it is explained by the experts interviewed, the foundation of *Back to the future* lies in the cooperation between municipality in charge of social assistance and public employment services.

The skills-demand structure in Vienna is characterized by a trend towards a higher request for higher qualified activities, while the share of jobs focusing on manual activities is shrinking. On the other hand, opportunities for young people in the dual apprenticeship

system and in industrial sectors are quite limited. The main challenge for the Viennese labour market in the future will be to provide sufficient jobs for its growing population: especially for those who have lower educational qualifications, the access to the labour market is getting increasingly difficult. Moreover, migration inflows tend to increase the subgroup of vulnerable youth.

Data on public expenditure as a percentage of GDP clearly show that training and skills development represent the main focus of Austrian active labour market policies. In the case of *Back to the Future*, the initiative has not to do with the direct provision of training. However, the creation of public-subsidized employment positions aims at increasing the human capital of the target group through practical working experience, which includes specialized skills but mostly soft skills like motivation, conduct at the work place. This is meant to ease the difficult transition from education to the labour market, and from a non-standard low-skilled employment to a more attractive, better paid working position.

*“It is hard [to find a job], because back then, a couple years ago, they [employers] looked for people with vocational certificate but now they want people with upper secondary degree.”*

(Y\_AT\_V\_8)

*“[asked whether it was an option to keep working in the firm after his apprenticeship] Right, at the beginning they said yes, but they [firm] were so overfilled in our age-group, that they only took over three of us [...].”*

(Y\_AT\_V\_8)

The design and implementation of the measure *Back to the Future* has been surrounded by different narratives, addressing issues related to welfare subsidies and activation programmes. On the background, recent media reports suggest that social subsidies are distributed generously without proper control, therefore favouring wasting of resources due to welfare dependency. The Municipal Department in Vienna denied this accusation, pointing out that the reasons for higher social expenses are to be found in an increasing demand: it is argued that there are not enough jobs in specific fields of profession for trained people, as well as a general condition of vulnerability for specific subgroups. The transition from lower to upper secondary education bears high potential risks: if a low-achiever pupil who is not going to engage in pre-academic and higher education misses the transition from compulsory schooling to the dual or educational system, his/her opportunities strongly decrease.

People with low education, migration background and single parents are more likely to be unemployment and/or suffer poverty. It is not just a matter of having a job, as in conditions of increasing labour market flexibility and diffusion of non-standard contracts, some don't earn enough money in their job to provide for a family and have therefore the right to get subsidies. However, the experts interviewed also stress that a change in the paradigm of Austrian labour market policies took place. The MA40 (*Magistratsabteilung 40 - MA 40 - Soziales, Sozial- und Gesundheitsrecht*) and the AMS (*Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich*, the Austrian public employment services or PES) stopped paying money to cover the costs of unemployed people without demands. They act on the assumption that it is financially more rational for them to invest and foster an integration in the first labour market. This resonates with the rationale of the activation approach, implying that provision of welfare benefits should be attached to forms of conditionality, in order to link individual responsibility (being proactive and act to speed up the return into employment) and entitlement to social provision. The discourse on individual responsibility of young people to be proactive is recurrent in the definition of the target group of the measure *Back to the future*. This is a regional and local policy influenced by transnational discourses on lifelong learning that then translated into Austrian narratives and strategies on LLL, connected with the relevance of vocational training and the emphasis on practical working experience. We can notice also the parallel existence of two narratives on the objective of LLL: on the one hand, it is framed according to an approach combining labour market participation and personal development or self-realization; on the other hand, practical employment skills and the fulfilling of the job-market needs are considered paramount. However, since the limited involvement of private actors in the design of the measure, the combination of narratives did not result in conflicts at the governance level. As for the governance structure implied, a common characteristic in Austrian policy making is the tight cooperation between different actors, which is however more difficult in Vienna due to the weakness of networks that we discussed in previous paragraph. However, this peculiar situation did not originate conflicts among different institutions: negotiations have reportedly been also quite hard, but then resulted in coordinate actions.

The focus on labour-related issue also resonates in participants' expectations and impressions. A recurrent topic in the interviews regarding learning experiences and "negative" academic performance at school was the young adults' explanation that they are better with practical learning, instead of theoretical learning which dominates at school. The provision of practical knowledge and soft skills through direct working

experience is considered a valuable tool in view of labour market participation and a stronger labour market attachment later in life.

*“...back then I really apply often [for a job], but everyone is looking for someone with experience. But how can I get experience if no one employs me?”*

(Y\_AT\_V\_3)

Different discourses regarding the target group shaped the measure in the passage from design to implementation. The initial motivation behind the policy was to reduce the number of basic income subsidy recipients, to get young adults used to regular employment, leading therefore to young adults' integration into the first labour market or reintegration into the education and training system. However, this is to be pursued following a more comprehensive approach addressing their working life in order to trigger a “change of face” regarding young adults' relation to work, where the incentive of transitional work is but a step to *“develop an incentive to enter this system and to stay in it. Thus, also to demonstrate the worth of work and to really get them into employment.”* (E\_AT\_V\_1). Young people are conceptualized as individuals in need of guidance, without a clear idea of what is work, why it is needed and how does employment work.

*“It's really about working on their mindset. That they just start working and to get them active in this direction. Because they just don't know this constellation, yes.”*

(E\_AT\_V\_3)

These lessons, according to the experts interviewed, are not to be learned easily: the intervention aims at getting young adults used to a regular working life and it is not about making young adults feel comfortable. Instead, they are to be confronted with the sometimes unpleasant reality of work. This is also intended to raise young adults' awareness of what their future will look like in manual and low-qualified jobs if they do not engage in further training or education:

*“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 labour market right now.”*

(E\_AT\_V\_3)

In this sense, BTTF is not only about labour market integration, but also about raising young adults' awareness of the importance of education and training. Another policy manager pointed to the fact, that this form of employment would show young adults the direct effectiveness of their work, increasing their feeling of self-worth and showing them on a small scale that their contribution makes a difference. Besides employment in one of the social enterprises, young adults receive application and general career coaching. In necessary, they also have the opportunity to engage in additional courses, like German language courses. After participation in BTTF, they receive assistance for three months to smoothen the transition into training or into the labour market.

*"Study, studying is the best for everything. Not only for work, for everything. Yes, my biggest mistake was, that I didn't [...] study on the university."*

(Y\_AT\_V\_7)

However, the analysis revealed that during the implementation phase this conceptualization based on the assumption that young adults receiving basic income subsidies are lost or just do not want to work or engage in education, turned out to be contrasting with practice and experience:

*"But at some point I apprehended, It's to no purpose, to stay there [in unemployment]. I can't simply say I stop with my life and say, I stand still, I have to go on and then I simply lowered my expectations, yes. And that is how I ended up with different little jobs over and over again."*

(Y\_AT\_V\_6)

In many cases the young adults who entered the programme were not able to find long-term employment from which they can make a decent living because of a lack in jobs for low-qualified and not a lack in attitude. A policy manager for BTTF stressed, in fact, that recruiting of unskilled workers apparently poses a challenge to employers, also because a reported high level of unreliability among unskilled workers. Therefore, during the allocation of young people to the measure, the operators often conduct a pre-selection of possible workers for employers based on their previous skills. However, such dynamic recalls well-known mechanisms of 'creaming' effect, as only the most employable among the targeted are able to access jobs through policy intervention; and of a Matthew Effect, as an intervention results in selecting the less disadvantaged within a population or target, thus bringing to a paradoxical increase in inequalities.

As we said, the target group for BTTF are young adults between 18 and 24 years old living in Vienna who receive minimum income subsidies. A policy manager specifically stated that the composition of people receiving income subsidies has totally changed over the last 20 years. While two decades ago it were mainly long term unemployed and socially excluded people who received subsidies, nowadays everyone is a potential recipient. The group of recipients covers all age groups, educational level, professional backgrounds, countries of origin. According to our interviewee this is mainly due to the changes on the labour market: certain job profiles tend to vanish as they are no more requested by employers; or people are employed in precarious job position and earn too little to make a living. The participants in BTTF represent the diversity of basic subsidy recipients and this turned out to be unexpected for the municipality's and employment services' actors. They stress that some share of participants was made up, for instance, by young people with a university entrance qualification, or with an HTL (5-year vocational college for technical occupations) upper secondary qualification. This brings out an issue of mismatch in analysing the transitions from school or unemployment to work, as unemployment or precarious employment seems not to be only a matter of qualification of the job-offer. It also comes up from the misalignment between job-offer and job-demand due to changes in employment relationship (Austria was also touched by a common trend towards the flexibilization of the labour market); as well as by tertiarization and economic restructuring that impact on the kind of skills requested making some skills from traditional industrial sectors easily obsolete. In the case of BTTF, policy makers designed the policy assuming that the target group would be low educated, school drop-outs, long-term unemployed and on-off employment. Participants only partly match this profile, as some of them are overqualified with respect to the policy intervention. For these people, participation is not related to a lack of skills but to the skills mismatch, so that the benefits they can gain in terms of reduction of life uncertainty is limited to the acquisition of some generic work experience. In this light, BTTF seems to suffer from a deeper inconsistency: policy makers and managers know that the reasons for receiving basic income subsidies are mainly related to current labour market characteristics – the structural level and demand-related. Still, they implement policies that are based on the assumed deficits of young adults – the individual level and offer-related level.

A policy manager stated that it took some time to get the policy started properly, because of the difficulty to get the target group interested in participation, as many young people do not show interest to the service offered. Possible participants get assigned to the policy by the PES but out of the around 600 young adults assigned, far less than 50%



showed up at the following informative meeting. Drop-out continues with each subsequent step, leaving a very limited number of full participants who fully participate in all the steps of the program. Policy managers had even to “overbook” the policy to ensure a decent number of participants. One of the reason of high drop-out rates is, according to the experts, that many young adults are disappointed because their expectation about the Austrian labour market diverges from reality. The wage seems also to be a key-issue, as young adults’ wish to financially support their families back home. With the money they earn by participating in the policies, this is not possible in most cases.

Looking at the governance structure of the policy selected, as far as implementation procedures are concerned, the interviews did not stress the emergence of relevant conflicts among actors. In the case of *Back to the Future*, public institutions played the leading role and managed to steer the implementation of the measure, while private actors like Reintegra mainly acted as executors in the implementation process.

In Austria, reforms usually take an incremental pace, implying minor changes within an established institutional architecture made up by long-lasting corporative traditions of cooperation and negotiation among welfare institutions and social partners. Therefore, innovation must be considered as context sensitive, as actions and policy measures occur within the borders of a significant national frame that shapes the design, the implementation and the outcomes of measures like *Back to the future*.

Moving within this picture, we can recognise that the measure selected addressed some peculiar new needs. To start with, the target group (people who get basic subsidies) changed in the last 15-20 years, covering now different educational backgrounds, heritage and social class. The skill formation system in the region of Vienna is characterized by the expansion of higher education and, on the other hand, by a limited relevance of the dual system of apprenticeship. Combined with the upgrading of the job demand, this creates a relatively good matching in the higher sectors of skills distribution; but also a lack of opportunities for low-qualified people, except for the case of non-standard jobs in service sectors like accommodation or restoration. This connects with migration in-flows creating a state of vulnerability in the passage to the primary labour market.

*“...in Austria I worked as waiter, no really as waiter, rather service, because my language was not so good, it helped me not so good.”*

(Y\_AT\_V\_1)

The combination of Austrian and Viennese-specific trends made up the conditions for a measure addressing the transition to employment for vulnerable young adult in the region of Vienna. Here, it is worth noticing that the most comprehensive LLL programmes for young adults in vulnerable situations are decided at federal level. Therefore, *Back to the future* represents a relevant innovation in the Viennese context, being a local action with a wide scope and a relatively high degree of standardization. In general, however, the experts engaged in the management of the policy stated that the “hands-on” approach is rather a new one in comparison to more traditional Austrian LLL policies, relying on standard course formats and mainly focusing on theoretical learning. This is why the participants use to see such courses, that they are partly been forced to attend, not as something actually helping them, so that they often end up attending in a passive way.

*“There was too much waste of time. Instead of providing me with a computer course, English course, any course that would help me, anything great for my CV and in the end the courses were good for nothing. It were dream vacations [matter of the course] and really totally weird, totally weird things that were offered for unemployed [...].”*  
(Y\_AT\_V\_6)

In the case of BTTF, they instead value the policy’s contribution in reducing young adult’s life course uncertainties. Notwithstanding the partial incoherencies in the definition of the target group, the experts tend to agree young participants gain precious professional experience and sometimes show a consequent willingness to engage in further education and training. From the experts’ point of view, these represent valuable advantages on the labour market.

The heterogeneous target group also triggered a strong necessity of cooperation among actors. As potential recipients of basic subsidies potentially vary across all population strata, coordination among actors instead of having everyone focusing on its own ‘little box’ was deemed as a value added in responding to diversified needs.

The young adults interviewed for BTTF had all started upper secondary school and partly had completed an apprenticeship. They all had acquired working experience before entering BTTF. Regarding participation in the policy and the related acquisition of skills, they mainly referred to soft skills. Participation had given their daily lives more structure. The specific tasks young adults have to fulfil within the policy, led to an increase in self-esteem, as they directly see the relevance and value of their own work. One interviewee also told that participation had helped her to handle stressful situations. All interviewees have made good experiences with the policy and were happy about the opportunity to

participate. In particular, the interviewees appreciated that they had a regular day-to-day structure and could do “real work” for which they receive acknowledgement.

*“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)

Also they stated that being employed via BTTF would raise the likelihood of finding a job, as it is much easier to find a job while in employment.

*“I have noticed that during the last years, if I was at home, searching for a job was quite hard. And as soon as I was employed somewhere, all of a sudden I received a lot of acceptances. It’s really a huge difference, if you’re at home or you go to work and look for a job along the way.”*

(Y\_AT\_V\_10)

As reported by the interviewees, participation in BTTF had a positive impact on their approach toward planning and future. This is to be seen in the statement of priorities and goals. Three of them referred to have plans of attaining a university entrance certificate and studying at the university in the near future. The other priority all interviewees stressed was more directly connected to the explicit purpose of BTTF, as it had to do with the search for a stable job. Some stated that they just wanted to find whatever job. While three of them said – partly based on their previous work experience – that it was more important to them to find a meaningful job and they valued “a good life” much more than earning a lot of money.

*“Of course I want to be able to afford stuff, but I rather want a job where I like to go to, instead of job, I do not really like but just go there because of the money. That’s not really my ideal of, of, of life (...) I like that better, than just be stressed and not able to enjoy anything and then to end up with a burnout”*

(Y\_AT\_V\_9).

Here the participation in the labour market is described as something going beyond the economic realm of meaning, while touching a wider concept of life and self-realization.

Therefore, the policy BTTF is seen as a support in developing experience and soft skills to foster a crucial transition in the life course and process of identity building.

***Correspondences:***

- Coexistence of personal development and strictly job-related activation approach.

***Implementation:***

- Fragmentation of the target group of people getting social subsidies, varying across all population strata.
- Cooperation mainly among public actors (municipality, employment services) in the design, private actors also involved in the implementation.

***Originalities:***

- Transitional employment and training to facilitate labour market integration;
- Low-qualified as a vulnerable group in the labour market;
- Local action embedded also in the Austrian context.

### **2.3. Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives**

*Analysis of the case from the CPE perspective*

The measure *Back to the future* finds its roots in a growing narrative on the relevance of successfully managing the school to work transition in order to achieve a long-lasting and positive integration into the (first) labour market. This issue is to be addressed by developing the human capital of young people, as composed by a variously defined stock of skills and capabilities. In the last 10 years, the main national strategies on education and LLL (Chance Education in 2007, the Austrian lifelong learning strategy in 2011 and the national strategy for prevention of early school leaving in 2012) had been strongly reflecting the strategies for Lifelong Learning formulated at the European level. The European discourse combined with national discourse on LLL stressed the central role of vocational training and apprenticeship providing to young people a mix of school- and work-based learning.

Within this context, *Back to the future* constructs its targets and defines its objectives according to the perspectives assumed by the Municipal Department of Vienna and the local section of the Austrian AMS, i.e. the two main institutional actors who cooperate in the design and implementation of the measure. The target group is made up by young people aged 18-24 who are dependent of basic subsidies, and are therefore experiencing major struggles in the integration into the labour market. This target (people

who get BMS) changed in the last 15-20 years. In the past, this group consisted in Vienna of around 30.000 long-term unemployed people with seriously damaged social networks. Over the years, this changed fundamentally in terms of demographic characteristics, covering now different educational backgrounds, heritage and social class. Accordingly, the policy managers interviewed stressed the extreme heterogeneity of participants in terms of educational background and “job readiness”. There are also some regularities, as 75% of participants are males, most of them second or third generation migrants or refugees.

A common stating coming from policy managers interview refers to the implementation of a hands-on approach, as a reaction to unsatisfying results of previous LLL policies mainly aiming at placing young people in training courses organized by the AMS. The latters are deemed as too theoretical: young people would take several courses without expected results in terms of employment. On this matter BTTF introduces a change because it places people concretely in employment. BTTF was also presented as the result of the paradigm shift from passive to active labour market policies, comprising a higher conditionality in receiving minimum income subsidies.

The measure is structured in a stage system, which is orientated on the Swiss Dock-Model, with a reduced working time(low-threshold) at the beginning, followed by positive stimuli/incentives (more money, higher positions) to foster motivation and help with the transition to the first labour market. Underneath lies the assumption, that young adults don't live in the “sobering reality of work“ (E\_AT\_V\_1, 367). The experts interviewed stated that their view of their own qualifications and the opportunities that the labour market offers are far beyond what is real. It is identified a contrast between young people life expectations and opportunities available. Therefore, the Municipal Department highlights the problem of reaching young adults that feel no pressure from their social environment to be active after the compulsory schooling. Solely financial incentives are considered not enough to motivate that group, while the objective of the Department is to show them a different meaning of life: the idea is to provide them with real working-life experience, so that young people may find their motivation, adapt the expectations to the reality of work and thus be able turn their path in an early stage. Moreover, the Municipal Department aims at reducing theoretical courses for unemployed people and instead practically employ them. It is argued that theory doesn't work as well as practical employment skills in integrating this vulnerable group in the labour market. They should learn step-by-step values of work, structure and stability to ease the transition and prevent them from discontinuing. There is also the awareness that some participants will not be able to successfully complete their transition, partly because of lacking

motivations and partly because of lacking basic skills. According to the experts interviewed, these individuals face the high risk to stay dependent on social support for a long time early in their life.

The issue of low motivation of young unemployed, partially ascribed to the relatively generous subsidies (BMS), is also raised by the expert of Reintegra, one of the private organizations collaborating in the implementation of the measure. Referring to Reintegra the goals of *Back to the future* are to build up self-esteem of young adults, to give them a daily routine and to provide them with a job certificate. A street level operator interviewed also highlights the importance of well-trained workers in the field of production and manual work for the Austrian market, because the international concurrence is strong and many jobs were outsourced to China.

On the side of the participants, the young adults in the measure are aware that their work-output is not the main goal of the *Back to the future* project. They know that they are expected to learn basic structures and values of labour. They stress that usually AMS courses are not really helpful in finding a job, due to a lack of practical training. In this light, the project is usually positively evaluated. However, as far as the outcomes of the measure are discussed, the opinions of young adults are quite diversified. Young participants with previous working experience stress the competitiveness of the labour market, due to the fact that companies rather hire people with higher qualifications. This is why some of them also consider the apprenticeship as less prestigious compared to higher education. Some report an increasing social pressure pushing them into higher education. Underneath there lies the strong assumption that opting out of the education system is not accepted in their society. This has consequences also on self-representation and identity, as some views their own way of life as de-standardised according to a 'normal' path made up by educational attainments of qualifications and subsequent labour market integration. The young adults involved also identified a partial contradiction in the target of the project, as they assume that almost half of all participants in the project are refugees who either need to learn German or have problems getting their certificates recognised. This contradicts the expert's statement that refugees who only speak basic German can be taken on only if they would get some translators: the operator working for Reintegra stated that only few non-Austrians attend the project, although there are many with migration background.

#### *Analysis of the case from the GOV perspective*

This Austrian institutional framework shapes the governance regime of *Back to the future*, which has been set up by governmental institutions and it is characterized by a

high degree of formal institutionalization. The peculiar status of Vienna in the Austrian federal context, makes it both a regional and local measure. The institutional actors involved in the policy are: the Municipal Department for Social Affairs, the Municipal Department for Health Planning, the Vienna Employment Promotion Fund, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Public Employment Service. The Municipality of Vienna (Municipal Department of Social Affairs) and the local section of public employment services (AMS Vienna) cooperate in the implementation of the measure. AMS allocates to the programme young people that are then employed with part time contracts in public funded social firms.

The initiative is funded with 10 million Euro and provides 200 transitional work places for young adults in socio-economic employment projects that have been funded and made available from December 2016 onwards. More precisely, 55% of the costs are covered by the Municipality of Vienna (via MA 40) and AMS, while 45% by the European Social Fund (ESF). It is important to state that, besides funding, the European Union had no specific role in shaping the design of the measure. The European fund provides funds for regional projects in the Viennese context, but due to the complex procedures requested to get financial support, the Municipal Department consider regional organizations like the WAFF more reliable when projecting and designing LLL interventions.

The Viennese MA 40 is the main responsible managing actor, working closely together with the Viennese Employment Promotion Fund (WAFF) and with the regional section of public employment services. Actors responsible for the implementation are social enterprises, while the Viennese Social Fund (FSW) plays a complementary role of cooperation in the functioning of the intervention. The AMS and MA40 are cooperating, because their target groups are similar (people who get unemployment benefits from the AMS and later from the municipality).

The target group of the Municipal Department shifted towards 18 to 24 years old people. Additionally, a secondary target group was added: refugees who were granted asylum. Under huge time pressure, the Municipal Department drafted a concept for the related ESF Call. The cost ought to be split between ESF (50%) and public bodies (AMS/Municipality of Vienna) (50%). After the revision in multiple commissions, the project call for 200 seats was published. The Municipal Department (MA40) selected 200 applications, choosing among young adults experiencing unemployment spells (also relatively brief, for instance 4-5 months). The reason for that was that the city financed partially the measure and that the target group of the *Back to the future* project (people who get BMS) are part of its competences. The MA40 picked two organisations, Start

Working and Reintegra (each received funding for 100 positions). The AMS distributes the young adults to the project. Their educational background does not seem to make any difference. Monthly the Municipal Department (that pays welfare benefits) sends the information of their clients (young adults) to the AMS, so that the employment services can update their database.

In BTTF, young adults are employed by the implementing firms: they receive a contract for 24 hours per week after completing the initial eight week orientation phase. Subsequently, they have the opportunity to increase their working hours. Two enterprises, Reintegra Craft Jobs and Start Working, applied for *Back to the future* and are key actors in the implementation of the project. Each offers 100 seats for training and educating young adults. Their staff consists of skilled manual teachers and caregiver (social worker, psychologists...). In the one, young adults work in agriculture, in gastronomy or a wood workshop. In the other, they mainly take over simple manual tasks, like packing, requested by companies the implementing organization has established cooperation with.

In the case of Reintegra, the firm orient the work schedule on realistic conditions and tries to mimic a logistic firm. Moreover, it is in contact with firms that could potentially employ participants. The Reintegra-team tries to allocate the different available tasks based on the strengths of the young adults (e.g. staffing communicative persons in the reception). However, the range of different tasks the program offers is limited and the focus does not lie on training the participant specifically but getting them used to a regular working situation. The participants receive slightly higher subsidies (BMS and little extra money for their effort, simulating a wage) that are linked to a principle of conditionality: they can be cancelled if, without a reason, the young people employed don't show up during their working time.

Beyond the financing, the AMS cooperates frequently with Reintegra by offering courses for participants if needed (Language course etc.). If young adults are sent to the *Back to the future* project they must attend an information event and if they are interested, they take part to an interview. Young adults who are assigned to the initiative (allocation is conducted by the PES) can participate for the maximum duration of two years. The first eight weeks serve as preparation phase. This phase – already part of the specific employment project – serves to find out more about the young adult's individual needs, skills, work experience, and obstacles in finding long-term employment. During the preparation phase participants receive financial means from the PES to cover their costs of living.



After completing the preparation phase, participants take up transitional employment and take over individually suited tasks, differing in difficulty. Individual assignment is supposed to encourage the employment and improvement of already existing skills, support the acquisition of new skills and prepare the participants for higher qualified tasks. Coaching and – if necessary – the engagement in additional basic skills course is viewed as contribution to a stable working environment and prevent dropout. Employment is set up in a two-step model. Participants start with low skilled task and reduced working hours but have the possibility of taking over higher skilled tasks and increase their working hours, both contributing to an increase in salary. Afterwards they are employed as interns for a period of two months followed by a regular temporary employment. According to Reintegra, the majority of clients who signed a contract attend the program until the end (1 year) or they manage to find a job in the meantime.

#### *Analysis of the case from the LCR perspective*

In Vienna, the higher education sector is highly attractive also for Austrian and international students. Moreover, the structure of the job demand, with a relatively low share of employed in industrial sectors and growing service sectors, as well as with a very high share of small-sized firms, makes up for a relatively small apprenticeship market. As a matter of fact, upper-secondary non-tertiary degree as maximum qualification dropped down to 37.2% in 2015, and only 58.4% of students engaged in upper secondary education enrol in vocational programmes. The general upgrading of job demand in the skill market (while the share of jobs focusing on manual activities is shrinking), the relative weakness of the apprenticeship system and of the industrial sectors in Vienna reduce opportunities for low-qualified young people: especially those who are not able to get an upper secondary qualification must face a shrinking apprenticeship market for medium-low qualified jobs and are therefore more exposed to unemployment or precarious work in less attractive and low-skilled activities in the service sector. This adds to the growing migration inflow, creating difficult conditions of labour market access particularly for the less educated.

As a general statement, youth conditions in the Viennese labour market are better than the European average. However, the transition between education and the labour market seems to pose some specific challenges, as young people in Vienna face more risks of unemployment than their Austrian peers. The transition to the labour market, especially when refers to individuals with low formal qualifications coupled with previous experience of unemployment and forms of material deprivation, is considered as a major factor of risk for young people. Therefore, as stated by the experts we interviewed, the main

existing challenge is to enable young adults' continuing participation in the education system or in training-related activities and thereby increasing the likelihood of attaining medium-level or high-level skills and educational qualifications. However, the early tracking within the Austrian school system and the segregation it creates at the lower secondary level represents an institutional obstacle in meeting this challenge.

Vocational education and training forms the largest part of the Austrian education system, particularly for young adults with medium and low level of learning skills. This importance is reflected in the orientation of the vast majority of LLL programmes and skills conveyed via them, even though participation of young adults in formal VET in Vienna is lower than the Austrian average: In our interviews, the publically funded supra-company apprenticeship programme and measures providing the opportunity to attain an apprenticeship qualification within a reduced time span, are considered as the most important LLL programmes for young people. Another approach – workplace-based qualification – also reflects the strong vocational orientation of LLL programmes. Companies that are not able to cover their workforce demand address unemployed persons who are interested in re-training, via PES. The principle here is the same as in dual VET, combining in-company training with theoretical learning in courses. It is important to point out that attaining an apprenticeship certificate is more than just a formal qualification, as it is proof that the worker has acquired skills related to the occupational profile as well as broader soft skills related to experiences in a working environment. For instance, social skills and language skills seem to become more important across all sectors of the economy. These skills are often as much valued by employers as the specific vocational skills acquired.

*Back to the future* is to be read within the array of measures that are implemented in Vienna in order to help young people in successfully managing the school-to-work transition, by rising their skills. *Back to the future* doesn't offer qualifications but public-subsidized employment to vulnerable young people entitled to unemployment benefits and social assistance, as a transitional step towards the reintegration into the labour market thus trying to ease the transition and avoid skills depletion. Moreover, in a synergic fashion, it has a potential for integration with other measures (training or further job-seeking).

The number of people getting social subsidies rose around 20% after the implementation of the new BMS model 2011, which introduced a higher minimum standard. Furthermore, there has been a change in the employment conditions, as more people work part-time and some who work full-time in low-wage jobs are working poor who are not able to earn an income above minimum social standards. However, extended unemployment puts

pressure on young adults especially if they live independently from their families. In their life course dynamics, young adults are strongly influenced (actively and passively) by their social environment (family and friends) in their transition from compulsory schooling to higher education or the dual system. Sometimes existing social networks may offer an easy transition to the labour market. However, many young people experience it as a situation of constraint and limitations of opportunity to find an own way, thus experiencing a major increase of biographical uncertainty.

The “*Back to the future*“ project addresses this critical juncture in an age where young people are still not too far away from education and the labour market. The aim is integrating the young adults in the first labour market or, at least, keeping them in the program as long as possible to prevent them from going back to social support (a possible option is also to go back into education through the dual system). The private organizations involved in the implementation of the programme, like Reintegra, have a network with firms to transfer suitable participants directly to open jobs. As for the impact of *Back to the future*, a complete evaluation of its effects on young adults’ life courses is at the moment not available. The PES conducts a one-time monitoring three month after participation in the respective project has ended, looking if former participants are in employment with full social security coverage. A longer-term evaluation for both policies is not intended. Some young adults experience the daily routine as positive and think that it might help them to get used to work, in view of their future job. For others this goes also along with mental and social stability. In general, the participants wish for more counselling interviews regarding their applications, curriculum vitae and similar issues. Within the program, young refugees have a somehow different status: those with a linguistic level of B1 are eligible. However, for them it is hard to go back to their original profession, because they have problems adapting to new organizational structures and they often face problems getting their certificates recognised.

### **3. Case study 2 – *Du kannst was!* (You know something) – Upper Austria**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The action *Du kannst was!* (You can something!) was implemented in Upper Austria in order to facilitate the official recognition of informally acquired professional skills. Its target group are people who are 22 years or older, who are employed and have acquired the skills of the respective occupational profile but do not hold an apprenticeship or have not been employed in the trained profession for more than five years. The action is also

directed towards immigrants whose educational attainment has not been officially recognized in Austria. Although it does not specifically address young adults, we consider it strongly relevant for them: therefore, we focused on people with less than 30 years who participated in the programme.

The project specifically applies to 20 occupational profiles selected because of the high number of semi-skilled people employed in these occupations, and also by looking at the labour market demand for skilled workers in the specific branches. The profiles range from knowledge-intensive activities (IT, engineering), to manufacture (metal working), to less knowledge-intensive and manual activities (backer, retail, restaurant service employees, carpenters). After a skills evaluation, eligible persons acquire missing skills – if necessary – in training courses and subsequently conduct a practical test to get a formal qualification recognizing the skills possessed or acquired during the training. The Chamber of Labour, the Chamber of Economy and the Upper Austrian authorities, initiated the action. Further project partners are the Forum for Adult Education, the Adult Education Center Linz, the Public Employment Service and the Upper Austrian Trade Union Confederation.

We selected *Du kannst was!* for our case study on Upper Austria firstly because of the number and range of institutional partners involved. The policy relies on the cooperation between the social partner, public institutional actors and adult education institutions. *Du kannst was!* is based on the fact that low-qualified people face higher risks of unemployment. Therefore, by targeting people who are in employment, this lifelong learning policy is based on preventing future unemployment by means of additional training. Finally, it can be considered a positive example in the landscape of Austrian LLL policies: *Du kannst was!* was first implemented in Upper Austria and its first edition is still ongoing. However, it was subsequently taken over in other Austrian regional states, as it has been considered successful in enhancing the recognition of informally acquired professional skills.

### **3.2. Telling the story of the case study – *Du kannst was!* (You know something)**

The Chamber of Labour together with the social partners initiated *Du kannst was!*. The original idea was taken from the Swiss model of recognising competences. That was an unknown territory in Austria. There have been three years of negotiation between the Chamber of Economy and Labour, the Trade Union, different educational institutions (for instance the *Firmenausbildungsverbund*) and the regional administration, who was supposed to finance the project. The cooperation among those involved is still ongoing

by means of frequent meeting activity. Given the major role of the social partners, and especially of the Chamber of Labour, in the design of the measure, the negotiation between them assumed a primary importance. In particular, the experts interviewed stressed how the Chamber of Economy had some doubts regarding *Du kannst was!* especially during the design of the action, as they feared it could bring to “cheap” qualifications for the employees, without a strong value added for employers.

The pilot phase has been conceptualised for 100 people, but it was clear that many waited for such an opportunity, as the program was soon booked out. The Chamber of Labour together with the AMS picked 9 different professions with the highest rates of untrained workers. Interestingly, it was easy to find participants in the sector commerce and metal industry and harder to find carpenters and IT-technicians. In the later phase the range of professions has been expended to 20 (creating and integrating a new one takes up 2 months). The range of occupations was selected by looking at the demand coming from the employers or at the available data on untrained workers. In autumn 2017 the project summoned a total of 700 participants.

As an expert from the Chamber of Labour puts it, at the origin of the project was, on the one hand, the complain of the Chamber of Economy about the so called shortage in skilled workers and, on the other hand, the position of the department of education at the Chamber of Labour, that pursues the increase of accessibility of further education for unskilled workers. This narratives have been filtered by the characteristic of the Upper Austrian context, i.e. the wide diffusion of upper secondary education and the role of the dual system in providing the bridge between education and employment. Therefore, within the official target of employed but poorly qualified people, particular attention is devoted to young people who were not able to get a qualification through apprenticeship, because they abandoned the course or failed the final examination. For instance, one of the young adults who was interviewed conducted the entire apprenticeship, did not pass the final examination. When he tried for the second time he failed again. He explained that he did not learn anything during his apprenticeship because no one in his training company felt responsible for teaching him anything and he only was allowed to do easy tasks no one else wanted to do. Because of this he also had difficulties in vocational school.

*“Then I was also in vocational school, I mean meanwhile, I was in vocational school during my apprenticeship. And I of course had difficulties in vocational school as well, because if you don’t have practical experience, vocational school is incredible hard.”*  
(Y\_AT\_UA\_4)

In the implementation phase, the potential conflicts between the social partners emerging during the design of the measure, seemed to leave place to a more coordinated effort, where also the employers' representatives focus on the advantages coming for the formal recognition and the coherent training for complementing already existing skills. All in all, this feature seems to confirm that the high involvement of interest representatives and social partners into political decision making and implementation processes gives shape to intense but basically constructive models of cooperation (as an expert we interviewed labelled them). As a consequence, *Du kannst was!* is seen a successful case by the experts and operators we interviewed, and it is also quite positively evaluated by the young people involved.

In what can be linked to the cultural and political economy approach, the policy seems to be characterised by the convergence of discourses stressing the relevance of skills, both for the supply side and for the demand side. Therefore, it resonates with discourses on the transnational and especially with lifelong learning strategies at the national and regional level. On the one hand, the formal recognition of skills is seen as a way to empower young people by increasing their human capital stock, in terms of both qualifications and competencies. On the other hand, this goes in the direction of firms as a way to increase the competitiveness of Upper Austria, coming together with an improvement of the image of the private actors involved in the project.

From the experts sometimes also emerged a general critical view of young people unemployed and receiving subsidies: one of the interviewees drew a clear distinction between the target group of DKW and other young adults in vulnerable situations. He classified the target group of DKW as motivated and taking an effort, while young adults receiving minimum-based income subsidies were labeled as often being indifferent and living at society's expense. This resonates with the persistence of a neoliberal view of activation placing on the individual all the responsibilities of difficulties encountered during life course transitions, by blaming them as welfare-dependent, without a proper look to structural pre conditions that may negatively affect youth employment (for instance changes in the organization of work or in the structure of the job-demand).

It is interesting to notice how the perceptions and discourses changed as far as the young adults are involved. In the interviews they primarily stressed the relevance of formal qualification in relation both to the labour market and to their identity. They emphasize the existence of social pressures considering the lack of job certificates as a sort of a failure, so they welcome the opportunity given by the project.

*"[...] There is a gap. You hear sometimes from cases, this is not the exception rather the reality. They were cheated out of a lot of money, because they don't have a job certificate."*

*(Y\_AT\_UA\_V\_5)*

Moreover, for some of them the action helped to overcome the anxiety for examinations coming from their negative experience within the education system.

The intervention addressed the life course by adopting a perspective of prevention and preparation, under a future-oriented time horizon. As a matter of fact, the target group is made up by people who are employed but face a higher risk of precarisation and unemployment in the future, due to the lack of qualifications formally recognising their skills. In the Austrian context, where qualifications are highly valued by the employers, this is considered as a weakness to be addressed in order to allow people to develop a satisfying labour market career. Workers with apprenticeship certificate fall in a higher wage category in collective agreements than unskilled people and have other job related rights unskilled employers do not have. Moreover, companies mainly want their employees to attain apprenticeship certificates, due to the general upgrading of the work demand in Austria that includes more opportunities for trained employees and investment in them. Therefore, the expected impact of DKW is to reduce the individual risk of unemployment and smooth transitions of the life course by certificates coming from professional skills assessment and increases in the self-confidence of participants. Not only transitions between employment and unemployment, or among different working relationships are concerned: also, as unskilled workers and employees often have made negative learning experiences, positive learning experiences via practice-based and adult learning approaches have proven to readjust their image of learning. For some participants this has led to further engagement in formal education, up to university graduation.

*"Now a-levels, with which I will hopefully start soon, than a manager position and with extra-occupational studies besides. In the company in each case, BMW, I would really like that."*

*(Y\_AT\_UA\_7)*

Since 2008, almost 600 people have successfully participated in the program. According to the Chamber of Labour one third of the participants is under 29, 59% are male and 41% female. It is a common understanding coming from the interviews that within the

target group women seem to be more open to engage in further education. This is the reason why females are slightly better represented in the program than in regular apprenticeship training. A side effect of the program, as stated by the experts interviewed, is the project's contribution to the social integration: bringing together native-born Austrians and migrants (40% of participants) confronts them with their own prejudices against the respective others, leading in most cases to the awareness of similarities rather than differences, as all participants have a common goal.

All interviewees for DKW had a lot of work experience before participating in the policy. In this sense, they matched with the conceptualized target group of the policy. In all cases participation was mainly about the formal recognition of vocational skills the young men had acquired through their job experience. Only two of them attended additional courses via the DKW. For all participants participation in DKW was mainly about the formal recognition of their skills and not about acquiring new skills and knowledge. Participating young adults reported to be aware that the program reduces biographical uncertainty (low wage and precarious employment) by providing an officially recognized certificate, which can be a valuable qualification for getting a better job in future. They are aware that companies seek their own advantage by encouraging and supporting them in their training, as they will get highly skilled staff and improve their image. However, it is a win-win situation for the employer and the employee. The opportunity to make up and acquire an official job certificate gives the participants more freedom in choosing their further life course. For some this marks a turning point in their life as they continue their education after participating in the program. Before they had the feeling of being trapped by the circumstances, but participation in DKW turned to be an opportunity to achieve a higher degree of self-satisfaction which extended from employment to identity and family life.

*"...I was never motivated to do that [acquire a certificate], because the money was always alright and I never had such a bad work the whole leasing time. And then, when I knew that I will become a father, I said to myself, that I don't, that I want to be able to say to my child some day, your dad also succeeded in something. He's not totally stupid."*  
(Y\_AT\_UA\_4)

On the critical side, some young adults experience the preparation courses as unnecessary even though they need them to gain the knowledge for the final exam.



*“Specialized knowledge was the only thing that I was lacking and 90% of all people in the course also wanted practical knowledge. And that is how I attended one day [of the course] for nothing.”*

(Y\_AT\_UA\_4)

Moreover, some of them complain that courses and trainings like *Du kannst was!* but also master-apprenticeship come with high expenditure for the trainee. Courses must be attended after the normal working day, with no support from the employer nor from the regional government. Within DKW participants are much more flexible in terms of time, as they are not obliged to attend any courses: If they have skills gaps regarding the occupation they work in, they have to acquire the respective knowledge, but they can do this in whatever way they want, also via self-study, if course schedules do not fit their working hours and other obligations. Nevertheless, attending additional training courses puts some pressure on a young individual when it comes to accommodate private matter, work and education, especially for mothers. Particularly, for young people with a family, this created difficulties in the conciliation between the sphere of work and labour market participation, and the private sphere of family life and care.

*“...some in the course didn’t get a single day off from work. [...] the support from the regional state is extremely bad concerning extra-occupational studies. It is really – Do or die! There was one who directly came from work. He slept through half the course.”*

(Y\_AT\_UA\_5)

Reportedly, no specific and effective solutions have been proposed by the actors involved in the implementation of the measure, making support for conciliation a key-issue for following editions of *Du kannst was!*

The most important success criterion for DKW is the number of participants attaining their apprenticeship certificate. Currently, the ratio of successful participants is between 70 and 80%, which is close to the success rate of standard final apprenticeship tests. For all participants, attaining an apprenticeship certificate via DKW boosted their self-esteem and self-worth. In the sense that they proved to themselves or their significant others that they are able to succeed. Two of the interviewees mentioned that it increased their sense of freedom. For instance, a young man interviewed, told that as an unskilled worker he was very dependent by others’ decisions in its company, but that through attaining the certificate he has left “the cage” he was in.

Talking about their plans for future life, and the way the measure contributed to them, the young participants interviewed referred both to improvement in their working careers and to the desire to continue education. It seems that the experience within the measure somehow succeeded in bridging the gap opened by negative past experiences in training, reigniting the desire for a successful educational career to be pursued in the future. One young adult said that it was embarrassing for him, that he never had completed his studies. Other two interviewees stated that they want to attain a university entrance certificate and get a management position in the companies they currently work for.

*“Now a-levels, with which I will hopefully start soon, than a manager position and with extra-occupational studies besides. In the company in each case, BMW, I would really like that.”*

*(Y\_AT\_UA\_7)*

The policy has been also classified by policy managers as very successful and has been transferred to other Austrian regions, although as “reduced versions”. Its success seems however to be related to Upper Austria’s economic structure, particularly the strong industrial sector. The labour market demand for skilled workers and employees is high, large companies tend to invest more in the upskilling of their workforce and work councils have a strong mandate, demanding vocational protection and risk reduction for their clientele.

The way to deal with the issue of the examinations, a difficult one for people who experienced breaks or falls during their educational biography, emerged as one of the most positive features of the initiative. As a matter of fact, the failure in the attainment of an upper secondary qualification via apprenticeship may generate negative effects also on the self-representation of young people, especially when confronting with pressure coming from peers, family, and society. *Du kannst was!* addressed this critical juncture and the anxiety it may spread from it, by means of a close dialog between the Chambers and trainers, consultants and examiners to make them aware that the clients are from educationally disadvantaged strata. Therefore, a goal was to show empathy and reduce stress during the exam.

As we said, the characteristic of Austria is the existence of a traditional corporative institutional frame at the federal level that combines with contextual regional and local differences. For instance, Vienna, as capital of the federal government and municipality with a dense increasing population, a strong higher education systems and advanced

tertiarisation of economy represents a highly different context with respect to Upper Austria, as more disperse region revolving around the city of Linz, with a strong industrial production and a developed apprenticeship system. Therefore, the reasoning on innovation and success of a measure must be rooted in the context where it was designed and implemented. In Upper Austria, the problem of youth unemployment is less relevant at the present time, but it may become more worrying in the years to come if we look at the simultaneous upgrading of the job demand and existence of a niche of low educated young people. The importance of the dual system in Upper Austria triggered a measure targeting as vulnerable those who were not able to get a job certificate (mainly through apprenticeship), in order to make them a more appealing resources for firms searching for skilled employment.

Looking at the governance of the measure, coordination on street-level mainly takes place between the two managing organizations, the Chamber of Labour and the Chamber of Economy. This cooperation proved to be quite successful, despite initial hesitations. A policy manager stressed the flat hierarchies within the policy, making possible quick adaptations and changes if necessary. The program's steering committee, including five people, meets once a year officially. However, at the beginning of the program the actors involved had a vivid exchange and regular meetings about getting to know each other and developing a common understanding about the policy. Cooperation among social partners is embedded within a broader social partnership culture of negotiations and concessions. However, for the case of DKW, the experts interviewed added that successful cooperation would depend very much on the specific individuals involved and not so much on the organizations they represent, thus stressing once again the relevance of the specific context and network of actors in shaping the implementation and the impact of a policy intervention.

The embeddedness of *Du kannst was!* in the Upper Austrian context may be therefore one of the reasons why the measure is considered strongly successful. However, the standardization and adoption of the action (as a best practice) in different regional contexts may prove to be problematic. Moreover, the complex design of the policy initiative made it difficult the adaptation to another target like the refugees, as issues of cultural and language differences layered on the original focus of formal recognition of skills.

The most innovative aspect of DKW is related to its original approach in the field of Austrian activation and training policies. First, as stated by the experts, there is no federal policy for the formal recognition of non-formally acquired skills that would guarantee young adults the same opportunities in all the regional states. Instead, this issue is

handled differently in all regional states. Despite the positive impact of DKW has triggered the design of similar policies in other regions, the federal government holds the responsibility for a unification of formal recognition practices at federal level. Second, previous policies aiming at the formal qualification of unskilled individuals mainly focused on the learning of theoretical subjects in school-resembling course settings, not taking into account the target groups' existing practical knowledge and their earlier made (often negative) learning experiences.

Policy managers explained that many participants have a difficult relationship to learning at the beginning, so that the self-esteem built up during participation is often related to a re-definition of participants' relationship to learning, based on a practice-based approach that starts from their already existing knowledge and takes on from there. The re-definition of their relationship to learning opens up new possibilities for participants: when they are in the program, people often experience that learning does not have to be painful and, as a result, there have been for instance cases of young individuals taking up academic studies after the participation.

*"... here I have the opportunity to take over [a branch] in the neighbour city [...] after the a-levels there is also the possibility of studying food technology. There are many thing."*  
(Y\_AT\_UA\_5)

One can conclude that a DKW touches more interconnected spheres of social life and self-realization. The main motivation for participation DKW, according to policy managers, is often more related to the symbolic value of an apprenticeship certificate rather than its financial rewards: it has to do with the acknowledgement participants receive from their co-workers or family once they attain a higher qualification.

Finally, DKW participants seems to enjoy relevant advantages also on the employment side. The cut-throat competition on the labour market is particularly fierce for the DKW target group, not least due to low-skilled migrants entering the labour market. They benefit from more job security, higher pay levels and more opportunities regarding further education. The program decreases the target group's replaceability and their labour market vulnerability, with a subsequent decrease of life uncertainty, also looking to a mid-long term horizon.

*"...I am free. Now I can find another job, I am no longer in a cage."* (Y\_AT\_UA\_6)

**Correspondences:**

- Relevance of skills to empower young people and increase firms' competitiveness;
- Focus on the advantages of skills recognition and formal qualification on the labour market.

**Implementation:**

- Cooperation among public actors and social partners (Chamber of Economy and Chamber of Labour).

**Originalities:**

- Help for overcoming previous negative learning experiences;
- Original in a context of absence of federal recognition of non-formally acquired skills.

**3.3. Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives***Analysis of the case from the CPE perspective*

The main problems with young adults in Vienna and Upper Austria is identified as early school-leaving, bringing about a critical share of young adults lacking basic skills, soft skills, learning skills and more generally life skills. In 2010, the Upper Austrian government set up the regional lifelong learning strategy (Strategy Upper Austria – Impulses and Goals for Adult Education), reflecting a common discourse on the national level. The strategy aims at creating interest and motivation for lifelong learning in all age and population groups with a specific focus on people with low educational attainments. The second main narrative accompanying the action is related to the job demand, as it refers to the need of counteracting the shortage in specialized workers on the Upper Austrian labour market. According to the experts we interviewed, *Du kannst was!* has been developed by the Chamber of Labour as a reaction to the economy's claim that there is a lack of qualified workers. The idea was to provide educationally disadvantaged groups with formal qualifications, who are excluded from further training in companies and don't show motivation to improve on their own. Moreover, the Chamber of Labour considers young adults with no formal education as poorly capable of autonomous orientation in the labour market. Therefore, the strategy of the Chamber implies the improvement of consulting programs to better reach their targets. This is also due to the fact that the Austrian system of training courses for unemployed is considered not updated, for instance in terms of new technologies adopted.

The qualification assessment and development ends with a practical and theoretical exam, which is executed by the Chamber of Economy (WKO). At the beginning, according to the Chamber of Labour, the examiners were sceptic about the project. They feared that it might lead to a “cheap” job certificate for people who don’t have the required skills. Therefore, they were very strict at the beginning, which changed over time.

The program was well received by Upper Austrian companies, as many of them requested to add new professions, in order to better educate their own staff. As reported by the experts interviewed, a significant share of companies involved are also willing to increase their economic commitment in the project, seeing it also as a reaction to the upgrading change in the Austrian market, “from cheap price to best price”. It is also stressed that involvement in the programme improves the image of the company.

According to the Chamber of Labour, the point of view of the participants is quite different, but still positive. They don’t pay attention to the situation on the labour market but they are aware that they are a vulnerable group and that increasing migration flows carry a higher risk: even though most of them have an employment, they envisage potential threats and connect them to a lack of official qualifications and skills. The main motivation for untrained workers to catch up and get a job certificate seems to be the acknowledgment from colleagues and family, while the prospect of a higher income plays a less relevant role. Young adults see the certificate they get as major goal of *Du kannst was!*. However, not all the participants appreciate the training courses and the additional knowledge provided. For instance, in an interview a young adult complained about boring theory in the courses: he suggested splitting them into theoretical and practical ones. However, the structure of the courses is flexible and adapts to the feedback given by the participants. This is seen very positively by the young people involved. Young adults also stress as a further positive factor the handling of test anxiety. Some of them failed at previous exams even though they had all skills required. Therefore, a relaxed dialogue situation helps reducing stress. All in all, participants experience the final exam as fair and oriented on their strengths: practical work experience.

The target group of the measure is described as quite motivated. On the matter, the Chamber of Economy’s expert stressed how this is not the same for all the vulnerable subgroups of young people on the labour market. It was pointed out that some people are not interested in industrial training because they get enough social subsidies, thus adopting similar arguments to a strict activation approach that allocates to individuals’ responsibility the main motivation for struggling in labour market integration.

### *Analysis of the case from the GOV perspective*

The objective of DKW is to help unskilled workers and employees to attain an apprenticeship certificate. The program's approach is to acknowledge non-formally and informally acquired vocational skills, to focus on the already existing skills as well as on individual strengths and to offer customized additional training if and where necessary. The reasons for implementation were twofold: first, decreasing the risk of unemployment by means of upskilling and higher educational attainments. Second, counteracting a shortage in specialized workers and fostering the economy by increasing the skills-level of the population.

*Du kannst was!* is funded mainly by the regional administration of Upper Austria, with additional contribution coming from the ESF and the Chamber of Labour. The training cost for the participants in the action vary according to their training needs. 70% of the training costs (but not more than 2.400 Euro per participant) are covered by the Regional Authorities. The annual costs for the regional government is about 150,000 euro, which is still considered quite cheap by the experts we interviewed. However, the participants have to pay about 40% themselves. This should ensure that the people show up and hold the program in high regard. The Chamber of Labour adds an education bonus of approximately 110 EUR for every participant. As for implementation, the main role is played by the social partners, namely by the regional Chamber of Labour and the Chamber of Economy, while education providers cooperate in the provision of the service.

With the first input coming from the Chamber of Labour, The Upper Austrian Corporate Training Association, which is a cooperation between the Chamber of Labour, the Chamber of Economy and the regional state, initiated the project. Further project partners are the Forum for Adult Education, VHS Linz, the Employment Service and the Upper Austrian Trade Union Confederation. This policy is based on a cooperation between public, semi-public institutions and third sector actors, as it involves social partners, governmental actors at the regional level (Land) and adult education institutions. Only four out of nine Austrian regions offer similar projects, but Upper Austria represents the most successful case so far. The Chamber of Labour explains this through the advantageous economic structure of the context: many big industrial firms are located in Upper Austria and they usually are more likely to invest in their staff further training. As we said, the skills system in Upper Austria is strongly embedded in the national frame. The main difference with Vienna concerning the institutional architecture is that the funding for further vocational education is covered by the regional administration and not by the WAFF. Moreover, Upper Austria structure of multilevel

governance shows a higher degree of decentralization than Vienna. As a consequence, there are more established networks among different actors as well as among the different local sub-organizations. Besides this, we can state that the main differences between the regions analyzed concern the specific skills demand and supply, rather than the actors involved in the system or the relations among them.

People interested in participation contact the Chamber of Labour and, during a first interview, receive information on eligibility and the set-up of the program. The Chamber of Labour offers free consultation for all employees on job related topics. In these situation, their consultants may suggest to enrol in projects like *Du kannst was!*. If eligible, the participants attend three workshops held by especially skilled trainers during which their professional skills, knowledge and capabilities are evaluated. Participants and professional experts review the results of the assessment. To acquire missing skills and knowledge, participants are requested to participate in targeted training courses or acquire these by means of self-study. In a last step, the apprenticeship office verifies participants' skills by means of a practice and theory test and issues an apprenticeship certificate.

The objective underlying the program is to reduce labour market vulnerability for unskilled workers. By formally recognizing existing skills, participants' chances on the labour market increase. In addition, the project allows to better make use of already existing workforce potential. At the same time, as we said, the action was launched with the argument to counteract the shortage in specialized workers on the Upper Austrian labour market. The Chamber guarantees at least one course per year for every profession, but more can be added if the demand is high. The first step in the program is the *Qualification check 1*, to assess what skills are owned by the client and what are lacking. They must own about 50% of the requested job-related knowledge, in order to participate in the programme. However, there is the opportunity to get a "partial/sectoral job certificate" if a full one is unreachable. If the client is fit for the final exam (called *Qualification check 2*), it can be taken right away. Otherwise, he/she has to attend a night course to close the gaps, or learn what is needed autonomously.

In December 2016, the Chamber of Labour started a new pilot-program for one year, which evolved out of *Du kannst was!* and is funded by the Ministry of Economy and the AMS. This action specifically targets refugees. Here however, some complex issues arise, pointing at the language barrier and the lack of basic skills. Therefore, the program has shown to be of difficult implementation and less successful than expected, when directed to different targets.



### *Analysis of the case from the LCR perspective*

Upper Austria is one of the main centres of industrial production in Austria. Moreover, the job demand in Upper Austria shows an upgrading trend, even if it is more focused on industrial production that can rely on a developed apprenticeship system.

The participation in upper-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education is high, as it is connected to the regional structure of the labour market and to the job demand expressed by a strong industrial production. Also secondary education attainment for those aged 30-34 is high in Upper Austria, especially for men. Young people in Upper Austria tend to enrol more in vocational programmes (76.2%). With respect to Vienna, in Upper Austria vocational education and the dual apprenticeship system play a more prominent role in structuring the transition from school to work, and are connected with low youth unemployment rates, as vocational programmes at upper secondary level are more effective in bridging the transitions to the labour market than general programmes. Conversely, tertiary education play a more limited role in the skill formation system of the region: the rate of higher education students is quite low. Youth unemployment is low and roughly stable, the employment rate 15-24 decreased in the last five years but it's still much higher than the EU average (57.3% against 33.1%). In Upper Austria, the activity rate of those aged 15-24 is very high, as young people spend less time in education (mainly vocational), thus entering earlier the labour market. The risk of facing unemployment decreases with higher educational qualifications. Particularly young adults with compulsory school as their highest educational attainment face a high unemployment risk.

In Upper Austria, vocational education and the dual apprenticeship system play a prominent role in structuring the transition from school to work, as young people tend to spend less time in education, especially vocational education, thus entering the labour market earlier. Due to the specific economic structure young adults are confronted with specific skills demands, thus formal qualifications are highly valued and facilitate the access to the labour market. Conversely, the situation for low educated has gotten more difficult; particularly, because job opportunities and opportunities for occupational upward mobility for people with low-level skills have decreased.

Likewise Vienna, the importance of VET is reflected in LLL programmes for young adults in vulnerable situations, that are characterized by is a strong focus on vocational skills. This similarity can be explained by the target group of most LLL measures, namely young adults with low-level skills, rather than with the respective regional economic context. Private commitment to skills formation is higher in Upper Austria, as a consequence of their involvement in dual VET.

In this context, the action *Du kannst was!* was implemented to formally acknowledge the already existing skills people without apprenticeship certificate have and to allow people who have already been conducting specialized tasks but were employed as auxiliary staff to officially gain the status of a specialist. The project provides formal qualifications which, according to the available evidence on labour market, are expected to result in higher wage and less vulnerability on the labour market. The starting point of *Du kannst was!* are the skills adults already acquired in their jobs but are not recognized in a formal certificate. The participants have to be at least 22 year old. By awarding skilled people with formal educational attainment, their chances on the labour market increase and the project allows to better make use of already existing workforce potential.

The reason why some workers don't have a job certificate is because they drop out of their apprenticeship. This can be put down to financial problem resulting from low wages at the beginning, especially if one has a family to take care of, or to bad working atmosphere including a unpleasant distribution of tasks. Another reason to explain why some adults own no job certificate, even though they worked as an apprentice, is that they were not able to pass the final exam. In some cases this can be explained through an excess of anxiety, or through the fact that they didn't get proper training or the opportunity to practice in their company.

The decision to begin an apprenticeship instead of higher education can be often traced back to the fact that some families can't financially support their children any further. This forces teenagers to start earning their own money within the dual system. In a later phase, they struggle to get further qualifications without relying on public support schemes: *Du kannst was!* Provides them with an opportunity.

In DKW, young adults and adults in employment but without apprenticeship certificate have their professional skills tested and subsequently acquire the missing skills necessary for attaining an apprenticeship certificate. Before participation, they take a counseling session, where their eligibility for participation is checked. One expert interviewed stressed, that the age group of 20-30 year olds expresses a strong request for professional coaching, as they often lack a proper assessment of their skills and strengths and therefore find themselves without orientation or a plan for their professional life. Upon participation, one of the first steps is to engage in biography work. This means to recap what one has already done – in professional terms and beyond – during the course of her or his life. Interview partners considered this step very important, as this “zooming out” and looking at one's own life from a bird's eye view let most people realized what they had already achieved. Reportedly, this has often led to a change in sense of self and an increase in participant's self-esteem as most participants would

underestimate their own knowledge and skills. This biography work is an important step in setting up individualized training plans, as one of the pillars of the program: participants should only have to learn, what they do not know yet. This implies that their already existing knowledge and skills are seen, valued and taken serious. According to our interviewees, the individualization of learning matters and the prevention of overburdening or underchallenging has contributed to participants' motivation to learn and has largely led to learning success. This again, is of particular relevance for a target group with predominantly negative learning experiences and a resultant reluctance towards learning, often in combination with exam nerves. To prevent drop out due to exam nerves, test situations are avoided and have been replaced by conversation-style knowledge assessments. Learning success partly re-defined their relation towards learning which subsequently led to further engagement in education and training.

Some young adults state that the reason for them to participate is social pressure. For instance, one participant decided to get a job certificate so that his children will not think of him as a "failure". Others want to keep up with friends who are all in higher education. A minor share of participants already have a job certificate but for another profession. However, in their current job they partially work in other sectors, which brought them knowledge and experience in a new field (e.g. a baker who also works in retail). By joining the project, they wanted to get an official document about their newly acquired skills to further improve their human capital.

#### **4. Emerging issues**

The policies analyzed present in both cases strong connections with the Austrian institutional framework, which provide a quite common configuration of actors and practices, as well as of problems to address through policy interventions. The linkages with the specific Austrian context of implementation pose limitations to be considered when reasoning on transferring of positive practices in different contexts and conditions. The lack of qualification is considered a major risk factor in young adults' working careers and life courses, both for those who are engaged in difficult school-to-work transitions and for those who are employed but face a risk of precarisation of their working position. Upper secondary qualification gained through apprenticeship in the dual system is usually regarded as the minimum step to help secure young people own choices in the labour market.

Cooperation and coordination among different actors is also a relevant feature of Austrian LLL policy making, involving not only public actors (municipalities and public

employment services) but also private actors like firms and social partners as expression of corporative interests (the Chambers, especially in the case of DKW). Even if personal features and case-to-case relationships are deemed as important, both the policies heavily related on cooperation among actors, in the wake of the tradition of Austrian policy making. However, from the experts interviews emerges a latent tension characterizing Austrian LLL policymaking: on the one hand, it is recognised the need of training and LLL in order to empower young people capabilities and opportunities of choices; on the other hand, it is stressed the individual responsibility with a sometimes limited consideration of structural limitations given by labour market and economic developments.

The young people involved experienced in various ways their path across the selected measures. Their biographical trajectories differed very much according to their current phases in life and the policy they were or are participating in. A communality between most of them, however was, that they were very eager in achieving their goals. Even though some of them have experienced difficult situations at home, at school, at work or in their countries of origin, none of them portrayed herself or himself as a “victim”. On the contrary, they all gave the impression of being also aware and responsible for their own lives and that they want to make the best out of it.

Their education and training trajectories are predominantly characterized by interruptions and breaks. However, most of them were positive about their future in general or their future engagement in education and training. For all of the interviewees participation in the respective policy had a positive impact: some reported to had attained more self-esteem by achieving a certificate or just by being able to employ their skills in their working life; others stated that participation in the respective policies helped them to get “back on track”. For these young adults participation was another chance of gaining autonomy and finding their own way into the education and training system or the labor market. Most of them expressed the feeling that participation had helped them or will help them to achieve their professional goals. In particular, they valued the practice based approach all policies are based on.

Young adults’ plans for the near future and their long-term plans were quite similar, even though the young adults interviewed partly were in very different stages of their lives. If they were still participating the policies, their main goal was to complete participation successfully. The young adults who have dropped-out from school or training all mentioned that they again want to re-enter the education and training system, try it again. Some others had plans for climbing up the career ladder in their current professions. Regarding their private lives and plans for the future, the young adults mainly referred to

moving out from their parents' places and finding a partner, thus establishing a link between a successful participation in the policy, labour market or training integration and the goal of family formation (even if conciliation between participation in LLL interventions and other working and family-life activities was still stressed as an issue in some interviews). Another common feature seems to be the tight connection between a satisfying participation in the labour market, which is strongly connected to formal qualifications, and identity as individual and member of a family.

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## **Work Package 7**

### **Regional/local Case Studies**

#### **National Report - Bulgaria**

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## **1. Executive summary**

This National Report examines two case studies from Functional Regions (FR) Blagoevgrad and Plovdiv in Bulgaria. The case studies relate to participation of young adults in two large scale policies – “Students Practices” and “Youth Guarantee”. The aim of the report is to present the history of these two policies and the way they influence the life stories of different participants. The two cases are presented separately and follow the same structure – introduction, telling the story of the case, and analysis from three major theoretical perspectives – Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Governance (GOV), and Life Course Research (LCR). The analysis of each case descends from Transnational through National, Regional, Local, Organizational and Interactive levels to the core – Individual level. Major cross-case and other emerging issues are summaries at the end of the Report in order to facilitate comparison between Bulgarian cases and the cases of the other YA participating countries.

The first case relates to the measure “University Students Training Practices” implemented by South-West University “Neofit Rilski” from the FR Blagoevgrad. The project is oriented towards the harmonization of the regional environment by including more young adults in the workflow and to strengthen the relationships between education, real work conditions and the labour market. The measure targets young people between 18 and 29 years old and serves a number of objectives detailed in the Introductory section. On the whole, the programme “Students practices”, in its two stages of implementation (2013-2015 and 2016-2018), aims at increasing students capabilities for employment, competitiveness and efficiency in various industrial fields and creating prerequisites for facilitating the transition from educational institution to the workplace, as well as increasing the number of students who find job immediately after graduation. “Telling the story of the case” section describes various aspects of the measure since its start in 2013, providing diverse information and data taken from a purposive survey carried out in 2016. Opinions of different kinds of participants (young people, functional experts, academic tutors and workplace mentors), are provided by quoting their utterances from recorded interviews. Life stories of three students, who have taken part in the measure, are further presented including their perceptions about the impact of the project on their professional preparation, personal development and prospects for future employability.

The next section provides an analysis of the case according to three different theoretical perspectives – CPE, GOV and LCR). The analysis starts from transnational policies and measures, explores the way they have been adopted at national level and implemented

at regional environment, aiming to establish their real impact on individuals involved and organizations engaged. Along the analysis different conclusions are made and some important recommendation proposed.

The second case relates to the measure “Youth Guarantee” implemented by Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski” from the FR Plovdiv. It targets quite different target group – young people up to 29 years old who are not only unemployed but also not being well educated. The main aim of the measure is to activate the inactive youths, including the discouraged people who remain out of youth unemployment statistics. It tries to provide different kinds of options in several areas – vocational guidance for young people, training for obtaining vocational qualification or key skills and competencies, subsidizing temporary employment, encouraging employers to open new jobs, etc. All these as well as some other essential aspects of the initiative are thoroughly explained in the Introductory section, also providing opinions of participants and stakeholders by quoting their utterances from recorded interviews.

“Telling the story of the case” section is structured according to the three theoretical perspectives – CPE, GOV and LCR and provides comprehensive description with lots of information and data about the measure and its development since its start in 2014. A number of quotations are also provided to illustrate the perceptions and viewpoints of different stakeholders. Assumptions, judgements and conclusions are made about programme appropriateness for the target group needs, its implementation and different kinds of impact.

Following the story of the measure, an analysis of the case again according to the three different perspectives is presented. As this is a centralized initiative, the analysis accounts from top to bottom – from the European level to National, Regional and Institutional ones. Outcomes of previous work, implemented in different Young\_Adults project work packages, is used to illustrate key aspects and major findings. Judgements about its successes and failures are made and certain recommendations are provided along the analysis related to the effects of the project on young adults’ lives courses.

Important emerging issues, key findings and valuable recommendations from the analyses of the cases from the two FRs Blagoevgrad and Plovdiv are listed in Section 4 separately. The issues cover both specific and more general aspects related to the implementation of the two large programmes which have significant impact on constructing life courses of young adults.

At the end of the report extensive list of references used for presenting and analysing the cases is provided.

## **2. Case study 1**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The case that has been studied in Blagoevgrad FR (BFR) is the project “University Students Training Practices”, implemented at South-West University “Neofit Rilski” (SWU). It was interesting to explore how this nationwide project has been developed at regional context, and which have been its socio-economic, demographic and academic characteristics. Thus, considering the particularities of FR Blagoevgrad, an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the project and its practical outcomes for the young adults is provided here. Moreover, this project is documented in its two stages which allows comparing the outcomes of its first period (2013-2015) with the current stage of the project (2016-2018). “University Students Training Practices” or “Students Practices” has been mapped in WP3 and was one of the foci of the analysis in WP5 providing qualitative information on the perspectives of young people and experts. In WP6 the analysis of the managers’ input has been further deepened.

The project “University Students Training Practices” has been oriented towards the harmonization of the regional environment and the inclusion of more young adults in the workflow and to strengthen the relationships between: education - work environment - labour market.

The main objectives of the project have been defined as follows:

- to improve the quality of education through gaining practical experience and developing practical skills of students in vocational schools and universities in accordance with the needs of the labour market;
- to facilitate the transition from educational institutions to the workplace and increase the successful realization of young people in the labour market;
- to support and encourage the development of stable partnerships between educational institutions and businesses;
- to increase the students incentives to participate in additional practical training in a real working environment;
- to increase the number of students who succeed in finding a job immediately after graduation;

- to provide some preconditions for updating curricula as a whole and certain disciplines, courses and topics in accordance with particular needs of the labour market;
- to support the creation of sustainable mechanisms and opportunities for employers to select appropriate high school leavers and university graduates who have proven their skills, competencies and attitudes in real working environment for their immediate inclusion in the labour market

The project is significant because it is oriented towards the 18-29 age group as a specific youth community. These young adults carry out training practices and internships in real working environment over the course of six months, while at the same time they continue pursuing their studies at a university. The program as a whole contributes to the effective functioning of the educational process at university level and within training organizations.

Therefore, the case study “University Students Training Practices” serves as a basis for formulating recommendations for more effective settlement of the educational process at university level and within training organizations. It also allows to analyse the strengths and weaknesses encountered in the cooperation initiatives between the stakeholders of this policy – universities, businesses establishments, public institutions, non-profit organizations, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, etc.

The main problem the program addresses is the lack of practical experience and skills of young adults who study at universities and who possess actually no practical competencies (Milenkova, 2015). In this respect, another problem that the project addresses is the improvement of curricula in terms of their practical orientation and relevance to the labour market conditions, real human resources needs and necessities. On this basis, the link between the training process and the realization of young adults is intensified and the number of graduates who find work immediately after graduation is increased. In its entirety the program aims at solving problems related to unemployment and employability of young adults by providing beneficial conditions contributing to the social progress and prosperity, as well.

The other national program “Start in the Career”, as well as the European and national “Youth Guarantee” Project (which have been studied in WP5 in BFR), also aim at promoting conditions for acquiring practical skills and habits by young people as well as at increasing their employability capabilities. However, the difference between them and the “Student Practices” project is that it aims at improving the opportunities for practical training during the course of university studies (Boyadjieva et al., 2013). The traineeships are carried out in different organizations and enterprises along with university classes, in

order to increase students' competitiveness and create prerequisites for employment of young adults immediately after obtaining their Bachelor's or Master's degree.

The project has been implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science in partnership with all 54 universities and high schools in Bulgaria (<http://praktiki.mon.bg/sp/>). It is funded by the European Structural and Investments Funds under the "Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020" Operational Program of Bulgaria. The opportunity to benefit from it is opened to all students enrolled in the Register of current and discontinued students as well as all PhD students. The policy it implements conforms to the strategic objective of the Operational Program related to the improvement of education quality through gaining practical experience and improvement of practical skills of university students in accordance with the needs of the labour market. Another significant objective is to facilitate the transition of young school leavers and university graduates from the educational institutions to the workplace. It also intends to facilitate the successful realization of young people in the labour market as well as to increase the number of students who find a job immediately after graduation. An essential element of the project is the strong collaboration between several functionally bound up with each other actors:

- training organization – an establishment where the practice of students is carried out by providing both real work and specific training environment;
- trainee - a student who has been selected by a training organization to participate in an internship for a certain period;
- mentor - an employee from the training organization who supports the trainee by providing guidance, instructions, advices, etc. during the training practice in particular working environment;
- academic mentor - a teacher from the university, who is responsible for and supervises the practical training of a student or a group of students;
- functional expert - a representative of the university who supports participants and organizes diverse project activities in terms of logistics, communication, data and documents handling, etc.
- leading functional expert - a representative of the university who is responsible for the overall organization and supervision of the project implementation and acts as a contact point in communication process between the project management team at the university and the respective experts from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). Thus, the whole co-ordination process between all the actors involved is a responsibility and is carried out by the Leading functional experts who maintain the communication and collaboration issues with MES.

From the discussions with the members of the management, it appears that the major outcomes of the project so far have been: 1) improved practical skills of students corresponding with the needs of the labour market; 2) building of strong partnerships between the university and the local and regional business establishments from different spheres of industry; 3) created working habits and developed personal qualities by the students; 4) adapted and updated curricula as well as new study content related to specific needs of the labour market; 5) created opportunities for employers to select students who have demonstrated appropriate skills and attitudes and well prepared to be immediately involved in concrete workplaces and job positions. Furthermore, they evidenced that accumulation of practical experience and provision of opportunities for professional realization are some of the main challenges which have been successfully solved in collaboration between the main stakeholders.

On the other hand, the interviewed experts (Chengelova, 2016) say the program “Students Practices” has its own positive and challenging features. The success of the project implementation depends on the people involved in it themselves, on the extent to which they could take advantage of the project, and also on employers, because some of them have real needs to hire students as new employees after completion of the training practice. Hiring a student from the training organization after the internship is often practiced but it mainly depends on the organization’s policy and its demand for new staff. It could be said that the engagement and performance of students are equally very important, i.e. their personal drive to acquire skills at real workplace settled practice. However, in order to move from training to hiring, it is necessary to exist demand in the training organization itself. This is a two-way process as pointed out by experts. In fact, not all students participating in the project are equally active and feel involved during the period of practice and this has been witnessed in all different kinds of activities – i.e. different levels of participation and engagement demonstrated by different young people have been registered by both in-house and academic mentors.

In spite all these, the interviewed experts have said the main project outcome, that has been the successful transition of university students from their studies to the conditions of the labour market, is clearly justified by many successful stories. As a matter of fact, the efficiency of the project is measured by the variety of practical skills the students have acquired and the level of mastering them, especially those which will be needed in the future.

As for the quality of the processes during the course of the implementation of the project, the interviewed experts confirmed that no serious problems have been faced. However, a greater and more efficient control over the practices carried out in many organizations

is necessary, as well as improvement of collaboration between the university and the training organizations. This involves also selection of appropriate students, assessment of the appropriateness of the workplace conditions, possession of sufficient resources and benefits, available for trainees, etc.

Regarding the evidences that emerged from the interviews with young adults, they have said that the program enables them to benefit from working at an organization or a company; that they feel happy participating in real work processes and be part of the communication within the community of all employees; be able to perform different real tasks assigned to them; etc. All these are important conditions for gradual accumulation of practical experience, which establish a solid ground for their future work as employees. All interviewed young adults have expressed considerably high level of satisfaction with their participation in this project. This might also mean that the interaction between all participants - students, academic supervisors, mentors, etc. is based on shared views and is rather efficient – a sense that can be perceived while listening the recorded interviews.

In the interviews which had been conducted within different WPs, majority of respondents expressed similar opinion that the main challenge for most of the participants were “limited opportunities for effective participation in decision-making processes”. Thus, the young people feel “unheard” of their community and “with limited opportunities and exposure” to meaningfully participate in inclusive decision-making processes. Therefore, there is a need for supporting and participatory structures as well as measures to ensure greater level of trust between youths and institutions, including provision of more capacity building opportunities. This latter issue was particularly important as stressed by many participants. In addition, the interviewed young adults expressed their strong desire to be offered specific measures for the acquisition of soft skills. In their opinion, every skill is a valuable asset even if not directly related to particular job. On the other side, employers and mentors think that, young people should learn to work and perform responsibly, to feel and demonstrate respect towards their workplace (including employing organization) as well as to people with whom they work, collaborate, live.

## ***2.2. Telling the story of the case study***

During the starting period of the project implementation (“Students Practices – 2013-2015”) an amount of 5761 students benefited from the opportunities offered by the SWU Career Centre (SWU-CC), responsible for maintaining the practices. The Centre engaged 530 private companies, NGOs, public institutions, schools and other kinds of



establishments from the region by signing contracts to act as “training organizations” and accept students from SWU willing to gain practical experience. Additionally, some 1129 contracts were signed with employees from this training organizations to be in-house “mentors” for the allocated students as well as 303 other contracts with “academic mentors” from SWU to supervise the trainees.

The major benefits for the students out of their participation have been new opportunities for finding job at the labour market; stronger motivation for searching appropriate positions; gaining experience for successful job application; acquisition of valuable information about concrete skills and competencies appropriate for obtaining different kinds of positions as well as hints and “secrets” how to behave during negotiations with prospective employers; building new industrious habits and development of personal attitudes and qualities; gathering useful information about particular aspects of their future work places; participation in interactive training courses, specialized instructional sessions, presentations and many other building capacity activities; etc.

There were also diverse benefits for the involved employers – establishing close ties and relations with prospective employees and/or collaborators; pre-work training of future staff members facilitating their hiring policies, staff selection and initial training procedures which also result in subsequent savings of time and resources; enhancing their public image and/or advertising initiatives, plans and strategies of the organization; etc.

There exist a very interesting research (Dzhorova, 2016) aiming to evaluate the extent to which the additional practical training for students from SWU in real work and professional environment provided them with real opportunities to develop and/or improve their skills and competencies within the project “Students Practices 2013-2015” in accordance with their particular studies (i.e. level, course, subject/field, preparation already obtained, and time available apart of studies at the university). The analysis of the results showed that the project was a successful initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science, a conclusion confirmed by one of the Vice-Ministers in a public speech at a meeting with employers, students and HEIs representatives.

The students who participated in this survey were invited via e-mail to respond to an anonymous e-questionnaire and asked to provide their opinion about own motivation for taking part in the practices project, to share insights on different aspects of the training as well as to express their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction about important features of their experience (e.g. performance, communication and collaboration with the different actors, work environment, payment, etc.). The total number of the e-questionnaires filled out was 1352. According to the results, 43% of the respondents were motivated by the

opportunity to acquire practical skills at real work environment, 16% of them wished to find out how much their study subject corresponds to a particular profession or a job position, and 14% due to financial reasons. Important outcomes of the project were that 11% of the respondents were offered jobs, 8% out of which started work at their training organization, and 14% were invited to extend their internship beyond the project timeframe. The majority of respondents expressed their very positive satisfaction with the practical training and only 14% of all left comments and suggestions for improvements. The overall conclusion of the survey is that the “Students Practices” project is a successful scheme achieving all its goals and expectations at least for the young adults from South-West University (Dzhorova, 2016).

According to another survey, (carried out regularly by the SWU-CC staff by anonymous questionnaires filled out by 1031 students who successfully completed their training practices between 2013-2015) 320 participants were offered jobs out of whom 110 started work at the companies where they had practiced, 75 got extra payments by their training organizations, and 230 were offered an extension of the practice beyond the contracted period within the project (Survey 861382, 2015). This survey also demonstrate very high level of satisfaction among the participants. Here are some students’ opinions about their participation in the project: “Students Practices” is a wonderful initiatives helping students to get into the ‘kitchen’ of their study field. Working in a team of professionals (like the one I used to work in) a student has opportunities to develop her/himself, to express own opinion, to learn”; “I am very content with my practical training. I was completely involved into a real teaching practice, learned a lot from my mentor about how to approach and communicate with kids, how to keep records and handle different documents, related to managing a kindergarten”; “I’m really grateful for the opportunity to participate. My practical work was exceptionally useful for me. I’ve learned lots of things. For the first time in my life, I faced challenges in the concrete work of a real accountant”; “The practice is a wonderful opportunity of professional realization, for obtaining and compiling experience. I’m very content. To work with kids is wonderful, they bring so much joy and happiness. They make you feel alive. Children are the nicest and most lovable creatures and I am so glad I’ve had this opportunity during my student’s practice to be with them for some time. Working with them makes you better and nicer person” (Survey 861382, 2015).

During the next period of the project implementation (the so called “1st phase” for 2016-2018) and until December 2017, 1805 students carried out their practical training at 216 organizations, supported by 450 in-house mentors and 256 academic mentors from SWU. Results of a survey, again carried out regularly by the SWU-CC staff and

questionnaires filled out by 593 participants show that 79.43% of the respondents were motivated by the opportunity to acquire practical skills at real work environment, 24.62% of them wished to find out how much their study subject corresponds to a particular profession or a job position, and 12.31% due to financial reasons. Important outcomes of the project were that 14% of the respondents were offered jobs, 8.26% out of which started work at their training organization, and 17.54% were invited to extend their internship beyond the project timeframe. The majority of respondents again expressed their very positive satisfaction with the practical training and many of them left comments and suggestions for improvements of different aspects of the project: to reduce the amount of documentation required, to involve more administrative staff at the Career Centre, better payment, longer period, better fit between the training and studies, etc. Here are some opinions of participants: "I'm very satisfied with this students practice because I became much more self-confident in working with professional issues in the field study, as well as those I have to do in future. I was offered a job and got a very warm welcome by all staff at the hospital where I practiced"; „For me these students practices have very strong contribution in the process of enriching ones knowledge and skills at a real work environment, related with the studies pursued at the university. This is a wonderful opportunity for a self-assessment and also for an estimation of the appropriateness of the profession we have chosen“; "The project 'Students Practices' has provided me with a unique opportunity to understand and acquire a specific manner of work at an attorney's office" (Survey 156181, 2017).

The evidences emerged from the interviews with functional experts, academic tutors and work place mentors are related to the acquisition the more practical skills and competencies of students during their training that will allow them easier adaptation of education to work transition and thus make them more successful and more confident in themselves. Even in their first steps when they enter the labour market, and when they actually take part in activities and competitions to take up specific positions for which they have been trained within the bachelor's and master's degrees. According to functional expert, involved in both phases of the project, it is "extremely effective for all parties involved in it" (E\_BG\_B\_1). She adds that lots of "employers, private and public sector institutions and non-governmental organizations are involved at regional level" and the feedback coming from them is very positive. And also it is "a good and effective practice of interaction between business and a higher school" because collaborating in such a way they create an environment for efficient transfer of knowledge, innovation and new skills in both directions (E\_BG\_B\_1). According to her "the project is very successful" because regional and local employers train their future employees. The

project creates “work habits, develop personal qualities, skills and competencies necessary for student’s future workplace”, but she adds, with a certain sense of disappointment, that “there is no any kind of validation envisaged in the project”, neither “anybody monitors the correspondence between demand and supply of skills in the region” (E\_BG\_B\_1).

Another interviewed tutor shares her reflections and insights out of her participation: “In the project I have been an academic tutor of students studying Geography and Pedagogy of Geography and History Education. Some of them have acquired practical skills in different schools, primary and secondary schools, where the subject ‘Geography and Economics’ is being taught, and they had opportunities to practice teaching and acquire pedagogical skills. The second group of students worked with non-governmental organizations and the practical skills acquisition was focused on different field – exploration of opportunities for developing tourism, touristic routes design and practice of rural development. Students were very interested in the project. Most of them participated with the purpose to acquire pedagogical skills. It is well known that for young teachers it’s difficult to adapt to the school environment. What is offered in their curricula as a teaching practice is not enough to make them good pedagogical specialists. This is what they feel. We, as teachers, as well as the experts of the Ministry of Education also realize the existence of such deficit and hopefully they proposed a new regulation which was adopted last year aiming to increase the amount of practical training courses and the overall practicing of professional skills in the curricula” (E\_BG\_B\_3). She finds that cooperating with different organizations address this major challenge – “deficiency” of practical skills and competencies training during the university studies and thinks that “this is yet another attempt to make studying closer to business, to real practice, to the areas where students will pursue their professional realization”. In her opinion, such good cooperation [between the university and work organizations] “can make students grow up also in other spheres and areas as long as there is good collaboration between them”. For this academic tutor “the project definitely has achieved good results” proved by even another evidence – employers appreciate what students have demonstrated coming to their organization. Moreover, some of them offered part-time or permanent jobs, signed contracts for different kinds of interaction beyond the contracted practical training period. Therefore, it’s important for all involved in the training practices project “to go on in this direction and look for more and more diverse forms of cooperation”. Yet another valuable outcome of the project is that young people feel that “someone is addressing them, that somebody needs them, which is important for motivating them to stay, live and eventuate

in Bulgaria which would be evidenced in a longer period, not necessarily now” (E\_BG\_B\_3).

Very important role in the project perform the mentors, experts from the organizations accepting students for the period of training practice. One of the interviewed mentors, who has been working in the non-governmental sector since 2002, when she was 16 years old and started her career as a volunteer, describes her experience with the trainees practicing in her organization: “My task was to introduce students with issues we usually do at our place, the Mental Health Information Centre, which is a part of the Global Initiative in Psychiatry, nationally operated by an office in Sofia. I had to introduce interns to what we do, particularly with my position as a social worker as well as with the non-governmental sector, as a whole. Together with the trainees we worked with people suffering from mental diseases as well as in certain actions under preventive HIV and AIDS programmes, prevention of tuberculosis, etc.” (E\_BG\_B\_2). In fact, she is disappointed that most of the trainees have to leave the places they practice after the end of the contracted period thus wasting a valuable resource: “A boy, a sociologist, was hired in our organization. He was involved in the tuberculosis preventive programme. He had worked with us for about a year or so, but when the project finished he had to leave”. However, not all students benefit from the Students Practices project equally. She says “The project is efficient for students who wish to participate actively and have interests. But there were also students who were not so much interested. They were in a hurry to leave. And there were also students who were eager for getting involved and taking part in all our initiatives and tasks. Quite a large portion of them had been involved in voluntary initiatives in under other projects. Therefore, the project is effective, but its effects depend on students themselves”. In fact, the effectiveness could be measured by the opportunities provided for them to learn how to do lots of things that they are going to encounter in their future or things that might be useful for their future career as well as things they may have missed so far.” This mentor thinks that the participating organizations also benefit from this project (she knows about several non-governmental organizations from the region accepting trainees among which the local Municipality offices, the Regional Library, etc.): “I think, it is important for institutions to meet students, to see how prepared they are, to find out what kinds of skills they possess, because it [the project] ensured direct, face-to-face, relations with young people who could potentially be hired afterwards. And it is equally important for students to get introduced with their potential future employers. Real relationships are being established between youngsters and employers”. This also ensures setting up valuable interfaces between educational institutions and real organizations which makes the transition of students to

the labour market easier and more efficient (E\_BG\_B\_2). The mentor adds one more reason for which the project Students Practices is highly valued – employers prefer to hire young people with some practical experience and avoid getting those without any. Therefore, participating in this project raises the opportunities to be hired.

A student (Y\_BG\_B\_1), participant in the Students Practices project, was born in a small village at a remote part of the country close to the border. He finished a secondary school at that village being fond of computer subjects. His grades in Mathematics were very high and thus he was able to enrol in the Computer Systems and Technologies programme at South-West University. Two years later he started some a teacher's qualification programme in Informatics, complementary to his running studies because this would give him one more option – to become eventually a teacher in a secondary school. The student confesses that he has been quite independent in following his own decisions but his parents have always supported him: "I am grateful to my parents for they have always supported me whatever I decided to do. ... And I've chosen computers because, while I was in school, I was looking for prosperous fields/occupations. And it became clear to me that the computer systems field was one of the best for the future". At the same time, he thinks that the studies at the university are not enough to become a good specialist: "If we rely only on the university studies, we cannot obtain what's needed [at the labour market]. It's all about how much you are motivated, what you want, etc. Your motivation is very important because without extra work in addition to that required in your study programme you can't achieve anything. You need to do some extra work outside the university. Everything depends on the person himself which is the most important" (Y\_BG\_B\_1).

The conditions in which this young person lived as well as his parents have strong impact on his choices and viewpoints: "My parents have always supported me. We do not have any family business. They certainly are concerned with my education, and they have been always encouraging me to study hard since my childhood. They brought me up to be a good student and directed me to the exact sciences [i.e. Mathematics, Natural Sciences, etc.]" (Y\_BG\_B\_1). For him participating in the project was extremely valuable also having in mind the kind of occupation he is preparing for. "My student practice was in a computer company. I was an IT administrator there. The fact that I've learned a lot in the field of programming languages at the university helped me a lot in the company. I got into the things quickly willing to see the real processes themselves. I think this project is very important because during my training I succeeded in finding a real workplace, in getting into a real computer company and do the work I find very interesting. I got into the job easily and fast and I think, I'm fulfilling my tasks and my duties very well. I'm trying

to be very efficient in order to be offered a job after my student's practice at this company ends, because the programme encourages employers if they are satisfied with a trainee to offer his or her a position in their company. I have a mentor who assigns me specific tasks every day, and checks regularly my performance afterwards providing me with recommendations on how to make things better. When I have questions or something I don't understand, I approach my mentor. It's good they assign different kinds of tasks in order to learn how to do things, and this is amongst the most valuable opportunities the training practice ensures. I'm very pleased to be part of this project and think it helps me a lot to improve myself" (Y\_BG\_B\_1).

Unfortunately, many young adults like this highly motivated student leave the country to search for a better future: "I have a lot of plans. The question is how to realize them. Like most of my colleagues, one of my plans is to go abroad. You go somewhere to improve your language and then looking for an occupation in the area you graduated in. However, I prefer to stay here, in Blagoevgrad and this is my greatest desire. The problem is that it is hard to find a job even if it's not paid enough. So, we'll see. I can't say just now what would happen. These are my plans in general" (Y\_BG\_B\_1).

Another young adult aged 21, also born in a remote small town of a very different region, finished a vocational school of Computer Systems and Technologies. However, regardless his high education in Computer Science ("no matter how promising it looks like to be"), he decided to study Political Science at South-West University and enrol in a Bachelor's programme in 2014. He mentions some reasons for this in his interview: "I studied Computer Science but I was not as interesting as I was in Politics. ... I've chosen that because I'm socially active and engage in many civil activities. I am socially conscious and think everyone should be concerned with politics because our future depends on it. To some extent, I expected something to be changed in our country. I do not like the way the policy has been made and I'll try to convince as many people as I can to take a public position and to be socially active" (Y\_BG\_B\_2). This young person is disappointed by some injustice in the country and "also by the apathy of young people" many of which find politics issues as negative, bad and dirty things. It's very interesting that his parents have never been interested in politics and have not participated in any way in political life of their region or the country. He reports that the decision to study Political Science was entirely his own and his parents supported him both financially and morally.

Participation in the Students Practices project was also very valuable experience for this young person. He applied because he was very curious and wanted to get more real perceptions about the real world of politics. "I started working for this company in

November 2016. The team in the company were very good with me. My job was to process documents thus I became well acquainted with the Bulgarian legislation as well as with many features of public and business administration. One of the most important outcomes for me was the knowledge I gained about European projects and European business-oriented policies which expanded and enriched my own viewpoints about European Union and the role of Bulgaria" (Y\_BG\_B\_2). The practical training at a real company had a strong effect on the professional development of this young adult for he is sure he will continue developing in this direction: "I learned a lot of things that will be useful to me ... the student practices changed me, I started spending more time reading legal literature and getting more interested in this". Additionally, he met lots of new people and it was also a valuable result especially in view of his future career: "Contacts, I think, are very important" (Y\_BG\_B\_2).

A student of Law also was completely satisfied with her practical training. She was born similarly to the other interviewees in a small town up north in a very poor region close to the river Danube. Her father is a veterinary surgeon and her mother – librarian. She finished her high school in Humanities in her native town and decided to study Law mostly due to her natural inclination to justice, fairness, rights, and probably because graduating from a Law programme gives plenty of opportunities for occupation in many different spheres. Student's parents care about her a lot because she was "a long-awaited child", encourage and support her in many different ways. She experienced lots of hardships at the start of her studies since, being a very shy person, it was very difficult for her to socialize: "This was one of the biggest challenges for me. In the first year, when I came here it was just some kind of a hell. I am a shy person and I used to have only two or three people closer to me, no more" (Y\_BG\_B\_4). However, that completely changed during her studies.

Her training practice was at the local Municipality having the Secretary General as mentor. During the practice she learned very well "from within" how the municipal administration works: "We have learned the internal arrangements and processes of all the services at the municipality, their particular responsibilities. We have even met the Mayor". Amongst the main outcomes for her were – the ability to work with others efficiently, to select information according to its importance and usefulness" (Y\_BG\_B\_4). In spite of her complete satisfaction of the training practice at the Municipality she doesn't consider working at a public institution. She will rather search for an occupation as a lawyer.

### **2.3.      *Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives***



### *2.3.1 CPE perspective*

There are many policies and measures at transnational level that target educated or illiterate unemployed young people, which make them strong catalysts for support and assistance to vulnerable groups. The goal of each policy is to stimulate social inclusion, employability, professional realization and personal development and their target groups are constructed by the policy itself (WP5, p. 13). Examples of projects implementing such European policies are international and national programmes like “Youth Guarantee”, “Start in the Career” and “Students Practices”. What makes the “Students Practices” project different from the others is the fact that it aims at improving the opportunities for practical training for students during their university studies through internships/traineeships in different kinds of public organizations and private enterprises in order to increase their future competitiveness and create prerequisites for employment of young adults after obtaining Bachelor’s and Master’s degree. Another objective of the initiative is to facilitate the transition of young graduates from educational institutions to workplaces and increase the successful realization of young adults (YA) in the labour market (LM) as well as to increase the number of students finding job immediately after graduation (WP5, p. 4). Being in line with respective transnational policies and initiatives, the project “Students Practices” is funded by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) under the “Science and Education for Smart Growth 2014-2020” Operational Programme (OP) of Bulgaria (WP5, p. 4). Therefore, the problems tackled by this measure as well as its aims and objectives are recognized both at European and national levels.

At national level it conforms to the strategic objectives of the OP to raising the quality of higher education through gaining practical experience and improving practical skills of students in accordance with the real needs of the labour market (WP5, p. 4). The core project objectives relate to the acquisition of more practical skills and competencies by students yet during their undergoing studies which could ensure fast transition and easier adaptation for them from university to work thus making them more successful and self-confident (WP5, p. 13).

This measure is very important for the Functional Region Blagoevgrad (FRB) because it combines the efforts and activities of both South-West University “Neofit Rilski” (SWU) as an institution operating in the field of Long Life Learning (LLL) and various other private establishments, public institutions and NGO organizations from the South-West region of Bulgaria which serve as training organizations for the students practices and where trainees are enhancing and enriching their experience, skills and competencies in

real work environment (WP5 p. 4). The measure contributes also to the harmonization of regional labour environment striving to include more YAs in workflow around the region and to strengthen the relationships between the higher education sector, respective work environment and the regional labour market (WP 5, p. 5).

The specific target group of this measure are undergraduates and graduates enrolled at South-West University in Blagoevgrad, the administrative centre of the South-West region of the country. Blagoevgrad region is the sixth largest in the country with a total population of around 313 000 inhabitants. The region includes 14 municipalities, 96 city halls and 280 settlements. The urban population in the region is 59% and it shares the sixth place on of the largest number of rural population. In terms of economy, FRB involves almost all sectors of the national industries. Although the town is not so big (around 70 000 citizens) there are two universities, three colleges and a number of general and vocational high schools. However, there is a misbalance between qualifications of graduates and the market demands both for low and highly skilled workers. The youth unemployment rate in Blagoevgrad is 5.3% for the age group of 15-24 and 22.8% for the age group of 25-35. It is important to note that the social policy in the FR Blagoevgrad is implemented through the activities of the Social Assistance Directorate, particularly by its Department for Social Protection of Children and People with Disabilities (WP 5, p. 3) which has strong cooperation links with different faculties and departments of SWU.

The “Students Practices” project has also a very strong local impact. It aims to encourage and support the development of sustainable partnerships between educational institutions, public organizations, local authorities and business establishments and has already achieved considerable success acknowledged by all stakeholders.

The measure contributes also to the effective functioning of the educational process at the university level and at different organizations acting as “training sites” for students, related to professional preparation (WP5, p. 5) because it encourages improvements of curricula and the quality of higher education as a whole.

The intense and diverse interaction between all actors involved in the project implementation resulted in valuable outcomes some of which are: improved practical skills of students aligned with the needs of the labour market; strong partnerships established between SWU and regional organizations (public and private); developed industrial habits and improved personal qualities of students; improved and updated curricula with new disciplines/content, pedagogical approaches, teaching methods, etc. in accordance with concrete needs of the labour market; created opportunities for employers to select appropriate students performing very well during the internship and

demonstrating sufficient preparedness to occupy certain position at a company or organization; etc. (WP 5, p. 13).

At individual level, participation of students in the project, respectively their placements at real companies and working environment, contributes to facilitating their transition from the university classroom to an appropriate workplace. There are strong evidence that the project has increased the number of students finding an occupation immediately after graduation. Their complete satisfaction, expressed during the two surveys proves the effectiveness and value of the measure, as well as the relevance of the policy. As explained by young people, they obtain both soft (transferable) and hard (work related) skills and competences helping them to perform efficiently at certain positions as well as to gain self-confidence, credibility with their mentors and future employers, offers for jobs or continuation of the internship beyond the contracted period. Academic mentors also benefit from participating in the project and it leads to improved curricula in order to respond to real needs and requirements of the labour market players. For the employers this kind of initiatives are also very important since they become an active part of the educational process and get better and more appropriately prepared employees.

### *2.3.2 GOV perspective*

Implementing social policies requires considerable amount of resources – financial, human, expert, infrastructural, etc. Some of the sources supporting young adults in Bulgaria come from: EU Structural Funds; “Human Resources Development” Operational Programme; “Administrative Capacity” Operational Programme; “Rural Development” Operational Programme; the state budget through different ministries, agencies and public institutions (WP 5, p. 3). The new phase of the project “Students Practices” is funded by the ESF under the “Science and Education for Smart Growth” Operational Programme. This programme is a crossing point of the needs and interests of players from the fields of education, science, society and economy allowing and intensifying transfer of knowledge, identification of necessary skills and proposing innovative models thus establishing a broad fundament and the national context for implementing LLL.

Currently, there are no regulations regarding the labour market demands and the relevance of skills supply at national level. This is one of the reasons for the high unemployment rates related to young adults. In fact, a National Skills System has been developed as an initiative of the Council of Ministers since 2013 (WP6, p. 9). It is based on regular NEA surveys which include compilation and analysis of quantitative data collected by local Labour Offices. The mission of NNCA is to enhance labour market

demand and supply by developing a system for workforce competence assessment by sectors and regions. The focus of the NNCA work has been development of standards for workforce competence (i.e. “skills profiles” for each occupation). There are 10 Regional Competence Assessment Centres established in Bulgaria, and the National Competence Assessment Centre supports them by providing the assessment methodology to be applied (WP6, p. 10).

Since the project “Students Practices” is a nationwide initiative, the Ministry of Education and Science, representatives of universities and other training organizations, business establishments, public and non-profit organizations have been involved under this unique cooperation scheme. Therefore all the stakeholders’ interests and needs have been equally represented in the process of definition of this measure.

The interviewed experts today say that the main project outcome being successful transition of graduates to the labour market has been successfully achieving. And the efficiency of the project is measured by the variety of practical skills the students have mastered, including such competences which will be needed in the future (WP 5, p. 14). At regional level a “Social Services Development Strategy (2016-2020)” was adopted (WP6, p. 30. This strategy aims at providing accessible and quality services in Blagoevgrad region, integration of communities and individuals, complete realization and care for people from the risk groups (WP5, p. 3).

FR Blagoevgrad has very specific economic and labour market conditions. The relative share of population living in material deprivation (2013) is 22.1%; the relative share of people living below the country’s poverty line is 15.7%; the population’s economic activity rose considerably in 2015 to 70.8%; in 2015 the unemployment was 10.4%, thus coming closer to the national average of 9.1%; the unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (annual average 2015) was 10.4%; the employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (annual average 2015) was 63.4%; the economic activity rate of the population aged 15-64 with tertiary education (2015) was 70.8%; and the students in universities and colleges as per 1000 citizens (2015) were 38.6 students (WP6, pp. 28-29).

The Skills System is divided into “skills formation” and “skills use” markets. The most institutions regarding the supply of “skills formation” in FR Blagoevgrad are: two universities and three colleges, several regular and VET schools, a number of non-formal education providers and specialized training institutions, private establishments, NGOs, different VET centres. A strong importance at the “skills formation” market has the Regional Employment Agency and the local Labour Office being parts of the national administrative structure, namely being affiliations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. An important role also plays the Regional Directorate for Education. The two

universities and the three colleges in town are also providers of skills, and potential skills users are many organizations not only in town but around the region which also offer work placements and in-house training through internship schemes. The demand for “skills use” comes generally from the public employers (local and regional institutions and authorities) and private employers (diverse kinds of business establishments) so that they can produce and deliver effectively and efficiently their products and services to the local and regional community, users and customers (WP6, p. 33).

Employers from public and private organizations offering products and services for the regional community have specific labour market demands. On the other hand, the public and private institutions in the region are the locations where the student practices take place. Thus the link between the project "Student practices" and the labour market is provided. Employers formulate their requirements for the Workforce as qualities, skills and qualifications, and these requirements are the model under which the student training practices are structured and carried out in regional and local context. They are a kind of "lab" for the formation of labour market skills set by employers.

At local level, the key actors in the measure from the FR Blagoevgrad are: different Municipal authorities, the Regional Employment Agency and the local Labour Service, South-West University, some regular and vocational schools, non-formal education and training institutions, NGOs, the Regional Directorate for Education, the Social Assistance Agency, different VET centres and others (WP6, pp. 35-36).

Regarding the outcomes of the “Students Practices” project, according to the majority of interviewees, the main challenges for youth are the “limited opportunities for effective participation in decision-making processes”. Having “limited opportunities and exposure” to participate essentially in decision-making processes, young adults feel somehow “unheard” in their communities. The need for participatory structures and greater trust between youth and institutions as well as for expanding capacity development was also stressed (WP5, p. 19);

In terms of the organizational aspects, the project operates in a streamlined manner, similar to all participating universities in Bulgaria. A student applies for the position s/he has chosen, and which corresponds with the professional field of her/his current studies. The training organization offering the position (which is a public organization or private establishment) selects certain trainees among all the applicants for the same place. Upon approval by the training organization, the student confirms his/her participation in the practical training. The student indicates through the information system an academic tutor, draws up a schedule for the practice which should be approved by the related in-house mentor and agreed also with the academic tutor from the university. A contract

between the student and the university is signed after confirmation by the student that s/he will participate in the respective practice. An obligatory condition is that there are signed contracts between the training organizations and South-West University, in-house mentor and the university as well as between academic mentors and SWU. An approved subject related programme and a concrete timetable for the practical training should also be available. All these documents need to be uploaded at the project server prior to the practice (WP5, p. 13).

The interviewed experts say there have not occurred serious problems during the implementation of the project, respectively the individual practices of students. However, a greater and more effective control over the practical training at certain places has been recommended. It has been also suggested that the collaboration between the university and the training organizations should be increased and intensified, as well as more attention to be paid whether the proposed trainings organization fit student's fields of studies, level of qualification and her/his real training needs (WP 5, p. 14). Another important recommendation relates to that the Career Centre at SWU needs to become more active and more involved in its role as a link and mediator between the university its partners in the project. Equally important have been said to be the responsibilities of regional and local business branch organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce in Blagoevgrad FR (WP6, p. 34).

On individual level, the university (as suggested by some interviewees) needs to create more favourable conditions for students participating in the project in order for them to be able to reconcile studies at the university with an internship that takes place at an outside training organization (WP 5, p. 10). Some of the students find it difficult and face certain challenges to combine studies with their work at an organization because of lack of time, heavy study schedule and/or assignments, etc.

There have not been groups or individuals discriminated in the process of application or participation in the project according to all interviewed experts and students, as well as the data available (WP5, p. 13)

### *2.3.3. LCR perspective*

There are high shares of people in Bulgaria with higher education, both regarding the whole population and the 30-34 age group. It is also indicative that in 2014 two thirds (66.5%) of the 20-24 age group were students. This percentage is an obvious indication that education is perceived as a value and this is also an essential result of the active governmental policies towards YA in the country. The proportion of people aged 30-34 having upper secondary education (ISCED 3-4) is higher than that in the UK and is

comparable to that in Germany. On the other hand, when it comes to adult education, the values decrease significantly. The share of learners aged 24-34 is much lower than the EU27 average. This means that after completing secondary education, young people lose ambitions and seize their efforts to continue their education. This phenomenon requires more active involvement of training organizations in formal and non-formal education activities and LLL initiatives (WP4, p. 3).

One more important fact is that 69.3% of the young people live with their parents (by 2013), due to mostly social factors such as cultural traditions, strong family connections and shared views between parents and children to stay as long as possible inside the well-known “comfort zone” (WP4, p. 11).

In the South-West region of Bulgaria, the rate of students increased from 69.8% in 2005 to 90.1% in 2013 and then decreased to 80.8% in 2014 (WP4, p. 19). Youth employment rates in Bulgaria are well below the EU-27 average but in the South-West region they are above the country average value of 20.3% (2015). At the same time, long term unemployment rates indicate the effects of the economic crisis from 2008 on the overall youth employment in the country (WP4, p. 23). The rate of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Bulgaria is decreasing in the period 2006-2015 and is relatively stable between 2008 and 2015 when it varied between 40% and 50% (WP4, p. 26). The difficult realization of the graduated young adults clearly indicate that the link between studies/training and labour market is disrupted. This could be proved by data obtained by NSI, MES, MLSP, NGO sector, Chamber of Commerce as well as results from sociological surveys.

However, at national level as well as at the level of FR Blagoevgrad there is process of economic stabilization, income growth, poverty reduction, increasing youth employment, growth in disposable household income, and increase in the share of people with higher education. This trend has a positive impact on the living situation of young adults in the country and the region (WP4, p. 29). Today in the South-West region over 50% of the employees work in medium and large size companies. Concerning the unemployment rates, the region offers somewhat more favourable conditions for young people in terms of their fast and smooth transition from education to employment (WP4, p. 29).

FR Blagoevgrad is a significant educational and cultural centre in Bulgaria and especially in its South-Western part. Currently there are a total of 133 educational institutions around the region including 106 general schools, 3 specialized, 1 related to arts, 18 vocational, 3 colleges and 2 universities (WP5, pp. 2-3). The main programmes implemented after 2013 in FR Blagoevgrad, conducted under the labour market policies as well as in line with the LLL policies for YAs, were or have been: Life Long Learning

Hub (2013-2016); University Students Training Practices (2014-2015 and 2016-2018); Youth Guarantee (2014-2020).

The implementation of national project at regional level, regarding the FR Blagoevgrad, related to: maintaining specific cases and offering relevant social and health services for early prevention; supporting families at risk of abandoning children; supporting families of children with disabilities by services of specialized day care centres; targeting families with disabled children for early diagnosis and timely intervention against disability; providing methodological support and assistance to the Centres for Public Support; special care for the elderly and people with disabilities (WP5, p. 3). As seen from the above, all these project address needs of different target groups.

The target group of the “Students Practices” project are undergraduates and graduates (i.e. Bachelor’s and Master’s students) enrolled at South-West University “Neofit Rilski” in Blagoevgrad. These are usually young people aged between 18 and 26. In comparison, the other project named “Career Start” addresses youngsters up to 29 years of age with a tertiary education but without any practical experience in the field they’ve studied (WP5, p 18).

Various types of companies, organizations and institutions have been involved in the project serving as training organizations where the real practice takes place. Many of them provide opportunities for their trainees to continue working with them after completing the internship (WP5, p. 9). The collaboration of this training organizations with South-West University provides preconditions for and stimulate revision of curricula in terms of rethinking and updating particular subjects and topics within these subjects to be better aligned with the real needs of the labour market.

Successful or unsuccessful participation in the project depends on the people themselves who are involved in it, the extent to which they are taking advantage of the opportunities available, depends also on employers involved and their needs and wish to hire students. Hiring students after completing the practical training period is practices by growing organizations when they have high demand for staff. However, active participation and excellent performance of students are also very important as well as their inspirations to acquire practical skills and to get an occupation at the organization they are practicing in. This is a two-way process as evidenced by respondents in interviews – student, mentors, and functional experts. In fact, not all students taking part in the project are equally active during their practical training (this observation has been mentioned many times in the surveys) and their different level of engagement and performance effects students’ overall professional development and the possibilities to get a job (WP5, p. 14).



Good interaction has been also achieved between young adults and experts. Participants evaluate all aspects of the programme positively and their own participation as successful. One of the essential project's features is that any students can apply for taking part in it– there are no limitations neither discrimination of any kind. Many respondents comment different aspects of the project in the open question sections of questionnaires and point out its good points and advantages. As mentioned already, many of them think that beneficial participation depends on the young people themselves, the extent to which they are ready to and actually take advantage of the practical training collaborating closely with employers, due to the fact that some of them have possibilities to hire students. Hiring a student after completion of the internship is practised and depends mainly on the organization itself, its demand for new staff (WP5, p. 21) and it often happens as the reports of the Career Centre (cited above) demonstrate.

The project “Training Practices” has very strong impact at individual level. However, support from their family is also very important. With respect to the young adults' successful professional preparation and overall success in their life, the interviews have shown a clear link between family/parents' support and young adults inspirations. In other words, parents who are strongly involved in their children's education and ensure stimulating learning environment at home and encouraging attitude help considerably their children in developing feelings of self-esteem, self-control, curiosity, positive attitudes towards studies and work, as well as competence and better performance at university and work places they are practicing. However, developing skills and competencies is influenced not only by family/parents, but also to varying degree by teachers, mentors and supervisors according to respondents. In the opinions of interviewed young adults, different kinds of skills and experience can be acquired in various contexts over lifetime but education is thought to be particularly important in forming skills and professional competences. Most of the interviewed have various levels of literacy in foreign languages, however, “to be disciplined” and “accurate” are among the most valuable skills according to respondents. Social skills such as “self-confidence”, “self-direction” and “risk-taking” are also increasingly important because people are expected to be able to behave much more autonomously. “Learning how to learn”, “abilities for fast adaptation”, “to be able to change” and “to make sense of the vast information flows” are now generic skills that everyone should acquire. Employers are increasingly demanding the ability to learn and acquire new skills rapidly and to adapt to new challenges and situations. The most important skills in demand at the job market today are related to the “booming” and very fast developing computer industry are

computer skills which are advisable to be obtained. Foreign languages and command of a second language is also recommended (WP5, p. 20).

A general conclusion about the project “Students Practices” is that young adults obtain variety of both soft and hard skills in real work environment which is very valuable for their future success in their work and life; university teachers update curricula in accordance with real current needs of the labour market and related industries; employers prepare their future employees and collaborate better with the university.

Usually after completing the period of practical training students fill out an e-questionnaire to evaluate their participation in the practical training, about assistance and support received, the learning outcomes achieved, the quality of collaboration with mentors, and their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with project as a whole. Results of these surveys evidenced that majority (more than 90%) of students are satisfied and find the opportunities provided by this measure as very valuable.

### **3. Case study 2**

#### ***3.1. Introduction***

"The European guarantee is the aspiration for all young people to be activated ... to overlap. These young people who do not study and have not completed their education, we have to activate them, enrol them in schools, at least not to have illiterate people, the other part who have graduated to help them find a job and encourage employers to recruit the young people who have come to us", this is how one of the experts presents one of the most popular and wide-ranging programs for young people in the Functional Region Plovdiv (FRP) – “Youth Guarantee” (E\_BG\_P\_1, WP5 Report).

The scheme started in 2014. It has facilitated structural reforms and innovation in policy design across EU Member States<sup>1</sup> ever since. In Bulgaria, the National Implementation Plan for European Youth Guarantee (NIPEYG) is also implemented and covers the period (2014-2020) and its implementation is carried out within the framework of OP "Human Resources Development" (OP HRD). It is envisaged that the implementation of the NYGIP is financed by the national budget, corresponding to the EA maintenance funds and the National Employment Action Plan for the respective year, by the European Social Fund (ESF), by the Youth Employment Initiative within the framework of the

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<sup>1</sup> EC, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion The Youth Guarantee country by country – Bulgaria, 2017.

implementation of the OP HRD and by employers' funds. For the implementation of the NIPEYG for the period of 2014-2020 are provided BGN 231,276,000.

The Youth Guarantee project is focused on young people up to 29 year-old who are not only unemployed but also not being well educated. The aim is to activate the inactive youths, including the discouraged people who remain out of youth unemployment statistics. The implementation is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Young people can register through the Labour Offices with the assistance of labour mediators working with unemployed young persons.

The Youth Guarantee aims to provide a number of options that can be divided into several areas: vocational guidance for young people; training in professional qualifications or key skills; subsidizing temporary employment; helping employers to open new jobs; support for youth entrepreneurship; provision of services from the EURES network.

The accomplishment of the above objectives depends to a large extent on the satisfaction of the participants in the program and on the specificities of its implementation.

According to the perspectives of the interviewed managers and experts, the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the functional region of Plovdiv is more or less successful due to its positive effects: increasing the employment among young people, reducing the number of people at risk of falling into poverty and the number of early school leavers, helping young people to enter the labour market. On the other hand, these effects are a prerequisite for achieving sustainable economic growth and reducing costs from the untapped potential of young people. The advantage of the initiative is to target more affected regions with high level of youth unemployment. As one of the experts explains: "The program allows to everyone to get a job. Then, when there are youngsters with problems in the sense of having some deficits or being shyer, then they get the support of the case managers. They go and present the young people to the employer. And hardly, the institution stands behind these youngsters, we help them to get started." (E\_BG\_P\_1, WP5 Report).

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee in the Functional region faces a number of challenges. One of them, as we faced in Work Package 3, is that there is no procedure for the selection of the participants and thus the program does not reach the truly needed target group. The target groups that are still under-represented in the labour market are not covered by the planned measures. Ignoring these groups is particularly important and requires specific actions. In this regard, one of the interviewed experts mentions:

"Much more is needed to be done for young people without education or very low education" (E\_BG\_P\_4, WP5 Report).

For the purpose of the analysis in WP7, two cases of young people have been selected. The first one is of a young man (Y\_BG\_P\_4) with a good education and stable financial and social environment, and thanks to the Youth Guarantee he finds a proper job. The other case is of a young woman (Y\_BG\_P\_5) who has quite a different education and social background. The lack of financial, personal (family) and social (friends) support forced her to apply in YGS. In her work trajectory she changes several jobs through the Youth Guarantee, but fails to stay anywhere, and finally she blames herself. Both cases are quite different, but very interesting in the sense of the provided structural analysis. In the studied Functional region they enrich it from different angles, revealing the existing gaps in the implementation of the YGS, and contributing to the effective accomplishment of the provided policies, such as: social, education, youth and labour policies. In this complex process many institutions and actors are involved, they collaborate at different levels, and in different ways, and the cross-case analysis approach reveals the complexity, and the dynamics of different interactions between them. However, most of the measures target young people with secondary or tertiary education, with less emphasis on low-skilled youths. This is particularly worrying that the number of low-skilled NEETs is high and targeted actions are still limited. The growth of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) remains quite above the EU average, despite the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. In addition, the vast majority of NEETs remain inactive, indicating structural problems in involving young people in the labour market or in education.

According to the interviews with experts, managers, street-level professionals and young adults the program is facing several challenges. First of all, young people have an unrealistic assessment of their own qualities. On one hand, their expectations about a certain job and employer are too high, and on the other hand, their skills are too low. Secondly, there is a need for much higher wages for young people to gain greater self-esteem and be satisfied with the efforts they have made. Thirdly, more support is needed for young people without education or very low education. Another problem is the unrealistic expectations of employers, who require young people to get quickly into work.

### **3.2. Telling the story of the case study**

*Reasoning on correspondences*

*CPE perspective*

In the economic and social approach, state interference is always discussed and subject to many analyses. Undoubtedly, the realization of young people leads to public welfare, and due to this, the effective institutionalization of the Youth Guarantee is vital in achieving the publicly desired outcomes. The integration process of the Regional Employment Agencies into the Youth Guarantee scheme realized in FR Plovdiv is an example of local government adaptation of a European policy. Furthermore, on local level the National plan for implementation of the European youth guarantee 2014 – 2020 is implemented. The National Employment Agency and the Regional branches are responsible for the implementation of the program. The local agency as part of this program has a key role in targeting and registering youngsters. The significance of the program is in supporting young people in the country to achieve their realization. The program is associated with high expectations - solving the problem of youth unemployment and ensuring effective workforce.

The following analysis is provided on primary data through two interviews with young people from FR Plovdiv, which are quite different in their profile and impact on the project proposes. Both of the cases reveal different gaps in the project implementation. One of the youngsters (Y\_BG\_P\_5) has not found a permanent job and thinks that the program is not achieving its goals because the business abuse of subsidized employment. In the opposite is the opinion of another one (E\_BG\_P\_4) who thinks that: "The unreal evaluation of the candidates themselves, I talk about young people. They have much higher expectations than they actually can get". The Y\_BG\_P\_4 is prepared for the profession due to the youth guarantee and intends to proceed with this work. "I dare to say that I am a better lawyer after this 6-month practice than before. Because even if I get into a different kind of right environment, I have some idea of realization and implementation and communication in the legal sphere - how it should be realized, what it looks like."

In fact, there is no mismatch between the opinions of the young people and the experts, who think that the program helps graduates in finding their adequate job. When a failure is registered, both experts and young people think it is rather personal, than it affects the programs.

On one hand, the transition at local level is successful. It is adapted according to some specific essences of the region. With the assistance of Roma mediators, the young people in the largest Roma neighbourhood of Stolipinovo are reached. Even though, on local level "in Plovdiv a few are defined as Roma. Most of them are either Bulgarians or Turks. Very interesting is the distribution - those who are from Sheker and Harman Mahala, in the northern part of Plovdiv, they are Bulgarians. "Most of them are

Bulgarians. In Stolipinovo they are divided into Turks, Bulgarians and Roma, meaning for curiosity, we have less than 200 people registered in the labour office who have identified themselves as Roma”, according to the E\_BG\_P\_1. On regional level the mechanism is the same, except it is helped by Roma mediators who aim to motivate young Roma people. A large majority of NEET remains inactive, thus indicating structural problems in the inclusion of young people in the labour market or in education (Eurofound, 2016). The NEET rate among Roma is very high, particularly for girls. Early school leaving increased to 13.4 % in 2015 (above the national EU 2020 goal of 11 %) amid high regional variations and urban-rural disparities<sup>2</sup>. It is particularly high among Roma. Socioeconomic factors, educational difficulties and family reasons are key drivers of early school leaving. EU funds are used to provide second chance education, literacy courses and qualifications to adults who dropped out from school. A strategy to tackle this phenomenon is under implementation."

Despite the different level of development of the regions, young people receive equal payment. Concerning the target composition, the Regional Agency does not reach the target group even though the eligible beneficiaries under the Youth Guarantee are treated without discrimination. The efforts have to be focused on public awareness directed to the objectives, procedures and benefits of the lifelong learning tools. The communication channels should address not only the key stakeholders, but also the potential beneficiaries with special focus on the disadvantaged groups.

The institutional interaction along with the interaction between the key actors is crucial in solving possible conflicts that could hamper the achievement of the set up goals. In this sense the importance of the Youth Guarantee, as well as the measures and policies related will determine the willingness of the parties to achieve their goals. Both employers and workers intend to increase the quality of workforce through internship programs and trainings. It is important for young people to gain experience in the study years and for the institutions - to achieve labour market efficiency by improving the matching process between job seekers and job providers. There are no evident conflicts between the key players, as it is clearly stated in one of the interviews (E\_BG\_P\_1, WP5 Report): "we have no conflicts at our level, we manage to work well, sometimes, there are some remarks if something does not work, but conflicts do not exist in general ... No, no, no, we are so adaptable that we have already found a good language for all."

According to the interviews with experts, it is evident that all measures, with direct or indirect effect benefit local needs. The link between the objectives of the program and

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2017), Youth Guarantee Country by country, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

the local needs is mainly in two directions: on the one hand, public institutions aim to promote economic activity by increasing employment, and on the other hand, they aim to increase employment corresponding to the needs and requirements of local stakeholders.

#### *GOV perspective*

It has to be noticed that the review of the regulatory framework explores the rights and the responsibilities of adult learners, identifies gaps and existing impact tools. But in fact the key stakeholders do not know or do not apply the regulatory framework. Some employers and representatives of various target groups do not apply it because they do not know it. The lack of a comprehensive system for control and supervision of the sector is an additional factor due to which the laws and by-laws do not lead to the provision of quality education and training for adults and the fragmented nature of the regulatory framework further hampers its application. The role of employers in the financing of formal school adult education is also special. In Bulgaria there are three possible sources of funding and financing schemes: public funding, employers and private sources. On 03 Dec. 2014, the National Assembly adopted amendments to the Labour Code, which introduced the Institute of traineeship, consistent with the European Quality Framework for traineeship. The figure of the mentor is introduced, as well as a period of traineeship (from 6 to 12 months). After the amendments the Labour Code stipulates the employers to conclude a labour agreement with the trainees for a period of half a year to one year. Individuals up to 29 years of age, who have graduated from secondary school education or higher education, and have no length of service or professional experience in the profession or specialty, which they have acquired, can become trainees. An employee can be appointed on the basis of an agreement with a condition for only one-time traineeship. For each trainee there is a requirement the employer to appoint a mentor with at least three years' length of service and a qualification in the same or similar profession to the one. The interviews experts commenting that this is a problem for employers as they have to devote work resources to this. Big companies are more likely to do this, but for the little ones it means to be deprived for a time by a full-fledged worker who is the mentor of the interns.

#### *LCR perspective*

The initial stage of young people's life course is a consequence of their education. It is important to clarify the reasons that young people leave school/ university. The attitudes define their decision to participate in YGS. According to the interviews the educational

period in their life courses, young people rely on the authority of two main figures: the parent and the teacher.

Institutional authorities in the face of teachers/university professors appear to be one of the key factors in making important decisions related to drawing the professional trajectory of young people. Distinct emphasis on the part of teachers/university professors (Y\_BG\_P\_5, WP5 Report) is observed. The withdrawal of teachers and the lack of empathy towards the future of young people is in fact a turning point in drawing the life trajectory. Partial empathy by teachers/university professors (Y\_BG\_P\_4, WP5 Report) is mapping the life and professional trajectory. In the case of the selected two young people, not the teacher's authority, but a parent or a friend has a key role in the decision-making process, related to the professional realization.

As a result of the lack of a sustainable career project, the young people turn to the Labour Office for participating in YGS, and the ways to participate in the YGS LLL programs are recognized as:

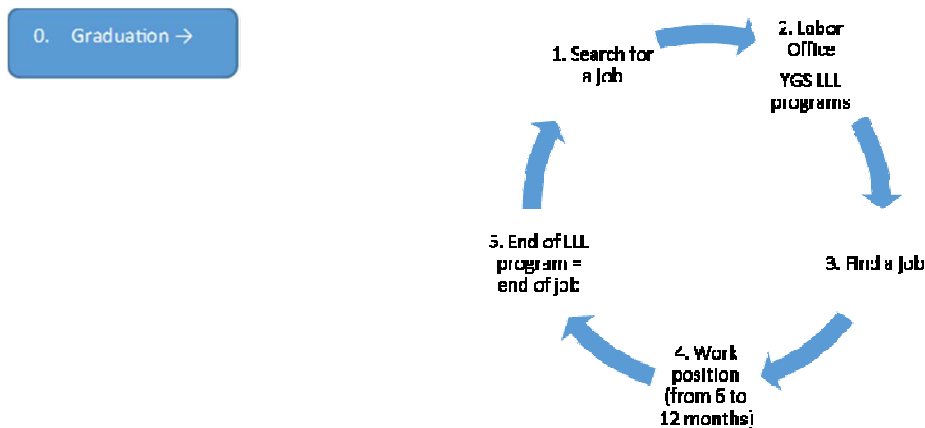
- personally motivated choice (Y\_BG\_P\_4\_WP5, Report);
- recommendation of a colleague (Y\_BG\_P\_5\_WP5, Report);
- employer's request (Y\_BG\_P\_5\_WP5, Report).

The young people emphasize that the skills acquired at school/university are insufficient for successful realization in the labour market. The focus is on the lack of practical orientation of the education courses and the inadequate preparation of the young people to cope in a real work situation. The young woman admits that after completing the program, the YGS gave her opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills but did not help her to integrate what she has learned into her personal professional development project. The young man has acquired new skills and managed to integrate them into the work environment. He emphasizes that the initial expectations he had when entering the YGS programs went hand by hand with the objectives of the measure.

The two young people do not perceive YGS as a decisive factor in mapping their life and professional trajectories. They determine the program effects as short-term and they cover only the period of subsidized employment. The life trajectory of Y\_BG\_P\_5 is related to the process of transition from education to employment through the YGS and realization on the labour market in PFR (Figure 1).

*Figure 1. The process of transition from education to employment*





Source: own figure

### *Reasoning on implementation*

#### *CPE perspective*

The Regional Labour Agency is the responsible institution on local level and it is working with all of the described agents. They work there with employers and unemployed youths up to 29 years of age. This is generally the target group under the procedure. They are helped by youth mediators who are a part of another European project and are subordinate to the municipality. They have an obligation to activate the youths and lead them to the workers in the Agency. When registering at the Bureau of Labour, they become aware of the problems of each and every young person individually, and afterwards he is included in a workshop. Then they meet a psychologist who organizes meetings between case managers and youngsters. And almost all young people go through these two steps in order to make an assessment of their needs, desires, and opportunities.

Young people get confidence, and an essential part of them continue working in the firm. The principle is 6 + 6, in the sense of 6 months of subsidized employment, and the rest of time is without subsidized employment. At least 30-40% remains in the companies. The employer has to appoint a mentor and a proper position in the company. Misunderstandings appear due to undiscussed or unclear items during the interviews. The implementation of the project measures does not lead to conflicts between the main actors but it needs an additional period for reconciliation between the opportunities that employers offer and the expectations of young people.

#### *GOV perspective*

The process of matching between employers and young people creates short-term problems clearly identified in the interview (E\_BG\_P\_4, WP5 Report): "The problems, on

the one hand, are in the unrealistic assessment of the candidates themselves, I speak about the young people. They have much higher expectations than their capabilities. They also have high expectations from the employer, and in fact they actually have neither practice, nor experience. The employers also have some requirements, because he/she has to appoint separately, following the procedure, apprenticeship, depending on the level of the acquired education.“ If there is a problem it is quickly solved because of the good communication and the common interest between the involved parties.

Surely, there is an option of misunderstanding in every communication between the main actors. Even the conflicts are not clearly determined, it is important to register and describe some of them, in order to prevent them on time.

Part of the conflicts arises due to a huge amount of documentation and bureaucracy in the various programs. This inevitably leads to communication gaps and problems but because of the positive intentions and provided actions, they are solved quickly. The main conflict situations, as the expert points out, are found in the inadequately prepared documentation or an existing mismatch between the characters of the participants. There are situations when the conflicts are neglected or underestimated in order to prevent program cancelling. Some interviews give the impression of hidden conflicts. Considering the complexity of links, multiple communication channels, the multiple-level goals and priorities, the existence of many partners, and last but not least, the different level of communication will inevitably create both a clash of interests and problems in achieving the goals set up by all participants. However, the official position in some cases is that any misunderstanding can be solved quickly without any serious disturbances.

Some of the conflicts arise from the unrealistic expectations of young people. “With conversations and with ... examples. So like all human beings when you explain to one, promptly and clearly what he can expect, and not just what he reads in the media, I think he accepts things with understanding. And all people are open to communicate with him.”

The only way to deal with the problems, considering their complexity and consistency, is to provide a communication and to explain realistically the benefits of the program.

#### LCR perspective

After university graduation, young people find themselves in a situation where they need to start work but they have no practical experience. Participation in YGS programs enables young people to start work, not only acquiring new knowledge and skills, accumulating work experience, but also earning income security for a certain period of time. These regular incomes enable them to plan their life development, albeit in a relatively short term (from 6 months to 1 year). During this period, young people are able

to distribute their time and financial resources, thus they can accomplish various important necessities.

### *Reasoning on originalities*

#### *CPE perspective*

The subordination of local needs and the maintenance of good communication between the main actors should be highlighted. As a typical centralized measure, it is difficult to talk about a bottom-up solution. The program First Job was successful as it has a similar target group and some of the problem areas have been cleared. The Youth Guarantee is related to other programs that offer training, social partnership projects where they organize courses. Another project is with young people up to 29 years of age which aim is to form key competences, targeting young people with secondary and lower education. Up to date, upgraded by all programs, the new Youth Guarantee has three goals: activation, training and employment.

These goals prove that the project is widely open to meet the needs of the main actors at all levels, and especially on local level. The opportunities for change depends on the increase of youth employment, and the adaptability depends mainly on the specifics of the region. This regards the types of employers' organizations and their culture, the youths, and the nature of the educational opportunities, and the needs of the region as well. Through consultations between local institutional bodies, young people and employers, a flexible system for the implementation of the project objectives is created offering a wide range of opportunities. The result is in satisfying local needs through proper training, focused on local labour market demands, and the rise of discrimination is prevented. The programs outline the issues of socio-economic reality in the region. As one expert notes: "Somehow this project is related to the demographic problem, the aging of the population, respectively the "brain drain". I suppose they have reported factors such as qualifications, age, marital status, etc." (E\_BG\_P\_3, WP5 Report)

Any program or measure aimed at enhancing the adaptability of the workforce to labour market requirements through training, internships, practices, etc. is inevitable in favour of local needs, no matter where. It is important for each employer to have a qualified workforce with experience.

#### *GOV perspective*

The progress achieved in 2014 mainly focuses on "institutional" activities, such as: introduction of flexible accreditation models, implementation of quality-oriented funding models, development of management systems of universities, improvement of the

admission model, etc.<sup>3</sup> Some activities in the higher education sector in Bulgaria remain outside of the scope of adult learning. They are aimed at: strengthening the role of universities as institutions for lifelong learning and encouraging potential trainees for further education in the higher education system; enhance the lifelong learning as a mission of universities and an indicator for quality assurance; adaptation of curricula to the specifics of the individual profile and the learning needs of the trainees; improvement of learning forms and assessment methods aiming to create an innovative and flexible learning environment; promoting access of "non-traditional" students and adults through alternative forms of lifelong learning in universities; providing support and appropriate facilities for undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities; encouraging universities to use data on the graduates' employment rates and the growth forecasts while planning the education and training courses and programs.

#### LCR perspective

The new 21-st century generation of young people lives in a different political, economic, social and cultural environment that ensures a different entry to the life project development. Young people prove themselves in every stage of education and career development. On one hand it makes young people more adaptive and competitive. On the other hand, it makes young people foster their professional development. In that specific context they accumulate new skills through LLL program participation, which gives them security until they have the next job position. After finishing the subsidized employment, they will have new skills in order to start a new job.

Young people know that they lack the needed skills, and the education (in school and university system) emphasizes mainly on theoretical issues rather than practical training and practical preparation. In that sense, young people are not well prepared and do not respond to the requirements of the labour market. The gap between the formal (theoretical) education and the real labour market requirements has to be filled in with different training programs, including YGS LLL programs. Thus young people can accumulate new skills in order to get a good job.

The analyses of the in-depth interviews with the two young persons from Plovdiv show that YGS is not an important factor in mapping their life and professional trajectories. Young people define the effects of programs as short-term and that they cover only the period of the programs.

### ***3.3. Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives***

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education and Science, Report on the progress in the adult learning sector in Bulgaria, Sofia, 2016.

### *3.3.1. CPE perspective*

“Regarding the evidence-based youth policies it is essential to underline the need of working together and cooperating between public authorities, civil society and the research community”<sup>4</sup>. The Youth Guarantee is a program designed to solve a European level problem but for Bulgaria this program is very important. One of the major reasons is that: “With the beginning of the transition to a market economy, the liquidation of the totalitarian structures in our country led to the liquidation of the youth policy infrastructure.”<sup>5</sup> The rules and aims are set from top to bottom – from the European level to National and Regional, Institutional. This is a centralized program. The problems tackled by the measure are recognized at EU level. The Youth Guarantee is a commitment between all Member States that comes to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive qualitative job offer, continuing training. All EU countries have committed to the implementation of the Youth Guarantee according to a Council Recommendation of April 2013. The Youth Guarantee is based on successful experience in Austria and Finland that indicate that investing in transition from school-to-work for young people pays off.

At National Level, the EU assists its Member States in setting up national youth guarantee schemes through significant financial resources, political cooperation and exchange of experience. In particular, the European Commission has helped each country to develop a national plan to implement the Youth Guarantee. The Commission also facilitates the exchange of good practices between governments, in particular through the Mutual Learning Program within the framework of the European Employment Strategy. In accordance with the EU Council Recommendation, in Bulgaria a “National plan for implementation of the European youth guarantee 2014 – 2020” is being developed at national level. The Member States voluntarily can increase the age limit to 29 years and Bulgaria has taken this decision. As it’s evident from the interview (E\_BG\_P\_1, P5 Report) “this European guarantee is the chance for all people - young people who are on the territory of Bulgaria. They have to be activated, to come out in the light - young people who do not learn and have not completed their education, others that have graduated to help them find a job”. We encourage employers to hire exactly the young people who have come to us”, which completely corresponds to the set up

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<sup>4</sup> Mitev, P., T. Kottseva, G. Mihova, Mladite hora v Evropejska Bulgaria, Tsentur za izsledvane na naselenieto pri BAN, Sofia, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Mitev, P., Novite mladi: Bualgarskata mladezh i evropeyskata perspektiva, Institut za sotsialni tsennosti i strukturi “Ivan hadzhiyski”, Sofia, 2005.

goals on European Level. The E\_BG\_P\_4 states: "This is an initiative of the European Commission, where we aim to support young people in the target group. In case they are interested in the program and the measures of the European Youth Guarantee, they receive a good job offer for their apprenticeship or internship within four months after they have registered at the labour offices. The offered opportunities include: vocational guidance, information on career choice, further qualification, motivation training, training for acquiring professional qualification, job creation measures through financial subsidization for their employers, internships programs, measures aimed at improving and higher education and vocational training, subsidizing temporary employment, promoting territorial mobility in the country of search and commencement getting into work".

A secondary goal is to reduce the inactive population, improve the efficiency of the local labour market and promote economic activity. In this way, national targets are linked to local needs. According to E\_BG\_P\_1 (WP5 Report) "there are many universities in Plovdiv, many young people graduate from universities and it is practically very difficult, at first, to find their so-called first job. Each company has some requirements".

A youngster who has just finished studying, these skills are lacking. This subsidized employment enables him/her to acquire a practice and at the same time assist in finding a job. Even though E\_BG\_P\_1 (WP5 Report) thinks that this is not enough to maintain the young people in the region and because of the low payment it is impossible to trigger the real economy of the region.

The Youth Guarantee implementation include a reform of VET system, traineeships legal framework, measures against early school leaving, higher education reform and local partnerships for enhancing outreach; the Youth Employment Scheme that aims to increase the competitiveness of young people through traineeship or on the job training; the network of youth mediators (unemployed youth with a higher education degree recruited by municipalities to reach out to non-registered youth); the launch of a National Framework Agreement for the realization of the YGIP and in particular for strengthening YG partnerships.

The results correspond to the opinion of the experts. For 2015 show that the YG scheme in Bulgaria reached only 14.3% of NEETs aged fewer than 25, a decline of 5 percentage points compared to 2014. Only just over a third (35.9%) of those leaving the scheme in 2015 took up an offer within 4 months of registration, though this is an improvement compared to 2014 (27.6%). The difficulty to deliver timely offers is reflected in the fact that more than half (54.3%) of those in the scheme at any point during the year had been registered for more than 4 months, with half of these (27.3% of the total) registered for

more than 12 months. Follow-up data show that less than a quarter (23.4%) of those leaving the YG in 2015 were known to be in employment, education or training 6 months later, a slight improvement on 2014 (19.6%), though both figures are likely to be understated as the subsequent situation was unknown for the majority of leavers (74.6% in 2015 and 78.2% in 2014). Longer-term follow-up of those leaving in 2014 shows little change in positive outcomes after 12 or 18 months (18.5% and 18.8% respectively)<sup>6</sup>.

One level below, on Institutional Level, according to both experts the intuitions, as universities, social partners, employers' representatives, economic chamber, large capital, industrial capital, the Chamber of Commerce, Employment Agency, Directorate, "Social Assistance" the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy are learning to work together to facilitate the young people in achieving success according their education and to help them with the transition from secondary or higher educational organization to an appropriate workplace.

The experts of the Regional Labour Agency are working on the aim to make possible for these schools, universities and universities to get in touch with the business. They organize exchanges, meetings, campaigns. And this shows the interactive level of the communication between the actors.

According to both experts the Youth Guarantee is important on individual level. A youngster under the age of 29 cannot find a job without experience. And on the other hand, the employer needs a young man, but he needs to train him. Even though some of the youngsters cannot find a job, during the internship they are gaining experience. They can be more competitive on the labour market as well, according to the E\_BG\_P\_1. All of this comes to show as that" Currently, the labour market is characterized by a high share of long-term unemployed in total unemployment and a high inactivity rate limited inclusion of young people in the labour market and skills shortages and mismatches. While the unemployment rate fell below the EU average in 2015 the share of long-term unemployment and the rate of young people not in employment, education or training and the low employment rate of low-skilled people are still major challenges. In the face of these challenges, active labour market policies are insufficiently targeted towards disadvantaged groups and their needs, which hinders their employability. In addition, the insufficient integration of employment and social services for recipients of social benefits can limit their labour market participation."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2017), Youth Guarantee Country by Country, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (2017), Youth Guarantee Country by country, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, pp. 9.

### 3.3.2. GOV perspective

Youth Guarantee is one of the EU's main tools for improving labour market efficiency through long-term structural reform and a positive investment in the future of young people and the economy: "Youth is high on the EU's political agenda. EU youth policy places particular emphasis on increasing social inclusion of all young people, greater participation in democratic and civic life, and an easier transition to adulthood, in particular the integration into the world of work."<sup>8</sup> The implementation of a national youth guarantee scheme requires long-term and substantial funding. As the project is of European relevance, its funding is carried out by the national budget with the support of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the resources of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) during the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020. In order to achieve the Youth Guarantee targets, national budgets can use the financial assistance from the European Social Fund and the EUR 6 billion Youth Employment Initiative. Initiatives will provide priority financial support to the Member States most affected by youth unemployment. YEI will fund measures and policies aimed to activate young people. This includes young people who do not work, are not part of the education system or are not trained. At National Level the Implementation of youth guarantee is financed with funds from the state budget set out in the updated Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2013-2020). This includes financing of the active policy of the labour market (within the means of the Employment Agency and under the National Action Plan on Employment<sup>9</sup>): "Successful inclusion of young people in the labour market after education and training, as well as the updating of their key competences, is a prerequisite for their successful employment. In order to reduce youth unemployment and inactivity among young people in order to implement the national target for reducing the unemployment rate among the young people under the age of 29, the measures and actions under the National Initiative "Work for young people in Bulgaria" will be implemented, will continue in connection with the implementation of the National Implementation Plan of the European Youth Guarantee"<sup>10</sup>.

While labor market conditions have improved, challenges remain. "The unemployment rate is falls further to 7.1 % in 2017 (from 7.7 % in 2016), well below the EU average, while rapid wage growth does not seem so far to have had a negative impact on

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<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2015), EU Youth Report 2015, Publications Office of the EU, Luxembourg.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/nacionalni%20planove%20za%20deistvie%20po%20zaetostta/NPDZ\\_2017.zip](https://www.mlsp.government.bg/ckfinder/userfiles/files/politiki/zaetost/nacionalni%20planove%20za%20deistvie%20po%20zaetostta/NPDZ_2017.zip)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=858>



competitiveness”<sup>11</sup>. Adverse demographic developments and structural problems such as the high long-term unemployment, high inactivity levels, and limited inclusion of young people are key impediments to the functioning of the labour market.

"Successive CSRs to address the high percentage of young people not in employment, education or training have resulted in a variety of measures undertaken by the authorities. However, this progress has not yet translated into significant results.”<sup>12</sup>

One level below the financing from the state budget within the Employment Agency is about of the preparation of individual action plans for each newly registered young person up to 24 years old by the labour mediators at the labour offices.

The financing from the state budget within the framework of the National Action Plan for Employment: funding for the implementation of the active labour market policy. With the funds from the state budget, the employment, traineeship, apprenticeship and training of the unemployed youngsters will be financed. In addition, in programs and measures that are not specifically aimed at young people, young people will also be a priority target group for inclusion. “Young people continue to face employment challenges. The rate of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) remains well above the EU average, despite the implementation of the Youth Guarantee”<sup>13</sup>.

The implementation of Youth Guarantee measures and policies includes cooperation with local actors on regional level. It comprehends communication between the Regional Employment Service and the Labour Offices, along with affiliates, young people and employers. The methodology for implementing the measures is related to the main goal stated in an interview (E\_BG\_P\_4, WP5 Report): “Our aim is rather to make sure that both sides reach consensus- employers with unemployed youths, unemployed youths with employers. We also make sure that both sides are happy with their inclusion in the project”; the methods of incorporation are mainly related to the feedback as the interview (E\_BG\_P\_4, WP5 Report) reveal: “Well, the problems that arise at work are cleared by conversations, meetings with employers, so-called labour meetings that we do. Each unemployed person has the opportunity to get acquainted with the activity in practice, to be informed in a timely manner and on this base to choose the company he / she is interested in.”

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<sup>11</sup> European Commission (2017), Youth Guarantee Country by country, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission (2017), Youth Guarantee Country by country, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

<sup>13</sup> European Commission (2017), Youth Guarantee Country by country, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

The importance of the program at the institutional level is revealed by the activity and participation of the main partners. Organizational culture and company policy have a significant impact on the implementation of youth employment measures. Like most human resources management strategies, training and internship is a major tool to identify Human Resources Needs in the Organization and Internal Company Demand and Supply.

The main ways to access and enter the organization are, on the one hand, through round tables and awareness campaigns, and by other interviewing and consulting about the opportunities offered by each employer. Thus, by promoting the possibilities of the youth guarantee and the measures on the active labour market policies and the mutual interest between employers and young people, the young people get involved in the project.

At Individual Level the Methods of participation as a first step include the various opportunities for acquaintance with opportunities such as: meetings at universities, career centres, round tables, etc. Secondly, young people should have a basic desire to get an internship. Employers and institutions adapt to the needs of the young people.

### *3.3.3. LCR perspective*

The educational opportunities for young people in Plovdiv FR are significant on every level of education and personal development. The already established educational structure in the FR, corresponds to the main EU frame, concerning young adults, regarding the stimulation of youth development and adaptation of young people's skills to the labour market, foster the social inclusion process. According to the conducted interviews in WP5, related to the experts' and young adults' opinion, a big gap is still existing, as well as a lack of correspondences between the educational system and the labour market. As young people do not possess the necessary skills, there is a big need of Lifelong Learning programs in order to fill the gap between the set up goals of the official educational policy and the employers' needs and expectations.

According to the National Strategy of Youth Policy and YGS rules all LLL program applicants have an equal start. This is a leading principle of the Plovdiv Labour Office experts, as well. The selection process does not regard the place of birth, ethnicity, religion, education etc. These two young people have been approved for a participation and they have equal start in the LLL programs<sup>14</sup>. Here appears the uncertainty whether they have the same approach, the same LLL path and the same results after the end of the programs.

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<sup>14</sup> These two cases are „similar enough and separate enough to permit treating them as comparable instances of the same general phenomenon“ (Barlett & Vavrus, 2017, p.27).

Persons' life trajectory is a result of different elements, as: the acquired social, cultural, ethnic and family background. The religious background is also important, as it forms the moral categories, and the personal value system. Life course is a mixture of different elements as "socioeconomic conditions, welfare provisions, and individual decisions at biographical transitions"<sup>15</sup>. The individual decisions are in line with the personal background, are the decisive factors in determining the personal life trajectory.

The following analysis of the two selected young adults' cases (Y\_BG\_P\_4, Y\_BG\_P\_5) is based on the life course information already provided in WP5.

The case of the young man (Y\_BG\_P\_4, WP5 Report) is an example for clear linear transition from education to employment where his life course gives a privilege position and the young person feels himself safe and confident for his future. In fact, these cases are not widely spread in Plovdiv. The case of the young woman (Y\_BG\_P\_5, WP5 Report) is more frequent nowadays in Plovdiv. Her gained work experience with different employers made her career trajectory a fragmented one. The two cases prove that YGS is effective for those who follow the education system and facilitates the transition from university to work. For those who get different directions during their life, the program does not orient them professionally and does not stimulate the transition from formal education to labour market.

The relation "equal start/access to the LLL program = equal results at the end of the LLL program" is not valid according to the cases of these two young people. The main difference originates in their backgrounds – the previous conditions in their life are not the same and their realization on the labour market is different. In that sense the effectiveness of the YGS can be measured through the work trajectory of the young people.

The support of young people in the small settlements and rural areas as a goal of YGS (WP3 Report)<sup>16</sup> is not reached in the young woman case (Y\_BG\_P\_5, WP5 Report). She does not have any possibilities to develop a career in her home town and she migrate to the bigger municipality of Plovdiv. There she assumes she will set up a career and will realize successfully on the labour market. This is related to the other main goal of the YGS - stimulation of economic activity and career development of young people (WP3 Report)<sup>17</sup>. In the case of the woman this goal has not been achieved too – she has a fragmentary work biography, as she was not able to develop herself as a professional.

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<sup>15</sup> Heinz, Walter. Historical Developments and Theoretical Approaches in Sociology. Vol. 1. Life Course, Dynamics. 2010. EOLSS Publisher/UNESCO.

<sup>16</sup> Young Adults\_WP3\_Bulgarian National Report, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Young Adults\_WP3\_Bulgarian National Report, p. 23.

The prevention of social exclusion of the young people (WP3 Report)<sup>18</sup> means improvement of the social services in the specialized institutions and helping people enter and integrate into the society with respect to all spheres of public life. In the individual case of Y\_BG\_P\_5 this goal is not achieved as well, due to several reasons like: she has not enough time available (she studies and works) and not enough money as well for social and cultural activities, as she has to pay the bills and the university taxes.

The analysis of the implementation of YGS in Plovdiv FR is bottom-up, and it comprises the individual and institutional level. There are two different ways at the beginning of young people's career. The first one is the institutional one where the Labour Office expert selects the applicants and distribute them to the YGS LLL programs. The second one is the personal approach where an approved young person has to prove him/her self during the LLL program in order to get a proposal for a permanent job. The first step marks a relation between the two main actors – the young person and the institution. As participants in the YGS LLL programs, the young contribute to the programs, focusing on positive and/or negative aspects, and make recommendations for their improvement. This assessment is handled to the Labour Office where the experts should direct it to the next vertical levels: regional, national and European. The process of monitoring and implementation of the YGS, and the level of effectiveness of the different LLL programs are not possible to be measured without the evaluation of each individual participant in the program.

#### **4. Emerging issues**

##### ***4.1. Functional Region Blagoevgrad***

Many essential issues faced by the implementation of the programs at regional levels have been also manifested at national level. The main reason for such a phenomena is that the education system in Bulgarian is quite centralized. Secondary education - as content, curricula and structure – is governed centrally, which means that training is conducted in accordance with unified, identical national standards in all schools around the country, regardless any local or regional specificities.

Centralization in higher education is weaker, although certain stereotypes from the past unified and centralized system still exist and still have strong influence in the educational process. Centralization (as well as unification) it is also still support to a certain extent by

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<sup>18</sup> Young Adults\_WP3\_Bulgarian National Report, p. 23.

the accreditation system of universities and higher education institutions as well as through the state funding scheme for higher education in the country. As a result of these, many problems are mirrored at both national and regional level.

Some key themes which emerge from the analysis of the young adults training practices are:

1. The mismatch between demand and supply in terms of curricula (content, methods and pedagogical approaches) and the labour market needs related to both secondary vocational and tertiary education.

Graduates from tertiary education institutions usually find jobs after graduation, but a large portion of them tend to occupy positions appropriate for people with lower or no qualification. This tendency is highly alarming that university graduates increasingly occupy work positions which do not require higher education qualification. As an example, only one third of the university diploma holders in fields like Economics, Management and Administration embark on an appropriate job vacancy, career or appointment related to their former studies. Other examples for tertiary diploma holders, who occupy positions requiring lower than tertiary qualification, are graduates from the areas of Sociology, History, Biology, Chemistry, Tourism, etc.

2. Education is theoretically oriented and somehow inconsistent with modern expectations of the employers from the well-developed or fast developing industries. There is a shortage of educational programs which equip students with skills and competences required by many fields of the contemporary labour market. In the recent decade, there has been a mismatch between supply and demand of working force with certain qualifications related specific labour niches.

3. The policies which have been studied represent a very good opportunity to include unemployed young people in the labour market as well as to gain practical experience through apprenticeship and internship programs addressed towards university students. The main problem lies in the fact that, an organization or a company where the traineeship is running, recruits only a few or none young people after completing the practical training period due to the lack of available job positions. In addition, when selecting students for participating in an internship, the decisions are taken by the organizations in which the traineeship will take place which means that often those who wish to get a workplace do not fit the requirements of the training organization.

4. Educational institutions are operating in very dynamic industry and labour market environments with fast and sometimes radical changes. Employers are looking for qualities of the working force (skills, competencies, attitudes, habits, etc.) which are also changing rapidly. Additionally, the teachers and the educational systems as a whole,

should respond to the needs for new skills and capabilities related to professions and job occupations which yet not exist. In other words, besides traditional academic knowledge, employers nowadays are looking for qualities such as creativity and emotional intelligence, as well as analytical and problem resolving competencies.

5. There is a lack of sustainable links and appropriate communication with already graduated students (i.e. alumni) who might be used as a valuable source for both improvement of curricula, respectively the study processes and the undergraduates currently pursuing their studies.

6. There is a need for utilizing more actively European as well as other foreign experience as well as good practices with already proven effectiveness and efficiency.

7. It's necessary to initiate changes in the universities education systems encouraging them to become more flexible and responsive in meeting business needs and real labour market requirements.

8. The fact that, businesses' expenditures for and investments in training intended for their employees' professional development are insignificant or entirely missing, is an issue which needs serious concerns.

#### ***4.2. Functional Region Plovdiv***

The Youth Guarantee is one of the most popular programs in the Functional Region Plovdiv, but the still remaining challenge in the region is the high share of NEET. It is necessary to made greater efforts as to empower the most deprived young people and facilitate their inclusion in the program.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee project, it is necessary to improve the quality of the services offered by this programme and increase the duration of its measures.

Greater efforts need to be invested in order to overcome the short-term commitment of employers to hire young people intending only to get extra funds from the program and tackle the problem with the lack of commitment to investing their own resources in their qualifications.

Limiting the privileged inclusion of young people with communication and good communication skills to employers and targeting support for more vulnerable young people.

The communication between the main actors is good; if conflicts arise they are quickly resolved by coordinating their behaviour. In almost all situations, problems arise due to unnecessary documentation and bureaucracy, as well as unrealistic expectations at the

beginning. It should be noted that following a change in the government rules, some companies hardly allocate human resources for mentoring.

All programs are geared to local needs. This is achieved through both the actors' communication and regular analyses of the economic and social situation of the government for the region. At launch, the training, certificates, and experience gained are directly received from local an organization, which highlights its local relevance. After completing the programs, many learners receive job offers from local companies.

All programs aim to create quality workforce among young people. This is achieved by improving their adaptability to the labour market through a number of measures aimed at fully creating human capital. This includes creating a variety of experiences, different knowledge and skills, as well as social responsibility, activity and tolerance.

Young people are recognized as the main target group of all organizations and this determines their behaviour towards active labour market integration.

Despite the efforts of the stakeholders in the Youth Guarantee a large majority of NEET remain inactive, thus indicating structural problems in the inclusion of young people in the labour market or in education. The NEET rate among ethnical minorities is very high, particularly for girls.

Although the Youth Guarantee as a European program does not have a discriminatory effect, equal pay for participants in different regions of the country leads to discrimination, because of the different socio-economic development of each part of Bulgaria.

Improving the knowledge and skills acquired in the university/school, but also the acquisition of new ones is a core issue for the social inclusion and successful labour market realization of young people in the region. The acquired skills during the education life cycle within the formal education process are insufficient for successful realization on the labor market. The focus is on the lack of practical orientation of the education courses and the inadequate preparation of the young people to cope in a real work situation. The set up goals and intentions of the YSG programs could not be achieved through the provided measures.

The acquired competences through the YGS allows young people to develop their professional career in a real working environment and to achieve the necessary experience. They receive income security for a certain period of time. Additionally, the regular incomes enable them to plan their life development, albeit in a relatively short term.

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Young Adultttt, WP5 Bulgarian National Report

Young Adulllt, WP 4 Report

Young Adulllt, WP 5 Report

Young Adulllt, WP 6 Report



**Work Package 7**  
**Regional/local Case Studies**  
**Croatian National report**

**University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education  
(UNIZG)**

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## 1. Executive summary

The aim of this report is to identify more sustainable practices and patterns of coordination in LLL policy-making at different levels with particular attention to actors, dynamics, trends, mismatches and redundancies in two Croatian functional regions. Two functional regions and two case studies are selected by means of a detailed description that integrates all the information, material, and data that were gathered in previous project's activities. The first case study (LLCG Centre Osijek) is located in the Osijek-Baranja functional region and in the labour market policies, while the second case study (Open public university Diopter) is located in the Istria functional region and in the educational policies.

The purpose of LLCG Centres is to achieve a joint goal: enhancing user competences in order to increase competitiveness and restore the balance of labour supply and demand. The LLCG Centres' objective is to increase the availability and quality of lifelong career guidance services to all Croatian citizens and to provide appropriate support to different target groups at local and regional levels. The LLCG Centre Osijek provides information on educational and employment opportunities, enabling independent search of published job vacancies, as well as the use of different online tools. In cooperation with partners and other stakeholders, through counselling, thematic workshops, lectures, presentations, seminars and panel discussions, they provide necessary information about education, employment or lifelong career planning and development possibilities. However, these activities do not lead to the alignment of the labour market needs with the education of young people. Three persons are employed in the Centre. Approximately 4000 people use the Centre's services during a year. The main challenge for career guidance counsellor is that of aligning personal ambitions of young people with local labour market opportunities and mobility possibilities, which present them with limited or unattractive choices. Even though the LLCG Centres are available to all Croatian citizens, the focus is directed to young people. Improving the work of the LLCG Centres is needed, because the insufficient capacities and infrastructure cannot meet the demands of all interested citizens in a high quality manner. The first step in that direction is to ensure that all youth can access career guidance. The second step is to develop programmes that will allow all young people (including youth in NEET status) to develop skills needed to manage their progression in learning and work through their lives. The third important step is to improve the connection between youth and labour market - career guidance programmes need to be closely and actively linked to the world of work and to post-school educational options.

The purpose of the Open Public University Diopter is to enable adults' personal development and to develop the capability of their participants so they would adapt to changing circumstances in their personal lives, in the workplace and in the community. Diopter is one of the main stakeholders in the field of transition of young adults from education to labour market and its goal is compatible with goals of other stakeholders in that field, and that is to raise young adults' employability. It is one of the 15 public open universities in Istria County, that was founded in 1995 as a private institution. Nowadays, the Diopter is the biggest private open public university in Istria functional region, that have had more than 20.000 participants since 1995 (around 100 participants per year). The Diopter has 5 persons employed and more than 50 external experts. At the moment, the Open public university Diopter is offering 40 professional training programmes and 12 programmes of re-training

and acquisition of vocational qualification. The most often type of users who come to the open public university Diopter are young women and young man who have finished vocational school, already have some working experience, even family life, and now they want to finish something more in order to get a better job. Another type of the users are people who are already working at some places and they just need a certificat to continue to work there. Programmes provided by open universities are financed by the students themselves. An exception are programmes carried out within some European projects or programmes financed by public funds designated for active youth employment policy measures. Exactly this circumstance significantly hampers the access of youth in NEET status to education, as they do not possess the resources to finance those programmes. Another problem that the Diopter is facing is a lack of cooperation between different stakeholders in the field of young adults' education and labour market. The lack of cooperation is not existing only between county and local institutions but also between different open public universities. Because the offer of programmes of different open public universities is mostly the same, the competition instead of cooperation raises between them. The cooperation between the Diopter and other stakeholders is mainly limited to the cooperation during the realization of EU projects or specific programmes. So far the Diopter has implemented 6 projects, and all of them have included young people as a target group. The Diopter is using those projects to find funds for programmes of participants who are unable to pay for their training or retraining but also to start some new-methods programmes that would be interested to young adults.

The main conclusion of the analysis of two case studies is that the mismatches between education and labour market and a lack of coordination between different institutions are important reasons that the analysing policies do not answering needs of young adults. Moreover, the slow operationalisation and implementation of strategic documents greatly contributes to the fact that youth will go on depending mostly on their parents in their life possibilities and choices, since the process of finding adequate and well-paid employment, which would contribute to their independence, is still burdened with many obstacles.

## 2. Case study 1: Lifelong Career Guidance Centre, Osijek-Baranja Functional Region

### 2.1. Short account of the case study

The Osijek-Baranja County is located in the northeastern part of Croatia in the Pannonian plain and it covers an area of 4152 km<sup>2</sup>. It occupies 7.3% of Croatian territory, which makes it the fourth largest unit of local (regional) self-government. County covers 264 villages, i.e. 42 units of local self-government. The county has a very favourable geographical position and transport infrastructure (county is crossed by over 1700 kilometres of roads and 180 kilometres of railroads). Osijek-Baranja County is mostly lowland, and its climate and soil are suitable for the development of agriculture (260.778 ha of cultivated agricultural area and 82.868 ha of forests), and that is why this part of Croatia is called the Croatian granary. Furthermore, this county is bejewelled with well-preserved environment, the thermal water sources and cultural traditions. The city of Osijek is the centre and the seat of the county.

Despite the size, good geographical location, transport links and above mentioned natural resources that give the Osijek-Baranja county a comparative advantage, the County is not competitive. On contrary, it is indicated by many problems that result in stagnation and strengthening of the regional development imbalance in Croatia (the low level of general development, low social and economic development negative migration balance, high unemployment rate, etc). One of the major problems, county is facing, is leaving rural areas and the increased migration of population in the city (urban) areas as a result of the accelerated pace of life, urbanization and globalization (Frajman-Jakšić & Drvenkar, 2010). That is why youth entering the labour market today face different challenges and politicians should find variety of ways to ensure programmes that are responsive to the needs of employers and individuals. Vocational guidance services are one of them.

In the Republic of Croatia, vocational guidance services have been systematically rendered for several decades. The Croatian Employment Service (CES) plays an important role in the field of lifelong career guidance in Croatia. The career guidance services have been continuously developed and improved, aiming at various target groups: primary and secondary school students, college students, unemployed persons, people with difficulties accessing the labour market, employers and anyone who needs help in making career choices. CES is responsible for the Lifelong Career Guidance (LLCG) Centres in Croatia. These Centres are based on the principles of accessibility and flexibility. They are offered to people in various stages of professional development. The planning and implementation of lifelong career guidance activities include partners in the fields of education, employment, social inclusion, private institutions and civil society organisations. The majority of activities are implement within the framework of state institutions and agencies, although the non-governmental sector is also included.

There are several LLCG Centres in Croatia. The Centres provide information on educational and employment opportunities, enabling independent search of published job vacancies, as well as the use of different online tools. In cooperation with partners and other stakeholders, through counselling, thematic workshops, lectures, presentations, seminars and panel discussions, they provide necessary information about education, employment or lifelong career planning and development possibilities. The LLCG Centre in Osijek is one of them. Three persons are employed in the Centre. Approximately 4000 people use the Centre's

services during a year. The activities and their users during the year 2016 are shown in **Tables 1** and **2**.

*Table 1. Users of the LLCG Centre Osijek (source: Report about the work of LLCG Centres for 2016)*

Users	Type of service	Number of users
Primary and secondary school students	Group counselling	2583
	Individual informing and counselling	35
Unemployed persons	Self-help services	1512
	Partial help services	
	Individualized services	

*Table 2. Activities of the LLCG Centre Osijek (source: Report about the work of LLCG Centres for 2016)*

Name of activity	Number of activities	Number of users
Informing of primary school students about the choice of profession	41	802
Informing of high school seniors	53	1372
Winter school of professional development – for primary school students	3	30
Informing of parents about the choice of high school	7	48
How to write a CV, job application and motivational letter?	35	79
How to present yourself at a job interview?	3	15

## 2.2. Telling the story of the LLCG Centre

### Reasoning on correspondences

“In time when country is facing high unemployment rates very often there has been a polarisation in society: relatively securely employed (older) persons (*insiders*) and the (mostly young) unemployed (*outsiders*), of whom a considerable number are the long-term unemployed, with very slim chances of finding a job” (Bejaković & Mrnjavac, 2014:4). Although Croatia has a rather serious problem regarding high youth unemployment and, consequently, high youth NEET population, everything needed for identifying young people at risk of being NEET, to reach out to NEETs and to help reintegrate them back into education or into the labour market – including reliable statistics, collaboration between different institutions, and measures in place – is rather limited.

Even though it is one of the measures of Croatian Youth Guarantee plan, there is no administrative data on the NEET population in Croatia, and there are no specific measures aimed explicitly at this population group. This means that the main institution responsible for identifying young people at the risk of unemployment and to reach out to them and help reintegrate them back into education or into the labour market is CES. CES cooperates with other institutions in this process, mainly on the local level. That is why a key function of the

LLCG Centre Osijek is coordination and cooperation with other partners (local chambers, universities, adult education institutions, schools and NGOs) in the outreach and activation of inactive NEETs in order to improve their integration into the labour market and/or education/training or into other activities aimed at increasing their employability. However, there is a lack of coordination and collaboration between institutions in charge of unemployment (CES) and the social welfare system in Croatia. Due to that, the LLCG Centre is faced with many obstacles in achieving these priorities. The following statement illustrate above mentioned problems:

*"I am not able to reach youth in NEET status without any institutional support. Youth are on the Facebook, we do not have a canal of communication with them. Our central office does not allow us to communicate with youth that way. They say that there is no need for that. Moreover, we are in some kind of the competition with the CSOs. The CSOs have projects, they receive money for their campaigns, they are on the Facebook, they give certificates to their users. We are not able to do all of that."* Street professional (WP5\_E\_OB\_F\_2).

According to the data presented in the *Report about the work of LLCG Centres for 2016*, just 4.88% of users belong to the NEET population. Without any administrative data on the NEET population, apart from those who are registered as unemployed, nobody actually knows what is the structure of this population in Croatia, what are their reasons for inactivity, if they are experiencing some kind of "reduced working ability", if they receive some kind of non-work-related benefit and similar. Reaching out to the part of the NEET population who are not registered at CES should be put higher on the agenda of policy makers, since this group is highly vulnerable and probably has more need for the help in acquiring skills or searching for a job (*Labour market information in lifelong guidance, 2016*).

The LLCG Centre offers its services for free based upon the identified needs of the Osijek-Baranja County and promotes and/or delivers career development services to a wide range of stakeholders, from elementary and high school students and their parents to the unemployed and job seekers and to career counsellors. However, the majority of 'clients' who received support through some form of counselling/coaching since its establishment are young people at the age of 15 to 24. The goal is to provide guidelines for successful career planning for the young people based on the assessment of their potentials and interests as well as to develop and upgrade their career management skills. In reality, young people use other sources of support for career counselling, like friends or family members.

*"My grandmother said to me that I will never find a job with philosophy and I see now that she has right."* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_7)

*"My mother is a nurse, and since childhood all I can remember is that she was working all the time, and I remember me going with her to the work, and that is why I started to love it to be in the hospital"* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_4)

*"Both of my sisters went to gymnasium. I felt the pressure and thought that my obligation is to finish the same type of school. They both were excellent students. .... My sisters are my role models. One of my sisters went to gay pride and I went also. I learnt from my sisters much more than in school"* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_1)



Despite the Strategy for Lifelong Career Guidance in the Republic of Croatia 2016 - 2020, guidance and counselling in the primary and general secondary education (general grammar schools) are not properly elaborated and defined at the national, regional or local level. Except for the National Framework Curriculum, it is still inadequately mentioned in the Primary and Secondary School Education Acts, the Vocational Education Act or in the Adult Education Act. Professional orientation is introduced through operational programmes of in-class education and within the contents of additional and supplementary courses and extra-curricular activities. Career guidance services are provided by non-teaching staff (school pedagogues, psychologists, etc.) as part of their duties, while partnership-based models apply including various national stakeholders. Activities of the LLCG Centre are one of them, because this institution organises lectures and workshops in collaboration with schools to inform pupils on professions, qualifications and available educational paths. Lot of young people do not use this kind of services:

*"I know that something like that exist, but I did not use such support. Maybe I used to participate in some activities of the Centre, but I did not know. Now I do not have enough time for that."* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_7).

Youth and professionals agree that activities of the LLCG Centre are insufficient, because of a great mismatch in the number of people entering the record of unemployment and open work places, as well as because of incompatibility of skills/competences acquired through education and needs of the labour marked. That is readable from the following statement:

*"This communication with the counsellor has become like some formality for me. I send him an e-mail with the list of all job calls that I have applied for and I make clear that I didn't get any of those",* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_3).

Little connection exist between the number of people who are enrolled in educational programmes and the labour market demand for graduates of such programmes. The consequences of that situation are over-qualification and under-qualification of youth for first offered job after the finishing of education. Matković (2011) showed in his research that for 42% of youth their first job does not correspond with their field of previous education (for example, professor of psychology works as a secretary).

The CES (Osijek branch) recognized the need to increase the number of enrolled students of three-year vocational schools for the following professions: mason, carpenter, locksmith, sheet metal worker, woodworker, chimneysweeper and machinist. Further on, their recommendation is to decrease the number of enrolled students in the following three-year educational programmes: salesperson, hairdresser, photographer, baker and confectioner. Those recommendations where made based on the experiences of the CES (Osijek branch), at the end of 2016, for planning of educational programmes in 2017. Even with such clear recommendations, according to the Plan of student enrolment in programmes of three-year vocational schools in 5 craft schools in Osijek-Baranja functional region, 56 students (out of 232) are planned to be enrolled in the educational programme for hairdresser, 20 of them for baker and 12 of them for photographer. Inclusive, 40% of future students will be enrolled in educational programmes that are recognized by the CES as unnecessary professions for Osijek-Baranja functional region at the moment. On the other hand, only 14% of future students will be enrolled in educational programmes recognized as wanted in Osijek-Baranja

County: 6 mechanics, 6 carpenters, 8 locksmiths and 12 woodworkers. At the same time, employees in the CES are faced with ...

*“... the mismatch between skills supply and skills demand. Moreover, the quality of people that have higher degree of education is questionable. The structure of unemployed people each year is getting worse. We have around 30% of unemployed people who have had finished just elementary school. 20% of them are young people.”* Manager (WP6\_E\_OB\_F\_2).

The LLCG Centre tries to overcome these mismatches by using experiences of older youth in a way where employed people inform students, students inform high school pupils and high school pupils inform primary school pupils. The Centre is also working on the improvement of partnership with different stakeholders (during the year 2016, 26 new agreements were signed). However, these activities do not lead to the alignment of the labour market needs with the education of young people. The main challenge for career guidance counsellor is that of aligning personal ambitions of young people with local labour market opportunities and mobility possibilities, which present them with limited or unattractive choices:

*“First, people who finish secondary school often choose 'wrong' occupations, for which they are do not have any interest. Because of that, we need more aspects of career counselling. Wrong choice of the profession has effects to the dissatisfaction with life. Many young people today do not think how the mismatch between profession and interests can affect their life.”* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_8)

The question that arises from such a situation is: “Can one small institution with three employers, despite the support of CES, overcome all problems?”. It is difficult to answer positively to this question, especially when young people are extremely unsatisfied with their life circumstances. It comes from the following conclusions of the analysis of interviews with young adults:

- almost all of the interviewed young adults highlighted the support from their family as an important or key point in their development and in facing problems in their life
- half of the interviewed young adults have negative feelings towards secondary school
- all young adults highlighted their will to find a job and their readiness to leave Croatia in order to find a job
- most of the young adults are unemployed, regardless the achieved level of their education (they are unable to become autonomous in their personal life, and therefore they still live with one or both parents)
- they are not informed about their opportunities and they do not expect anything from the CES and the LLCG Centre
- if young adults want to get retraining or training, they usually need to pay it for themselves.

## Reasoning on implementation

The CES is the founder of LLCG Centres all over Croatia. The LLCG Centres are based on a partnership approach that is integrated in all of the Centre's activities: user outreach, service provision, knowledge exchange and upgrade of the LLCG system. Between the years 2014 and 2016, 187,500 € from national funds, and 1,062,500 € from European funds were allocated for the establishment of LLCG Centres. From July 2013, when the first eight LLCG Centres were set up, to 31 December 2015, 110,713 users accessed the Centres' services. These include:

- 43,064 primary and secondary school pupils (39%)
- 44,504 unemployed people (40%)
- 23,145 others (employed people and job seekers, students, employers, parents, career counsellors, etc.; 21%).

The LLCG Centre Osijek provides services to clients based upon their identified needs and their willingness for making decisions regarding their career. The Centres provide triage support at three main levels of support: self-help services, brief assisted services and individual case managed services (**Figure 1**). Besides, Centre provides coaching the clients and knowledge bases on career guidance and staff training.



Figure 1. LLCG Centre career guidance services system (source: *Lifelong Career Guidance in Croatia*, 2014)

The approach to career guidance services is based on the so-called „tiered system“, i.e. starting from the objective that the largest number of users should be informed (through group or individual informing, self-informing, computer software “My Choice” etc.). A smaller number of users is included into group counselling and the smallest number of users undergoes the entire procedure of psychological and medical evaluation, which is the most demanding and requires the maximum of financial and human resources. The activities of

informing and counselling of young, i.e. first job seekers and of secondary school leavers are continuously performed. The most common types of services are group and individual informing, counselling, assistance in self-employment, organisation of an internal labour exchange etc., including workshops for arising career management skills.

*“Practically, we work with the ones we can work with the most, so around 75% of our users are primary school and high school pupils, as well as university students.”* Street professional, WP5\_E\_OB\_F\_2

Professional informing provides pupils/students and their parents with the information relevant for their decision-making regarding further education, i.e. planning of their further career development. Through group informing, the users obtain the information on employment opportunities in certain trades, educational programmes, financial support and services provided by other educational/employment institutions.

“Moj izbor” (My Choice, <http://www.cisok.hr/moj-izbor>) is a computer software for lifelong career guidance, used in the Employment Service regional offices, schools and other organisations. It has been developed for the users aged 13 and above: primary school pupils, secondary school students, unemployed persons, employed persons considering the change of career and all other who are interested in various job information. The software includes a database of occupations, information on education and employment opportunities, as well a possibility for self-assessment through an interactive questionnaire. In addition to this, different brochures, leaflets, web pages and online social media are used more extensively by the CES in order to reach out to young people. Although mainly intended for sharing information about different programmes and initiatives, there is a possibility for young people to ask questions, especially through the CES Facebook page.

Group career counselling of the unemployed/job seekers is performed for the purpose of improving the skills of active job seeking.

*“Our idea is to start a circle, so we have some employed people who can say something to students and the students can inform high school pupils. We succeed at that through a smaller project called Lively libraries, so they can be available to high school pupils and they talk to each other in smaller groups. The response of pupils is good.”* Street professional (WP5\_E\_OB\_F\_2)

Individual career counselling with evaluations of working and personal abilities of the unemployed is performed with the aim of employment, education and referring to professional rehabilitation. Counselling is provided by a career guidance counsellor, most often a psychologist or some other specially educated expert for the work with certain groups of the unemployed. A physician, specialising in occupational medicine, may also be included in the counselling procedure.

*„The goal of the LLCG Centre is to cover as many pupils as possible through workshops and lectures, and as few as possible through 1 on 1 counselling because that is expensive. We use the reverse funnel model - from workshops to a couple of them that come to individual conversations.”* Street professional (WP5\_E\_OB\_F\_2)

It is possible to use the computer at the Centre to write applications and CVs and to search for vacancies. In order to improve the availability of career guidance services to all citizens of

the Republic of Croatia, the establishment of such Centres has been planned outside the premises of the CES. However, young people do not use that possibility too often:

*"I do not see that counselling can improve my presentation in the CV"* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_3)

According to the data presented in the *Report about the work of LLCG Centres for 2016*, the Centre had 7,122 users during the year. A majority of them were younger than 19 years (50%), while just 10% of all users are young adults (aged between 20 and 29 years). At the same time, a majority of users are still in the process of education, while around 12% of users achieved ISCED level 3 and ISCED level 5.1 of education.

During the year, the LLCG Centre Osijek organised 216 group activities (with 2,583 users in total). Other activities (individual counselling, for example) included 4,539 users. Just 133 (1.8%) users were in NEET status. The users' satisfaction with the service is very high: 95.6% of the users are satisfied or very satisfied with the provided services. The main outcomes of the activities of the Centre are:

- career guidance services are delivered to new clients which are not included in services by some other institutions
- new partnerships are set up
- public awareness about the importance of career guidance services is raised
- better cooperation and coordination of the organizations in sector of employment, education and social inclusion is established.

The LCG Centre Osijek is facing need to identify priorities in delivering services and to make balance with the resources available (human resources, financing and other). Motivating partners to take place in LLCG activities could sometimes be an issue. Finally, there could be some challenges in creating (new) services according to the local needs.

All the actors involved in regional LLL policy development, with an emphasis on content and type of skills, recognize the importance of more intensive and allied cooperation between educational institutions and the real economy. However, until now, there have only been a few examples of good practice of such cooperation. The development of new programmes and the adaptation of existing curricula to the needs of the labour market represents a great challenge in Osijek-Baranja County. Even so, the interviewed actors are recognizing difficulties and even lack of will to cooperate on early mentioned issues:

*"...we used to get enquiries from schools and from the County to give suggestions about the necessary professions. Although it was all just a formality... Today, we are not even asked any more. ... The system of education, both its secondary and tertiary sector, does not meet the needs of the labour market. The Employment Service sends a list of scarce professions to secondary schools and to the University. However, the problem is that the university is autonomous ... and secondary schools are under the jurisdiction of the County, and the head teachers are in most cases not proactive."* Manager (WP6\_E\_OB\_F\_2)

*“An association comes by and they want to do that job, I know that they can’t do it thoroughly the way we do because to the other association, it is more of a field trip. They do not have the necessary knowledge, they just earn money and that’s it. It’s pitiful that the county provides financial resources for all kinds of associations’ projects while we offer the same thing for free, continuously.... We must take care of how we do that to not seem like we are starting a competition to schools that do it professionally.”* Street professional (WP5\_E\_CRO\_OB\_2)

*“I do not see myself in Osijek, unfortunately. Maybe even not in Croatia. It all depends how many foreign languages I will learn. I speak English very well, but I need to learn some other languages, like German or Chinese. I mean, I love Osijek, I love Croatia, I would love to live here, but situation is just getting worse. When I see that you can just get a job by ‘knowing someone’, I have no illusions that I would get job any time soon.”* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_7)

Above mentioned statements indicate that there is a lack of dialogue between all actors in the field of education and employment of young adults, which is leading to the discrepancy between former students’ qualifications and labour market needs. That is the main reason for a bad economic situation in the region that lead to the high emigration rate of youth from the region. If they are not able to leave Croatia, they work as season workers in the Croatian touristic region (for example, in Istria County).

The LLL policies, including the sample of the LLCG Centre in Osijek, do not meet the needs of young adults and are not able to answer on their educational, private and professional circumstances. Making the Youth Guarantee a reality can overcome this gap, but it require well-targeted public investment. Also, developing and delivering a Youth Guarantee scheme requires strong cooperation between all the key stakeholders: public authorities, public employment services, career guidance providers, education & training institutions, youth support services, business, non-governmental sector, employers, trade unions, etc.

For the moment, we have many wishes (involved in the national LLL strategy plans and documents), but we are still missing the implementation of the activities that would lead to the realisation of these wishes. In the meantime, youth are looking for their future outside of the region and outside of Croatia.

### Reasoning on originalities

Early evaluation (Tomić, 2015) of LLCG Centres services suggests that the decentralisation and democratisation of career guidance in Croatia has had wider impacts on regional development as well as that that professional practice is developing new and creative approaches. „As education and employment policies seek to widen choices and to create systems that can respond to varying needs across the lifespan, career guidance becomes increasingly important for LLL policy. And public policy is important for career guidance: it sets the frameworks for it, and provides most of its funds“ (OECD, 2004:7). In this context, the LLCG Centre in Osijek-Baranja County should provide services that develop career management skills and ensure a greatly widened access for citizens to career guidance, extending access through the lifespan. “Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves.



Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and making it available when and where people need it.“ (OECD, 2003:41). The importance of LLCG Centre arises from its capacity to:

- improve the efficiency of labour markets and education systems
- support key policy objectives ranging from lifelong learning to social equity
- enable people to build human capital and employability throughout their lives.

Need for career counselling also derives from different life circumstances of young people. Some of them are:

*“I have not been a good student. I did not like to learn.”* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_2)

*“Students in Croatia are just passive observers in the class. Professors are authority, and nobody asks students for their opinions.”* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_5)

*“I feel so disorientated. I feel like a boat without a course for the first time in my life.”* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_5)

*“In secondary school I wasn’t that good student as in the 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.”* Young adult (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_6)

In order to analyse the LLCG Centre initiative, we need to put it into the context of the overall characteristics of the labour market in the functional region, as well as of the national career education and vocational guidance system. As is already mentioned, career guidance has still not been properly elaborated in the Croatian education related legislation. The LLCG Centres are the only institution in the field of lifelong guidance. There is no unified approach to the development of the required professional competences of guidance practitioners neither in the educational nor employment sector.

Moreover, the professional worker in the LLCG Centre Osijek mentioned different problems in its work:

*“... a great problem lies in the fact that we were founded exclusively by CES, yet 50% of my users are pupils. I don’t have a way to follow those pupils, to keep a record of what I am doing. You have no idea of the problems I encounter when I go to a school to gather the OIB numbers of pupils. Some share the information, while some don’t.*

*... An association comes by and they want to do that job, I know that they can’t do it thoroughly the way we do because to the other association, it is more of a field trip. They do not have the necessary knowledge, they just earn money and that’s it. It’s pitiful that the county provides financial resources for all kinds of associations’ projects while we offer the same thing for free, continuously.... We must take care of how we do that to not seem like we are starting a competition to schools that do it professionally.”* Street professional (WP5\_E\_CRO\_OB\_2)

There is a need for public employment and career guidance services to be familiar with employers' needs in their area so that they can offer accurate information and appropriate advice to young people, but also to employers and educational opportunity providers. To achieve this goal, big changes in the culture of collaboration among different local and regional services should be made. However, the functional region (as well as Croatia as a whole) is still faced with:

- fragmentation of some career guidance services (for example, those in schools, universities, non-governmental sector)
- lack of database about labour market activity of youth
- lack of infrastructure that would be responsive to different groups of young people and also to the changing needs of an individual
- limited resources that restrain access to a developmental process for all young people whilst in school or through their young adult lives.

A few more questions should be addressed in the conceptualisation of LLL policies and LLCG Centre in the Osijek-Baranja County:

- Does the approach of LLCG meet the needs of the County, youth and employers in the connection of different policies, individual talents and interests of youth with the labour market skills demand?
- How is it possible to improve the ways that the LLCG Centre is governed and co-ordinated?
- Does the LLCG Centre have enough capacity to offer their services to different uses, including youth in NEET status?

## 2.3. Case analysis according to the different perspectives

### Case analysis from the CPE perspective

With the aim of activating and reaching the greatest possible number of young people, in November 2014 Croatia adopted the Youth Guarantee and launched an extensive national campaign for promoting the Youth Guarantee and measures for promoting youth employment<sup>1</sup>.

The Youth Guarantee represents a structural reform that will enable quick activation for young people aged 15-30 within four months of leaving education system or losing employment in order to stay connected to the labour market and avoid long-term unemployment or inactivity. The document refers to a good-quality offer of an employment, a traineeship, an apprenticeship or continued education. Pursuant to the Youth Guarantee, the following priority areas of action have been identified: employment; continued education; apprenticeship and traineeship; entrepreneurship. It contains a complete description of the

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<sup>1</sup> The promotion has been applied in continuity as of November 2014; so far it was held in 20 towns/cities throughout Croatia. Further, Internet website "Youth Guarantee" was created in November 2014 as the central information portal at which employers and young people can have quick access to all information relating to education, work and employment and other possibilities of support available to them when choosing a career or entering the labour market.



reforms and measures that should be implemented in order to establish a support system and facilitate the transition from education to work and to establish a Youth Guarantee system. Special emphasis is placed on:

- high quality career guidance for youth
- lifelong education
- counselling and youth empowerment
- activities aimed at remaining in school and
- the development of youth services by the CES, especially regarding support to employment and mediation, on-the-job training programmes, traineeship and apprenticeship, the support for youth self-employment, further development of measures tailored to the specific needs of youth and building capacities of stakeholders on the local labour market.

During the first period of the Youth Guarantee (2014 - 2015) Croatia has been allocated ESF funds. They were used for strengthening CES, non-governmental sector, social partners and chamber associations to work with young people through the:

- strengthening the system of vocational guidance and monitoring system of labour market needs
- development of innovative approaches in activation of NEET groups
- development of local action plans for youth employment and
- development of support system to traineeships, on-the-job trainings, apprenticeships, etc.

The ESF part for the Youth Guarantee in the programming period for 2014-2020 amounts EUR 66,35 million.

Among other programmes and measures, the Youth Guarantee predicts a biggest vocational and career guidance reform at the national level. It includes the establishment of a Forum for lifelong professional guidance and career development, which should support promotion of mutual learning activities at national, regional and local level and further development of efficient policies, measures and activities aimed at development of top-quality vocational and career guidance. The LLCG Centres are important institutions that should answer on abovementioned aspect of the Youth Guarantee plan.

The LLCG Centres provide space and trained professionals to all stakeholders in creating and delivering support to unemployed youth, especially in career choice, in a individualized manner (small working groups or individual). The purpose of LLCG Centres is to achieve a joint goal: enhancing user competences in order to increase competitiveness and restore the balance of labour supply and demand. The LLCG Centres' objective is to increase the availability and quality of lifelong career guidance services to all Croatian citizens and to provide appropriate support to different target groups at local and regional levels.

Besides the Youth Guarantee, there are a lot of European and national documents and institutions that are involved in life long career guidance activities. The most important documents are shown in **Table 3**.

*Table 3. Documents connected with the LLCG Centres (source: Strategy for Lifelong Career Guidance in the Republic of Croatia 2016-2020)*

European	National
Two Resolutions of the Education Council (2004; 2008) have highlighted the need for strong guidance throughout one's lifetime so that citizens can acquire education and career management skills and the transitions between and within both education/training and work.	The 2015 National Reform Programme describes measures undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Croatia in order to resolve structural challenges faced by the Republic of Croatia, in accordance with the recommendations of the Council of the European Union from July 2014.
Guidelines for Policies and System Development for Lifelong Guidance: A Reference Framework for the EU and for the Commission The guidelines were adopted in February 2015. The aim of the Guidelines is to help improve the quality and efficacy of the career management of all EU citizens.	The aim of the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology is to build a system for identifying, encouraging and developing individuals' competences and potential and to reinforce LLCG service providers.
The Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training from 2015 defines new priorities aimed at reforming the education systems of EU Member States. The goal of this Strategy is to encourage Member States to take measures that will ensure that young people acquire the skills and competences required for the labour market with an emphasis on entrepreneurial and other transversal skills.	Croatian Qualification Framework is a mechanism that links the labour market to education. It establishes quality foundations, procedures and capacities for creating occupational and qualification standards in order to implement and develop a CROQF system for developing competitiveness in the Republic of Croatia.
The "New skills for new jobs" initiative - The goal of this initiative of the European Commission is to develop efficient ways to analyse and anticipate skills that will be required for future labour markets and use that knowledge for developing an education system that will enable citizens to acquire the required skills.	The Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia 2008-2013 recognised the importance of the continued harmonization of education with labour market needs.

Croatia's participation in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network has established a strong foothold for the development of the LLCG Centres in the Republic of Croatia. The Croatian Employment Service (CES) is responsible for carrying out systematic and organised LLCG activities in the employment system in Croatia.

Apart from CES, other relevant lifelong learning career guidance stakeholders in Croatia are: the Ministry of Economy Labour and Entrepreneurship in cooperation with the Ministry of the Science and Education, the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, the Agency for Science and Higher Education, Education and the Teacher Training Agency, as well as educational institutions, employers, private companies, social welfare agencies, etc.

### Case analysis from the GOV perspective

If not well co-ordinated between different stakeholders and different levels of government, career information can become quite fragmented and non-transparent, making it difficult for people to access. „This has implications for both geographical and social mobility.

Fragmented career information might suit existing administrative boundaries, but it fails to reflect the types of information that people need to make career decisions. In addition to a lack of integration, common weaknesses in career information include:

- a failure to include information on labour market supply and demand; delays in capturing changes in the content of occupations or in identifying new occupations
- the absence of information on the destinations and labour market outcomes of those completing courses of education and training
- a greater emphasis upon educational information than upon occupational and labour market information
- and weak links between these two key information domains.“ (OECD, 2004:10).

In Croatia, the responsibility for the connection of institutions responsible for the skills formation and the skills use markets lies on the regional authorities. Their role is to ensure availability of the educational institutions, which answer to the individual and labour market needs. The regional and local authorities are also responsible for the implementation of national legislation and policies at the local and regional level. The relative abundance of educational possibilities in Osijek-Baranja County (and in the skills formation) does not automatically ensure their relevance for the labour market (the skills use markets).

There are a number of obstacles in effective delivery of LLCG Centre to support young people through their career:

- high level of centralisation of the system
- lack of systematic education of Centre staff and few opportunities for creativity and initiatives
- lack of a system of information which would permit the availability of information and its exchange
- underdeveloped protocols of cooperation between institutions from different sectors, more precisely, from the education sector and the job market
- mutual competition among different actors in lifelong career guidance activities.

The workers of this centre do not take part in decision making processes and they aren't familiar with the policies that the LLCG Centre contributes to, with the exception of the Youth Guarantee. Systematic evaluation hasn't been developed. Regular statistics about activities and users are being kept, without insight in the possible results of these activities. Along with the lack of evaluation, there is also a lack of databases about the needs of the job market, its connection with the available educational programmes and other data which could enable an objective view on the needs of the job market (that are connected with planning of young people's careers). Improving the work of the LLCG Centres is needed, because the insufficient capacities and infrastructure cannot meet the demands of all interested citizens in a high quality manner. Enhancing cooperation between the Centres, primary and secondary schools, and other relevant institutions at the local level would enable systematic student monitoring, recognition of their abilities, interests and other relevant factors for career choices and development.

An *Intergovernmental Body for Labour Market Monitoring* was set up in 2010, which has a threefold remit:

- to develop a system for monitoring the labour market and forecasting educational needs

- to define and implement a career counselling system to provide advice at all levels of education
- to promote cooperation between the education system and the labour market.

It advises public authorities and educational institutions on issues related to the labour market, initiates legislation in the relevant areas, and adapts guidelines and recommendations for the activities of all stakeholders in these areas. Certain aspects of guidance are also conducted by private agencies and non-governmental associations, mostly in connection with job placement and with the organisation of different programmes of education and vocational training, and rarely with general guidance and career counselling. Unfortunately, the role of this body is not recognised and does not have any influence on the real coordination among stakeholders in the education and labour market system in the region.

The regional authorities do not offer any kind of support to the LLCG Centre Osijek, even though without co-operation with all regional and local stakeholders the Centre will not be able to improve their work and outcomes. Representatives of education and training providers, employers, trade unions, community agencies, students, parents, consumers, and career guidance practitioners need to be included not only in programme delivery, but also more strategically, in providing advice and in helping to set the policy goals and frameworks for the LLCG Centre, including better evidence and data of impact of the LLCG Centre Osijek.

Regional governance could also assist the Centre in funding their activities, by supporting wider use of ESF in the common project that would fulfil the needs of this specific region. Moreover, different local and regional stakeholders should help in the improvement of transparency of the LLCG Centre activities and outcomes.

### Case analysis from the LCR perspective

In Osijek-Baranja functional region there is a variety in the offer of levels and educational programmes, different secondary schools, open universities and one university. However, there is lack of cooperation among educational programme providers at different levels of educational system. The lack of cooperation is visible also between educational actors and actors of regional labour market. Although all interviewed persons highlight the importance of cooperation, there is still no systematic manner connecting different actors. Such a situation causes:

- illogical decisions regarding the amount of student quota for different educational programmes at the level of secondary and/or higher education; and also
- institutions involved in student career choices counselling are lacking important, evidence and experience based information about regional labour market needs.

The existing secondary education programmes/curricula, higher education programmes and lifelong learning programmes only partly respond to the needs of the labour market. The relatively poorly developed culture of cooperation between educational institutions and the business sector in curricula development in Osijek–Baranja County leads to:

- an insufficient offer of educational programmes that respond to the labour market skills or competences demands
- employers are not satisfied with knowledge and skills of young people gained through their education, and they are not willing to employ them without experience.

If young adults want to gain skills after or out of the regular education system, the problem they are facing is financing. Programmes in open universities, part-time studies, postgraduate studies are financed by the students themselves. Another problem, noticed by interviewed people, in the concept of lifelong learning and retraining of young adults, is their lack of motivation often caused by disbelief that those educational acts will lead them to employment.

According to the last census held in spring of 2011, Croatia had 739.461 young people aged 15-29 years (17.3% of the population), of which 505.835 young people aged 15-24 years (11.8% of the population). Size of the group of young people will be greatly reduced through the next decade, given that the census showed only 652.428 children aged 0-14 years. The youth unemployment rate in Croatia was high even during the prosperous years of the last decade, and the recent crisis and rising unemployment affected youth even more. Youth aged 15-24 account for between 16% and 25% of the unemployed, and youth aged 15-29 make up between 29% and 39% of all unemployed. Inactivity due to participation in education is a desirable outcome for this age group, so proportion of youth who are not in education, training or employment is much more relevant (NEET status).

Osijek-Baranja County is one of the regions with the highest unemployment rate in Croatia. In addition, the highest rate of unemployed persons in Osijek-Baranja County is among youth aged between 20-24 and youth aged between 25-29<sup>2</sup>. Around 3,000 unemployed people each summer go to seasonal work in the coastal region. Half of them are young adults. Further on, there is almost 30% of the unemployed people that have finished only compulsory schooling or not even that. Around 20% of them are young adults. The great problem is that the price of work is low, average salary is 30% lower than Croatia average. At the same time, costs of life are high. These circumstances highlighted the importance of cooperation among actors and institutions with different level of responsibility (national, regional and local) for the skills formation and the skills use markets. The County had been devastated during the war in 1991. The last fighting had taken place in 1995, and the region was only re-integrated into Croatia at the beginning of 1998. Previously, the region had been one of the most prosperous parts of the former Yugoslavia, but its GDP fell by 70% during the war. Since then, Osijek-Baranja region has been stagnating.

Osijek-Baranja County is not a region that 'is a bit late' in development compared to other regions, but it seriously falls behind in almost every area of development. Standard of living is much lower in relation to other Croatian regions, so that younger population is increasingly migrating toward other regions or foreign countries. According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2017), 36,436 persons emigrated from Croatia in the year 2016. Among them, 27.38% are young adults (persons aged from 15 to 29 years). The largest negative total net migration of population was recorded in the County of Osijek-Baranja (-3,952). Around 50%

<sup>2</sup> According to CES, 21% of all unemployed people in 2017 are youth (*Monthly Statistics Bulletin, 2017*). The total number of unemployed youth, compared with the year 2016 has decreased due to the emigration of young people (they left the region or Croatia).

of the young adults which went abroad are educated people, who had jobs here, but they left because of low salaries.

Therefore, taking a long-term view, those problems will reflect on serious social-economic structural problems that affect the life of youth in the region. An example of the way in which the LLCG Centre can affect the life course of young persons is shown here:

One interviewed young man chose his high school based on his sister's experience, because he did not have an idea about what he would like to do in life. He did not have a clear picture of what he would like to study and he tried with different study programmes. He was studying history because of his own interest, but pedagogy because of pragmatic reasons. In 2015, when he graduated, after a month he started a professional training without employment programme for school counsellor in an elementary school. He believes that young people during their education do not have enough practical work. His perception is that even after 5 years of university education they still aren't ready to start working. However, he stressed that this professional training is not a 'real' job (*"That is not an employment, so therefore that is not any sureness for a person."* (WP5\_Y\_OB\_F\_7). He believes that he received much more knowledge and skills for working in a school during the one-year professional training than by 6 years of university education. He is, as many highly educated Croatian young people, disappointed with the Croatian society, especially with the quality of education and nepotism. If someone doesn't offer him a good job opportunity, he will leave Croatia.

The LLCG Centre did not succeed in helping this person in his career choice, and it did not succeed in increasing his employment opportunity, because he was not informed about the possibilities that the Centre offers. It leads to the conclusion that more effort is needed to improve the impact of the LLCG Centre on the life course of youth. The first step in that direction is to ensure that all youth can access career guidance. The second step is to develop programmes that will allow all young people (including youth in NEET status) to develop skills needed to manage their progression in learning and work through their lives. The third important step is to improve the connection between youth and labour market - career guidance programmes need to be closely and actively linked to the world of work and to post-school educational options.

As is already mentioned, the weakest component of the LLCG Centre is the work with youth in NEET status. Working with them means to find a way to reach them, and that leads to the need of using outreach approaches. Moreover, this work implies a highly individualised approach, looking after young people's personal and social needs, as well as their educational and vocational guidance needs. It is obvious that policy-makers should pay more attention to the promotion of the LLCG Centre and ensure that its work will be based on a high quality career information.



### 3. Case study 2: Open Public University Dipter, Istria Functional Region

#### 3.1. Short account of the case study

Istria County is situated in the north-west coast of the Adriatic Sea and includes a large part of the Istrian peninsula. The County is surrounded by the sea, except for its northern borders that are close to two big cities, Trieste in Italy and Rijeka in Croatia. Rivers, lakes and underground waters represent significant water resources for the Istria County. One third of the Istrian peninsula is covered with woods. Administratively, the Istria County consist of 41 territorial units of local self-government: 10 towns and 31 municipalities.

Within Istria County, the rapid growth of some urban areas has caused further disruption and differences between the towns and the countryside. This is especially emphasized in the relationship between coastal towns and inland Istria. Such cases are evident in the richer and more developed coastal area, compared with the less developed and poorer rural inland. Istria County is one of the more entrepreneurial and economically better developed regions in Croatia. With 214 thousand inhabitants, amounting to 4.8% of the population of Croatia, and almost 7,200 registered business entities, Istria County accounts for 9.16% of the total number of Croatian entrepreneurs. Istrian economy is diverse. The leading activities are manufacturing industry, tourism, and trade. Other important economic sectors are construction, real estate and business services.

According to the Strategy of education, science and technology (2014) lifelong learning refers to all activities aimed at the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values during one's lifetime (either through their acquisition or improvement), in the context of personal, social or professional development. Such a comprehensive concept covers learning at all stages of life and in all forms. It includes programmes of formal education, non-formal education, as well as incidental and spontaneous acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values through non-formal and informal learning. Lifelong learning represents the basis for personal development and for capacity building of individuals to continuously adapt to changing circumstances in their personal lives, in the workplace and in the community.

In Croatia, the percentage of people enrolled in adult education is significantly lower than the EU average. In 2015 there were only 3.1% of adults (age 25-64) participating in the adult education programmes (ISCED 0-8), while the EU average is 10.7% (Eurostat, 2015).

The main providers of LLL education are local institutions for adult learning called public open universities in the Republic of Croatia. The open public universities can be founded by local self-government units and legal or physical persons with the purpose of providing primary and secondary education of adults, professional development, training and retraining of youth, outside the formal system of education (Public Open University Act, 2010). At the moment, according to the data of the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education<sup>3</sup> there are around 200 open public universities, and they are offering around 300 primary-school programmes, and over 9000 secondary-school programmes. There are also several private open universities.

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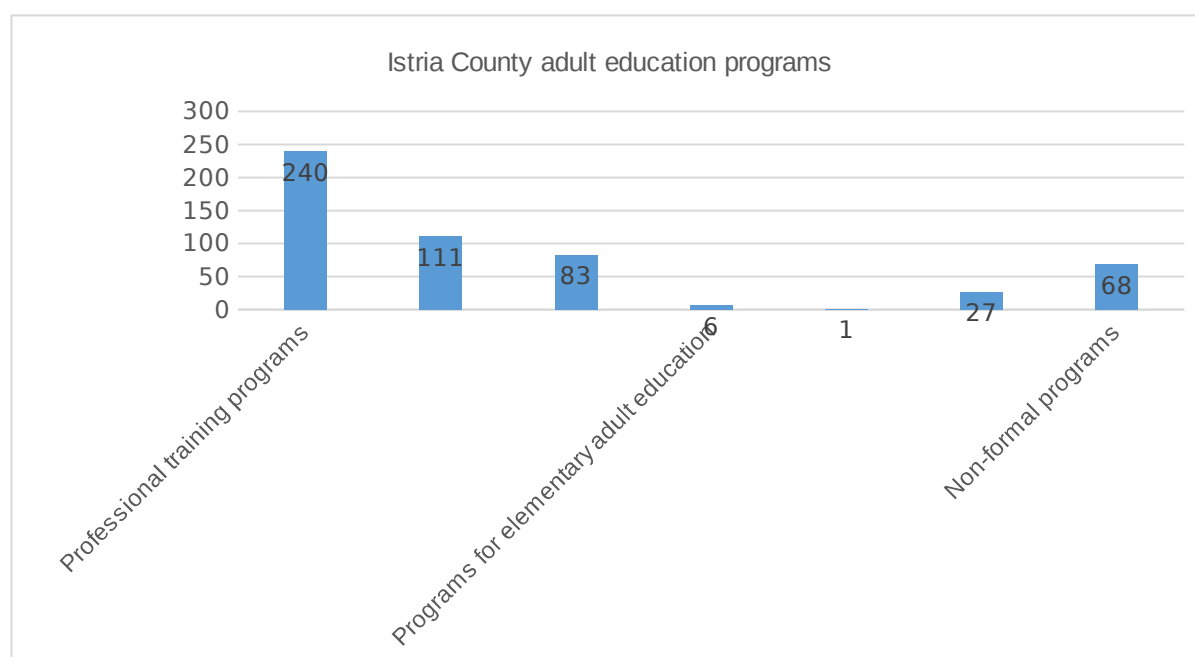
3 <http://www.asoo.hr/>, searched 18th December 2017

In Istria County there are 15 public open universities, which offer more than 500 different adult education programmes. These institutions deal with all kinds of adult learning including both formal and non-formal education. Their programmes vary from basic education and literacy to secondary-school courses, occupational retraining courses, foreign language courses, computer technology, general education and cultural courses. Istria County offers a large number of programmes for re-qualification and the acquisition of secondary-school qualification, foreign language learning programmes and informal programmes (*Policy Mapping, Review and Analysis – Croatia, 2016, Domović & Bouillet, 2016*).

Open public university Diopter is one of the public open universities situated in the Istria County. It was founded in 1995 as a private institution. At the beginning of their work Diopter carried out training for safety at work. Nowadays, Diopter is the biggest private open public university in Istria Functional Region with more than 20.000 participants since 1995 (around 100 participants per year). Diopter has 5 persons employed and more than 50 external experts.

In Istria Functional Region, in the field of adult education, there are 15 Open Public Universities, 8 secondary schools that are offering additional programmes of training and qualifications, and 1 primary school offering literacy programmes.

**Figure 2** shows the number of adult education programmes in the existing institutions.



*Figure 2 Programmes of adult education in Istria County (Policy Mapping, Review and Analysis – Croatia, 2016)*

At the moment, the open public university Diopter<sup>4</sup> is offering following programmes:

- *Professional training programmes:* Lawnmower operator, Grader operator, Web designer, Computer operator, Masons trade training, Roofer training, Scaffolding training for constructions, Bartender training, Reinforcing Steel Installer training, CAD specialist,

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.diopter.hr/programi-osposobljavanja>, searched on 14th December 2017



Hardwood floor layer training, Olive grower training, Chainsaw operator training, Excavator operator, Concrete pump and mixer operator, Compressor machinery and compressor operator, Vibratory compactor operator, Roller operator, Dumper operator, Scraper operator, Tile setter training, Sommelier training, Winegrower and vintner training, Computer graphics designer training, Terazzo worker and finisher training, Accountant, Crane operator, Forklift operator, Loader operator, Bridge crane operator, Portal crane operator, Auto crane operator, Signaller and digger training, Dozer operator, Bagger operator, Concreting training, Pizza maker, Grower, harvester and processor of aromatic, medicinal, and herbal plants, and Fruittree and vine cutter (40)

- *Programme of re-training and acquisition of vocational qualification*: Construction technician, Baker, Confectioner, Waiter, Cook, Agricultural technician, Mason, (Road) traffic technician, Motor vehicle operator, Sales associate, Retailer, Economist (12).

### 3.2. Telling the story of the Open Public University Diopter

#### Reasoning on correspondences

WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2 is a participant of a retraining program of the open public university Diopter. She explains:

*"I've finished the hairdresser training, that is a vocational school, then I've a qualification course to become commercialist, and now I am in the school of economy."* Young adult, Diopter participant (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)

According to the professional from Diopter, the interviewee is the most common type of user that comes to this open public university. She explains its usual users as:

*"Young women and young man who have finished vocational school, already have some working experience, even family life, and now they want to finish something more in order to get a better job."* Professional at Diopter (WP5\_E\_I\_F\_4)

The same professional recognizes further another group of users of their programmes:

*"A lot of people who come to us already work somewhere, and they just need a proof of qualification to continue working there."* Professional at Diopter (WP5\_E\_I\_F\_4)

While talking about the main type of users of their services, the head manager recognizes different sorts of motivation of the people undertaking training or retraining programmes in this institution. Her impression is that most of the students came with a will to finish an upper-secondary school in order to be able to enroll into higher education programmes. For them, it is not important which profession they will have. According to the head manager, this kind of motivation is not enough for successful completion of a program:

*“When young people come with that idea, most often they don’t finish the program because they are motivated by their parents’ wish to complete any course just to be able to go to university.”* Diopter Head Manager (WP6\_E\_I\_F\_2)

Similar motivation is visible in the interview with a young participant of a Diopter course:

*“My main motivation for starting this program was to get into university.”* Young adult, Diopter participant (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)

The reasons for such users’ profiles could be found in the characteristics of the Croatian education system gathered for the Croatian National Report on Quantitative Analysis of Young Adults Data (Domović, Boiullet & Pažur, 2017). In Croatia, after the completion of compulsory primary school more than 95% of students continue their education in secondary schools (corresponding to the ISCED 3 level) although secondary education is not compulsory.

**Table 4** shows the data on the available educational institutions in Croatia and in the Istria Functional Region, including the structure of population aged 20-29 according to the level of education.

*Table 4: Schools in 2015/2016 school year and population aged 20-29 according to the highest level of completed education (source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)*

Schools in 2015/2016 school year	Croatia	Istria County
Primary schools	2.125	105
Upper secondary schools	751	44
Faculties and high schools	104	2
Population aged 20-29 according to highest level of completed education		
<b>Total population (20-29, 2011)</b>	<b>550,724 (100%)</b>	<b>26,569 (100%)</b>
No schooling	2,352 (0.43%)	61 (0.23%)
1-3 grades of basic education	586 (0.11%)	22 (0.08%)
4-7 grades of basic education	2,502 (0.45%)	103 (0.39%)
Elementary education	27,831 (5.05%)	1,499 (5.64%)
Secondary education	415,729 (75.49%)	20,356 (76.61%)
Higher education	1010,385 (18.41%)	4,521 (17.2%)

The data presented in Table 4 leads to the conclusion that Istria County, despite the significantly lower number of educational institutions, stands out in terms of a favorable educational structure of youth which is reflected in the below-average representation of persons with a low level of education.

In the school year 2015/16 there were 751 upper-secondary schools in Croatia, with 415,729 students and 26,138 teachers (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The main characteristic

of secondary education is the division in three strands: academic schools (gymnasium), vocational schools and art schools. While academic (gymnasium) and art schools are four-year secondary schools, there are two types of vocational schools, the four-year and the three-year vocational schools. Approximately 70% of the secondary-school population attend vocational schools, of whom about 44% are in the four-year programmes and the remaining 26% are in the three-year programmes (Domović & Vizek Vidović, 2015).

In year 2016, according to the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education<sup>5</sup>, 70.9% of students of the total secondary-school population is enrolled in technical, industrial and crafts schools. That is around 136,000 students in 290 schools. There are three types of educational programmes of lower and upper-secondary vocational schools: *one and two-year-long* programmes, *three-year-long* programmes and *four-year-long* programmes. In the year 2016 around 1000 students were enrolled in 23 *one or two-year-long* secondary education programmes (0.5% of secondary school population). There are 93 *three-year-long* programmes for professions in industry and crafts. 25.9% students of the total secondary-school population were enrolled into those programmes. There are 83 programmes of technical and similar orientation in the duration of 4 years, and around 86,000 students attended them (44.5% of secondary-school population). **Figure 3** shows the percentage of students enrolled into different types of vocational secondary school education in 2016.

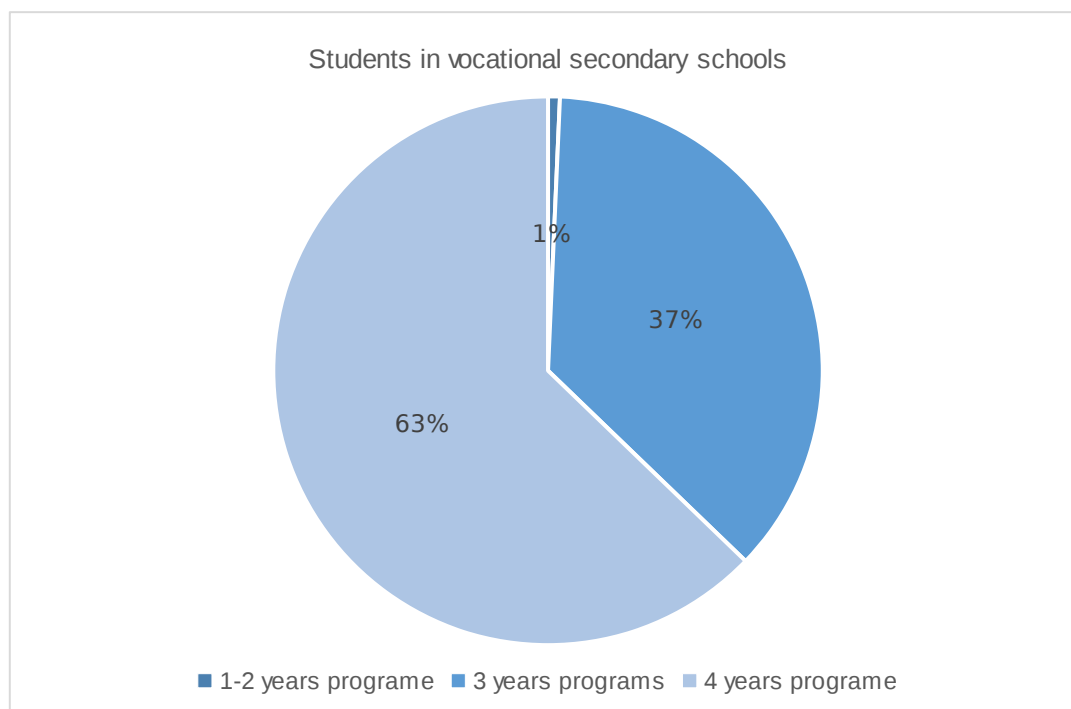


Figure 3 the percentage of students in different types of vocational schools (Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, 2017)

The level of participation in vocational education and training (VET) at upper-secondary level in Croatia is one of the highest in the EU – 71.3 %, compared to the EU average of 48.3 % in 2015. However, the employment rate for the recent upper-secondary graduates (people aged

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.asoo.hr/default.aspx?id=657>, searched 14 December 2017

20-34 who left upper-secondary education, one to three years long, before the reference year). The percentage of 46.1% in 2014, is significantly below the EU average of 73% and is the third lowest percentage in Europe after Italy and Greece. The employment gap between youth with upper-secondary and tertiary education is more significant than in other EU countries, especially 1-3 years after gaining a qualification. A relatively small proportion of VET graduates find their first employment in the occupation that they trained for. On average, between 37% and 47% manage to do so, whereas some sectors stand out as less challenging for finding matching employment, such as the retail sector, hospitality and tourism and wood processing (European Commission, 2016, p.7). According to official data of the local employment agency in Pula, employers mostly hire persons with a completed four-year vocational school. Occupations that require a three-year vocational education are proportionally sought. Third in line of employability are persons with a completed primary school and then highly qualified persons (higher education schools, colleges, and higher degrees of education).

Here are few main conclusions regarding reasoning on correspondences:

- The most usual type of users who come to open public university are young women and young men who graduated from a vocational school, already have some working experience, even family life, and now want to obtain another qualification in order to get a better job. Another type of users are people who already work and need a proof of a qualification in order to keep that job. None of the participants in the last year courses were the ones without a school diploma, which indicates that this type of institutions cannot answer the needs of the NEET people to help them enter the labour market.
- A relatively small proportion of VET graduates find their first employment in the occupation that they trained for. On average, between 37% and 47% manage to do so, whereas some sectors stand out as less challenging for finding matching employment, such as the retail sector, hospitality and tourism and wood processing.
- The third in line of employability are the persons with a completed primary school and then highly qualified persons (higher education schools, colleges, and higher degrees of education).

### Reasoning on the implementation

Additionally, the young interviewed female talked about how she decided to enrol into the program in the first place:

*"I: I wasn't able to find a job. Here in Pula, if you are a part of the political party in favour, your chances to get a job are much bigger. And so, my boyfriend's mother told me that I could start retraining for an economist. I thought that that was a good idea.*

*Q: But that means that you have paid for your education by yourself for the second time?*

*I: First time my mother paid, and this time I paid."* Young adult, Diopter participant, (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)

This conversation illustrates one of the main results of the analysis of the interviews with young adults. Almost all of the interviewed young adults highlighted the support from their

family as an important or key point in their development and in facing problems in their life. The same statement was made by our interviewee:

*“My mother has always been there for me in my education. She is still my biggest support.”* Young adult, Diopter participant, (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)

The question raised by this part of the conversation is what happens to young adults who do not have such a support from their parents? Which support, if any, is given to NEET young adults to successfully transit into the labour market or to finish education? In Croatia, all programmes of secondary education are financed by the Ministry of Science and Education, with the possibility of the County or other founders to co-finance it. Still, as a rule, school founders finance only what is stipulated by the Law, and this refers to the maintenance of the school buildings and to providing adequate infrastructure. Higher education programmes are also financed with public funds, but there are study programmes that students can finance with their own resources. However, programmes provided by open universities, enrolling mostly youth without qualifications, are financed by the students themselves. Therefore, the access of youth in NEET status to education, as they do not possess the resources to finance those programmes, is significantly reduced (WP6, Domović, Bouillet & Pažur, 2017). An exception are the programmes carried out within EU-funded projects or programmes designated for the implementation of active youth employment policy measures. According to Bouillet, Pažur & Domović (2017) in Istria Functional Region, 3 out of 4 young people who were not enrolled in education any more have been in the NEET status. Even so, they were not enrolled in any type of training or retraining. The above-mentioned challenge is recognized by the professional from Diopter:

*“This year we didn’t have any participants without any kind of school completed. All the participants have already finished some program, and they just wanted to improve their status.”* Professional at Diopter (WP5\_E\_I\_F\_4)

This sentence gives a new perspective to the context, because according to official data of the local employment agency in Pula, the most difficult to employ are the persons without completed primary school. These data are in agreement with the data on the structure of unemployed persons with respect to the level of education, but are not entirely in agreement with the educational structure of youth in the Istria County. According to the last census in the Istria County, in the population of persons between 20-29 years of age, of 26,569 young persons, 196 or 0.74% never finished primary school, and 1499 or 5.64% completed primary school only. Secondary-school education was acquired by 20,356 or 76.61% young, and some level of higher education was acquired by 3,521 or 13.25% of young people (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Population Census, 2011).

Another problem arising from the interview with the young participant from Diopter is the difficulty to find a job after completed education. She spoke about her experience while looking for a job:

*“There was one job, after the first testing they told me that there are 99% chances that I would get it if I pass one exam in Rijeka. So I had 3 days to study, and I went to Rijeka. I passed the exam and went to the interview with other two candidates. At the end, they took one candidate that wasn’t even on the list of people who passed an exam. I was angry, nervous, disappointed...”* Young adult, Diopter participant, (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)

The statement is compatible with the results from the qualitative analysis of the interviews with young adults (WP5, Bouillet, Pažur & Domović, 2017). Most of the young adults were negative about the nepotism in the labour market. All of them said that being a part of a political party would help a person to get a job. An interesting statement was one given by a long-term unemployed young adult from Istria, who claimed that she had not been able to find a job because she did not have a driving license, and that the employer expected her to drive herself by car from one place to another.

Another reason why young adults who completed education are unable to find a job in their profession is great skills mismatch that occurs in Istria Functional Region and it is readable from the Croatian National Report on Comparative Analysis Skills Supply and Demand (Domović, Bouillet & Pažur, 2017). At the moment, in the Istria Functional Region there are 14,456 job vacancies and 4,374 registered unemployed people. This information leads to the conclusion that there are insufficient jobs in that region, but also that there is a skills mismatch. The greatest mismatches are in the following groups of professions: technicians and associates (33% of registered people have no jobs to apply to), administrative officers (38% of registered people have no jobs to apply to), farmers, foresters, fishermen and hunters (30% of registered people have no jobs to apply to), servicemen of facilities and machines, workers in the industrial manufacture and product development (35% of registered people have no jobs to apply to). For some of the professions the jobs available are larger than the number of people entering the record of unemployment. Those are groups of professions such as legislator, functionary, director and scientist, engineer and specialists.

The head manager talks about the potential reasons of this mismatch from the perspective of an open public university:

*“We need to lean on our capability to get the data about need on the labour market through professional and personal contacts. The truth is that the data we got from Croatian Employment Service weren’t relevant for us... This one time we needed the data on how many unemployed young people under age of 25 is in Istria County. And we weren’t able to find that data in the Croatian Employment Service statistics.”* Diopter Head Manager (WP6\_E\_I\_F\_2)

Obviously, one of the potential reasons of skills mismatch is unavailability and inaccessibility of the data about unemployment and about needs of the labour market system. The reason for that could be a lack of sufficient cooperation between county and local institutions despite the existence of the awareness of the need for better coordination and compatibility of activity. This problem was also mentioned in the interview of the Diopter Head Manager:

*“We talk to young people about retraining, and in the end all open public universities offer the same programmes. We all have commercialists, transport technicians...when they come to the school, I ask them: Did you maybe hear for any other programmes out there?”* Diopter Head Manager (WP6\_E\_I\_F\_2)

Because the offer of programmes of different open public universities is mostly the same, there is competition instead of cooperation between them. The professional from Diopter talks about it:

*“In Istria County, the highest competition is in the city of Pula. There most of the open public universities are there, and we all have the same offer. In the end,*



*participants chose the programmes which are the cheapest.” Professional at Diopter (WP5\_E\_I\_F\_4)*

It could be concluded that:

- The programmes provided by open universities, enrolling mostly youth without qualifications, are financed by the students themselves. An exception are the programmes carried out within some EU-funded projects or programmes designated for the implementation of active youth employment policy measures. Exactly this circumstance significantly reduces the access of youth in NEET status to education, as they do not possess the resources to finance those programmes.
- At the moment, in the Istria Functional Region there are 14,456 job vacancies, and 4,374 registered unemployed people. This information leads to the conclusion that there are not enough jobs in that region, but also that there is a skills mismatch.
- Because the offer of programmes of different open public universities is mostly the same, there is competition instead of cooperation between them.

### Reasoning on originalities

According to the Croatian National Report on Comparative Analysis Skills Supply and Demand (Domović, Bouillet & Pažur, 2017) the cooperation between open public universities and other stakeholders is mainly limited to the cooperation of different stakeholders during the realization of projects or specific programmes. What is lacking in both cases is a continuous systematic approach which would provide usable statistic information for all, an insight into the possibilities of achieving long-term goals and immediate results (outcomes and effects) of the implemented activities and programmes. Open public university Diopter is one of the open universities that is engaged in the implementation of EU-funded projects. So far they have had 6 projects, and all of them have included young people as a target group. Diopter is using those projects to find funds for the participation in programmes of those who are unable to pay for their training or retraining. The projects have targeted different professions, such as barmen, an herbal medicine manufacturer, a cooker of traditional food, innovative methods in tourism and self-employment of youth. Through those projects this open public university aims to create programmes that would be more interesting to young adults. At the same time, people working at Diopter try to use modern teaching methods to further motivate the participants:

*“We are trying to keep the whole group until the end of the year. But in the several last years we were not very successful in that. I think we should start using some modern methods, like multimedia methods in the classroom.” Diopter Head Manager (WP6\_E\_I\_F\_2)*

The participant in a Diopter course also talked about a different approach to teaching in open public universities then in the formal education:

*“Teachers, they are different. I prefer talking to them about the content, and not take written exams. This is why I prefer this program to the secondary-school program.” Young adult, Diopter participant (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)*

The professional from Diopter mentioned the change that happens to the participants in the Diopter’s programmes because of the different approach that is used:

*"First when they come to the open university they keep a kind of distance, but we are kind and joyful, so soon they start to talk...and in the end, they have tears in their eyes when they graduate..."*. Professional at Diopter (WP5\_E\_I\_F\_6)

Except the change in the teaching methods used, Diopter professionals also see the change in some skills that their participants develop. One professional says:

*"I work with them on raising their level of responsibility. Each month I gave them their schedule, and with time I stopped reminding them when the next lesson is. So if they skipped the lesson, I told them that they should take responsibility for their education and check themselves their schedule."* Professional at Diopter (WP5\_E\_I\_F\_6)

Another professional raised the issue of more systematic evaluation of Diopter's work. She would like to receive feedback on the number of participants in their programmes who found a job after the completion:

*"While they are at school we know if they got a job, but we still do not practice asking them what happened to them, for example 6 months after they finished our program."* Professional at Diopter (WP5\_E\_I\_F\_4)

The lack of evaluation is in line with the main conclusions of the interviews with experts made in the qualitative analysis in Croatia (Bouillet, Pažur & Domović, 2017). The data show that the culture of evaluation in the institutions involved in this analysis does not exist. In other words, there is no reliable evaluation of the effects of policies implementation (some statistical data are available, but are not used in planning future activities).

All this leads to the conclusion that young people today clearly take part in the race for the skills which would help them get a job. This situation makes them oriented towards the skills they can use in their everyday-life situations (only practical skills that can help them in their job search) and they are not so proactive to take part in the activities that would lead to the community improvement. While talking about herself our young interviewee said:

*"I am communicative, sociable, I love to work..."* Young adult, Diopter participant (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)

Her statement is in line with the conclusion of the qualitative analysis in Croatia (Bouillet, Pažur & Domović, 2017) claiming that young adults mostly represent themselves through two groups of skills: social skills and work-related skills. While talking about their well-developed skills, almost all young adults said that they were communicative, and that they had good team-work skills. Another group of skills that young adults pointed out are their work-related skills, such as: hard-working, fast, fast learner. Only a few of the interviewed young adults, while talking about the skills that they have developed, highlighted the skills connected to their profession.

Open public university Diopter is one of the main stakeholders in the field of transition of young adults from education to labour market. Its goal is compatible with the goals of other stakeholders in that field, and that is to raise young adults' employability. Diopter is trying to reach that goal by developing young adults' skills, but at the same time trying to remain competitive at the highly developed market of public universities. Their aim, to help young adults develop the skills that would enable them to find a satisfying job, is compatible with the



motivation of young adults to enrol in their programmes. Also, employers expect young people to already have certain skills developed and to be ready to start working on the job “from day one”. Simultaneously, general problem of the unemployment of young adults stays the same, and Diopter lacks adequate evaluation methods to investigate whether it is successful in reaching its objectives. While the system fails to address the challenges that young adults face while entering the labour market, young adults try to reach their short-term goals, without any vision or plan of their long-term future. This is based on the following young adult’s story.

WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2 is a participant of a retraining program of the Open public university Diopter. She had satisfying childhood and she has positive feelings towards her primary school. She liked her vocational school education to become a hairdresser because she likes doing hair to other peoples. Then she entered the labour market, and her disappointments began. She wasn’t able to find a satisfying job, a political party member got a job she applied for even though she had better exam results, her employer makes her travel every day and work unpaid overtime hours. All these disappointments made her forget all the skills she had well developed, and made her concentrate just on the skills she thought her employer would like to see. WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2 has well developed computer skills, she speaks English and understands Italian, she has graduated from a vocational school, has one requalification, and she is still enrolled in the education to finish upper-secondary school, she used to play volleyball, and is an amateur dancer and singer. She never mentions any of these things when presenting herself at job interviews. All she believes that matters is to get a proof of (any) upper-secondary qualification that will help her fit into a better job or to enroll into higher education. This story lead her to the Open public university Diopter, an institution which can respond to her need to get one extra level in her education, but only under the condition that she has enough financial support from her family to pay for that level.

Finally, it could be said that she was right when her answer to the interview question *Would you say that you have luck in life*, was:

*“Well yes and no. Yes, because I have a supportive mother, boyfriend, sisters... that is luck. And no, because I am unable to find a job that would make me satisfied.”* Young adult, Diopter participant (WP5\_Y\_I\_F\_2)

The conclusions on reasoning on originalities are:

- Open public university Diopter is one of the open universities engaged in the implementation of EU-funded projects. So far, it has implemented 6 projects, and all of them have included young people as a target group. Diopter uses those projects to fund the participation in the programmes for those who are unable to pay for their training or retraining. The projects have targeted different professions, such as barmen, an herbal medicine manufacturer, a cooker of traditional food, innovative methods in tourism and self-employment of youth. Through these projects this open public university aims to create programmes that would be more interesting to young adults.
- Diopter uses more innovative teaching methods, and their approach to participants reflects their goal to raise their motivation to successfully complete the programmes they enrolled into.

- Young people today are oriented towards skills that they can use in their everyday-life situations (only practical skills that can help them in their job search) and they are not so proactive to take part in the activities that would lead to the community improvement. They choose programmes of open public universities as an instrument to get a higher education level, and not according to their professional interests.

### 3.3. Case analysis according to different perspectives

#### Case analysis from the CPE perspective

All relevant EU resolutions and guidelines highlight the need to implement the principle of lifelong learning in all forms of programmes for the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Some of those documents are: Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (2001), Council Resolution on lifelong learning (2002), Adult learning it is never too late to learn (2006), It is always a good time to learn (2007), European Platform against Poverty and social exclusion (2010) and Youth on the Move (2010). They also highlight the importance of including the highest possible number of citizens in lifelong learning, regardless of their age, social status and prior education. According to that EU dimension, the concept of lifelong learning is promoted in a number of policy documents from Croatia, including the White Paper on Croatian Education, the Education Sector Development Plan 2005–2010, the Development Strategy of the Vocational Education System in the Republic of Croatia 2008–2014, the Strategy for Adult Education, the Adult Education Act and other regulations related to adult education.

The education system of the Republic of Croatia has been regulated by:

- *the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (2008)*, which regulates the cooperation of schools and employment services and other institutions in order to provide timely information and vocational guidance of pupils and professional development of teachers
- *the Vocational Education Act (2009)*, which regulates secondary vocational education, training and professional development (hereinafter: vocational education), as an activity that enables the development and acquisition of the necessary competences to acquire vocational qualifications
- *the Scientific Activity and Higher Education Act (2003)*, which establishes a binary system of higher education, distinguishing between university and polytechnic studies. Professional studies are carried out at polytechnics and colleges, and, exceptionally, at universities, with the purpose of training for highly qualified professions. University studies are research-oriented and are carried out exclusively at universities, i.e. faculties, university departments and art academies.
- *the Adult Education Act (2007)*, defining the entire process of adult education, taking into consideration formal, and non-formal education, as well as informal and self-regulated learning. Amendments to the Act are being considered, which will prescribe

the use of the Croatian Qualification Framework as a tool for designing and approving formal programmes and licensing institutions for adult education.

Besides the abovementioned laws, which regulate the entire system of education, a law that plays a significant role in the education of youth who do not participate in formal forms of education and are not active in the labour market is the *Public Open University Act* (2010). This law regulates the establishing and functioning of open universities, which are founded by local self-government units and legal or physical persons with the purpose of providing primary and secondary education of adults, professional development, training and retraining of youth, outside the formal education system. These institutions can function as both public and private institutions, where teaching is adapted to adult students and can be carried out full-time, in the form of consultations and tutoring in groups or individually, through consultations, and correspondence and distance education using specially designed learning resources for self-study, by individual consultations and by means of multimedia.

Education System of the Republic of Croatia (**Figure 4**) includes pre-school, basic, upper secondary and tertiary education.

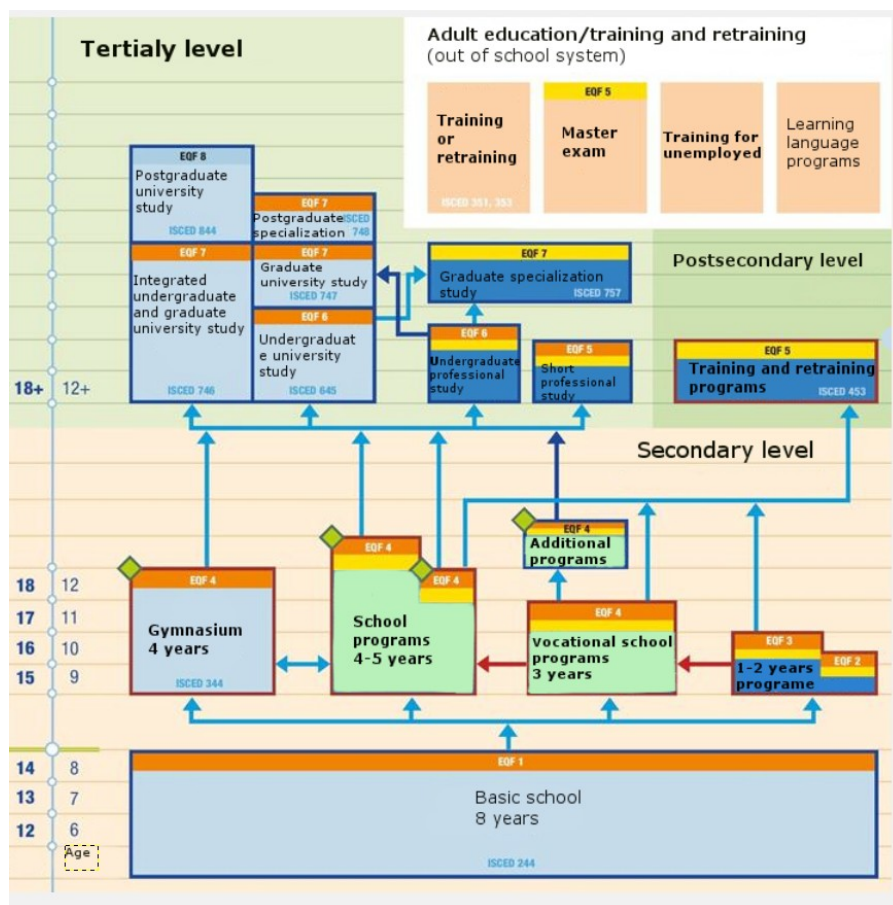


Figure 4. Review of education system in Croatia with the focus on secondary school programmes and adult education (adopted figure by the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education)

Basic and upper secondary education is either regular or special, which includes education of the disabled children and youth education of adults and basic education in art schools, as a preparation for education in secondary art schools. Pre-school education is not compulsory

and includes children from three years of age to school age. Since 2016 one year of preschool is obligatory. Basic education lasts for eight years and is compulsory as a rule for all children between the age of six and fifteen. It gives basic general education according to the established educational plan and programme.

Upper-secondary education may last from 1 to 5 years. It gives education and skills that are necessary either to enter the labour market or to continue education at a higher level. Upper-secondary education is not compulsory. Depending on the education plan and programme, there are following types of upper-secondary schools: grammar schools, technical and related schools, art schools, industrial and crafts schools. In the areas inhabited by national minorities, basic and secondary schools (school units) are established providing education programmes in their respective languages and scripts.

Tertiary education is carried out through university and professional studies. Adult Education is aimed at providing education for adults who have not obtained an adequate education in the course of regular schooling and those who want to get more vocational education. For adults, this can include either regular school attendance or taking exams only. Basic and upper-secondary education of adults is carried out in basic and upper-secondary schools and other licensed institutions.

According to the Development strategy of the vocational education system in the Republic of Croatia 2008-2013 vocational education system is faced with big challenges of continuing modernisation of the education supply and methods of work. The content of a large majority of the existing curricula and teaching programmes is outdated and offers little opportunity of gaining contemporary knowledge, skills and competences, because the dynamics of their modernisation does not follow the development of the new knowledge and technologies. An aggravating circumstance of their regular modernisation is that institutions are understaffed, as well as the financial implications it requires. Moreover, the methodology of drafting curricula and teaching programmes provides no mechanisms that would ensure that they reflect not only contemporary knowledge, but also their relevance in the world of work. Nowadays, the curricula and teaching programmes are created exclusively within the education system that insufficiently knows and follows the labour market trends. An additional problem is the structure of the curricula and teaching programmes itself, which is subject-oriented and prescribes the tasks of the teachers, and not the competences a student needs to acquire. In other words, the focus is on teaching, and not on learning. Also, general competences are not unambiguously defined in curricula. Moreover, the consequence of such a structure of the curricula and teaching programmes is an insufficient connection of teaching subjects and contents, and poor horizontal and vertical mobility within the education system. There is also a problem of premature guidance of students to choose professions, which is particularly pronounced in choosing narrowly profiled occupations, which provides for a very narrow set of competences.

The current system of vocational education and training does not ensure the acquisition of competences needed in the labour market, because the education supply and education programmes are not modernised fast enough. Currently, they are neither based on the market needs analyses, nor are the employment rate indicators and/or the education continuation rate of the students who completed vocational education followed up.

Insufficient real qualifications or the inexistence of the labour market need for such profile of competences, nevertheless, factually leads to aggravated employability, thus diminishing national and individual potentials for growth and progress.

Further development of the education system depends on the implementation of the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology – New Colours of Knowledge, which was formally adopted in 2014. The Strategy identifies and defines five objectives which refer to the entire education system which include both formal and non-formal forms of education. This strategic document provides an analysis of the level of education of Croatian citizens, which shows the need to upgrade the competence potential of citizens and to enhance the offer of programmes which will assure employability according to the needs of economy and society. In other words, it emphasizes the importance of the connection between adult education and social policy and with the labour market.

Another key public, political and legislative framework opening a door to the development and implementation of the recognition of prior learning in Croatia is the Croatian Qualifications Framework Act (2013). The Croatian Qualifications Framework (hereinafter: CROQF<sup>6</sup>) recognises the fact that learning outcomes are not acquired exclusively in formal ways, but also include other non-formal and informal paths, which need to be validated. In order to ensure quality and transparency of its implementation, a Register of the CROQF is currently being designed, with the aim of better connecting education and labour market needs. The Register will contain a list of all professions with their respective competences, whereas the learning outcomes will be attached to the respective competences. Since recognition of prior learning is at an early stage in Croatia, its implementation requires emphasizing the complexity of the context within which public policies and procedures of recognition of qualifications should be formulated. In order to integrate the recognition of prior learning into the system of Croatian higher education it is essential to consider its main features and current challenges. Since the central element of the CROQF are the learning outcomes, and not the way in which they were acquired, the CROQF sets basis for the development of recognition of prior learning. In other words, the CROQF enables the development of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, along with the compulsory introduction of quality assurance system and clear quality assessment procedures.

The establishment of the CROQF, with the promotion of the quality assurance principles in education, will enable, at all educational levels, the transparency, the comparability and the transferability of qualifications between various educational institutions at the national level and their connection with the EQF at the European level, and their common point of reference will be the results of learning. The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, 2008, to all the Member States, is to introduce measures so that all the qualifications until 2012 include a clear mark of the level of the national qualifications framework, as well as a mark of the reference level of the European Qualifications Framework.

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<sup>6</sup> The Croatian Qualifications Framework is a reform instrument for regulating the system of qualifications at all levels in the Republic of Croatia through qualifications standards based on learning outcomes and following the needs of the labour market, individuals and society.



The principal content of qualifications are the results of learning, that is the competences acquired through learning, and they comprise the knowledge (the factual and theoretical information acquired through learning), skills (the application of knowledge in performing tasks and solving problems, and they refer to cognitive and practical/psychomotoric skills), and competences in narrower sense (the acquired application of knowledge and skills in accordance with the given standards, that is independence and responsibility in their application).

Since CES data for the period 2010-2015 shows that the highest number of registered unemployed persons (58%) refers to the persons who have completed vocational education lasting one to four years. it is necessary to mention the Development of Vocational Education and Training Programme (2016 – 2020). This is a strategic document based on the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology, which envisages changes in the vocational education system for full-time students and in acquiring professional qualifications in the adult education system. This programme is the basis for the rationalisation of the vocational schools network, by promoting the attraction and excellence of vocational education, enhancing employers' capacities for monitoring students and fostering programmes for strengthening inclusion of groups at threat of exclusion from education.

### Case analysis from the GOV perspective

All programmes of secondary education are financed by the Ministry of Science and Education, with the possibility of including the County or other founders in co-financing. Still, as a rule, school founders finance only what is stipulated by the Law, and this refers to the maintenance of the school buildings and to providing adequate infrastructure. Higher education programmes are also financed with public funds, but there are study programmes that students can finance with their own resources. However, programmes provided by open universities, enrolling mostly youth without qualifications, are financed by the students themselves. An exception are the programmes carried out within some EU-funded projects designated for the implementation of active youth employment policy measures. Exactly this circumstance significantly hampers the access of youth in NEET status to education, as they do not possess the resources to finance those programmes.

Talking about the implementation on the national level from the governance perspective, one of the conclusions of the qualitative analysis in Croatia (WP5, Bouillet, Pažur & Domović, 2017) is that there are many institutions on the local and regional levels that have as a goal raising the quality of life of young adults through raising their employment. The main problem that causes failure of that programmes is the lack of coordination between different stakeholders and between three main systems: educational, social welfare and employment. Besides that, the institutions are choosing to deal with a few measures on the local level, based on their particular interest. At the same time there is no evaluation of the implementation measures, so there is no feedback on whether actions and programmes do help young adults in improving their life-quality. The lack of coordination and the lack of evaluation are creating skills mismatch at the local and regional levels that is visible to all actors included. All this leaves young adults in an unpleasant situation: unemployed, without any financial stability, living with their parents and unable to plan their future life. This situation, coupled with a high level of nepotism in employment, makes young adults dissatisfied with their life in Croatia and makes them willing to leave Croatia. The main thing

that both experts and young adults from both regions claim is that LLL policies should be changed and improved in order to answer to the special needs of young adults' transition to labour market.

The open public university Diopter has a very clear management structure with a head manager, education professional, and secretary. It is cooperating with different stakeholders, like Croatian Employment Service and some secondary schools. The cooperation is mostly connected with the implementation of EU-funded projects, and it is not sustainable after the projects are finished. The institution is not cooperating with other open public universities. Because the offer of programmes of different open public universities is mostly the same, the competition instead of cooperation raises between them. The Diopter is an institution of community interests, and it is dealing with different types of users (people without any completed education, unemployed people wishing to get retraining, employed people who wants another education level).

An additional difficulty for the system of mutual coordination is the fact that institutions are focused on the implementation of programmes and policies which stem from the interests of their founders, whereas the horizontal and vertical coordination among providers of educational services occurs sporadically, mainly in the course of the preparation and realization of short-term and mutually unrelated projects and programmes. The repercussion of lack of cooperation in the system are young adults who are unprepared and often without any support in their transition from the education to the labour market system. They are unaware of possibilities in their local community and in their region, they are not familiar with programmes that different institutions are offering, and they are focused on developing practical skills which will help them get a job or leave the country with any qualification.

It is particularly important to define the roles of stakeholders and bodies that will act as a link between vocational education and the labour market, and higher education. The principal holders of this process need to be sectoral councils, being the bodies that present, with competence, to the system of vocational education and training the needs of the labour market and higher education which need to be met by the vocational education. Their further work needs to be defined by the Act on Vocational Education, which is being drafted.

In the function of better meeting the labour market needs, it is necessary to further develop and enhance the lifelong professional orientation in vocational education, as an important tool of education and employment policy, among other also through strengthening capacities for providing services of professional orientation.

An available and flexible system of vocational education needs to allow for lifelong learning by providing an efficient education supply and flexible ways of acquiring qualifications. The system will, in the process, promote the principle of accessibility for all the population groups, offering education pathways both to those with high potential, as well as to those who risk exclusion from the education system and the labour market – particularly to those who leave education early, to individuals with low qualifications or with no qualifications, to people with special education needs and to older people.

### Case analysis from the LCR perspective

The most important principles of lifelong learning for individuals are:

- the opportunity of acquiring, improving and/or expanding knowledge, skills, attitudes and values
- the opportunity and the need for the development of personal potential in different stages of life
- the accessibility of different forms and content of learning with the aim of achieving personal goals and developing one's own abilities and
- the right to the recognition of knowledge and skills acquired in different environments and through different forms of learning.

The outcomes of lifelong learning should primarily lead to the development and achievement of personal potential and should become an important element of active citizenship, while also enabling better employability of an individual, i.e. by increasing their competitiveness on the labour market. The dynamism, flexibility and competitiveness of more developed knowledge based societies (which are also 'learning societies') are associated with the extent to which citizens are involved in various forms of lifelong learning and to the quality of the education process. In addition to the need of individuals to constantly learn, it is also important for organisations to keep educating themselves or support a learning environment — not only in the private sector, but also in the public, state and local administration. For these reasons, the promotion and development of the concept of lifelong learning implies the need to integrate, permeate and align the often conflicting objectives and activities of public policies (related to: social, economic and regional development; cultural development; employment; and social welfare) with the aspirations and potential of individuals.

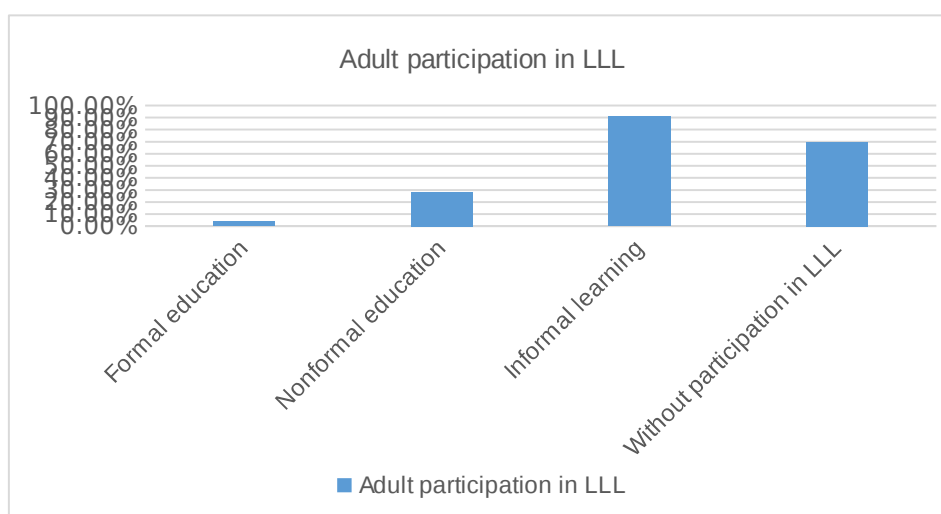
The Development strategy of the vocational education system in the Republic of Croatia 2008-2013 underlines that on the one hand vocational education contributes to the competitiveness of a national economy, but on the other, its role is also to contribute to the social cohesion of a particular society. It needs to provide a broad basis of competences which are crucial for professional and personal success of an individual, and to serve for the development of human resources and enhancing the knowledge-based society and innovativeness. It is, therefore, crucial that it be founded on the following set of principles:

- the principle of accessibility, that ensures equal possibilities of access for all the citizens to initial and continuing vocational education
- the principle of flexibility, that enables individuals to acquire equal qualifications in different ways, and ensures horizontal and vertical mobility of an individual and an individualised approach to needs, so to allow everyone to accomplish maximum possibilities and lifelong learning
- the principles of relevance and rationality, that ensure the basis of vocational education on analyses of the society and the labour market needs, the acquisition of competences relevant for the working life and/or continuing education, and continuous evaluation and rational adjustment of education supply
- the principles of partnership, ensuring the inclusion of all the partners (the state and economic institutions, private sector and other interested subjects) in planning, financing and managing the modern system of vocational education and training



- the principle of quality assurance, that strengthens confidence in system and contributes to its improvement; and the principle of the transparency of the system, that is open, active, and adaptable to contemporary markets, and based on clear criteria of decision-making and financing.

In the year 2016, Croatian Bureau for Statistics has conducted the Adult Education Survey, a survey that collected data on adult participation in education, training and learning within the context of lifelong learning. According to the results (**Figure 5**) of the respondents who participated in the survey, 30.2% reported that they participated in some form of education or learning (formal or non-formal education) 12 months prior to the survey. According to the collected data, seven out of ten respondents (69.8%) selected in the sample did not participate in formal nor non-formal education. As for the participation in education by learning forms, the share of participants in formal education is 3.6%, while the majority (28.3%) have opted for non-formal education. During this period, almost all respondents (91.2%) tried to learn something to improve knowledge during their free time, by informal learning. Out of 107 respondents, 4 participated in two or more formal education programmes, of which almost 2/3 of respondents (62.6%) paid the full costs of education. Out of 28.3% of respondents who participated in non-formal education, more than half (57.3%) attended only one activity, and only 10.2% opted for four or more activities. In the observed period, the largest share of respondents (39.8%) attended workshops or seminars, of which 90.2% were employed.



*Figure 5 Percentage of adults enrolled in LLL education (Croatian Bureau for Statistics, 2017)*

While choosing the programmes, according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2017), in the age group 25 to 34, the highest number of interviewees attended private lessons, while courses were the least represented by persons aged 55 to 64. Workshops or seminars were most represented in 45 to 54 age group and persons aged 35 to 44 equally attended all types of non-formal education activities. Out of young adults (age 25-34) who have participated in the adult education programmes, 42.1% have participated in the private lessons, 30.7% in the guided on the job trainings, 21.2% in the workshops and seminars, and 27.3% in the courses.

Regarding participation in adult education (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2017), an interesting information is that the respondents said that the greatest difficulties that prevented them from participating in adult education programmes were family obligations (72.9%; 2/3 of women reported), and no suitable education or training activity offered (61.8%).

From the perspective of open public university Diopter, there are different types of motivation of their users to enrol into training and retraining programmes. As it was already mentioned, they differ the user's motivation to get employed, their motivation to get a better job, but also a motivation to obtain another level of education in order to enrol into higher education. There are some users who were sent to the open public university by their parents, and this kind of motivation, most often, is not enough for successful completion of the programme. From the young adults' perspective, they are mostly focused on developing their practical skills. They are oriented on the skills that they can use in their everyday-life situations and they are not so proactive in participating in activities that would lead to the community improvement.

However, the participation in the programmes of open public universities does not ensure the acquisition of competences needed in the labour market, because the education supply and education programmes are not adjusting to the new developments and circumstances fast enough. The content of the most of the existing curricula and teaching programmes offers little opportunity for the students to acquire contemporary competences, because their modernization is not paced with the development of new knowledge and technologies.

## 4. Cross-case issues

The aim of this report is to identify more sustainable practices and patterns of coordination in LLL policy-making at different levels with particular attention to actors, dynamics, trends, mismatches and redundancies in two Croatian functional regions. Two functional regions and two case studies are selected by means of a detailed description that integrates all the information, material, and data that were gathered in previous project's activities.

The first case study (LLCG Centre Osijek) is located in the Osijek-Baranja Functional Region and refers to the labour market policies, while the second case study (Open public university Diopter) is located in the Istria Functional Region and refers to the educational policies. However, the majority of users of both analysed institutions are young people. At the same time, both cases have the same purpose: to strengthen the employability of citizens, regardless of their age. This is in line with the nature of LLL policies that should connect education and labour market policies, because: "policies aimed at improving the skills of the workforce will have limited impact on the incomes of those who acquire these skills, or on the performance of a national economy, unless other policies are in place that increase the demand for those skills" (Fasih, 2008:4).

The role of education needs to be seen in a broader macroeconomic context to ensure that education contributes to the growth of a country's economy. However, the Croatian labour market is characterized by a low degree of activity on the part of the population, a high unemployment rate, a pronounced problem with long-term unemployment and a high structural disproportion between supply and demand. The analysis of the situation on the Croatian labour market shows that significant structural issues still remained unsolved (such as inflexibility, mismatch between supply and demand with respect to profession and

education, and similar). Also, fairly limited creation of new jobs still persists. The employment rates of men and women and the employment of young people are among the lowest in comparison with the EU28 (Barković, 2009). Because of Istria's geographical position, the labour market is diverse and developed and Istria is one of the most developed counties in Croatia. The largest number of jobs is offered in occupations relating to tourism. During the tourist season, the demand for workers in Istria is significantly greater than the supply. On the other hand, the Osijek-Baranja County, as one of the less developed Croatian counties, does not have a sufficiently developed labour market. Many inhabitants of the Osijek-Baranja County of working age (particularly young adults) go for seasonal employment in Istria during the tourist season.

As mentioned in the Memorandum of Life Long Learning (EU, 2000:9), "employability is obviously a key outcome of successful learning, but social inclusion rests on more than having paid work. Learning opens the door to building a satisfying and productive life, quite apart from a person's employment status and prospects." Lifelong learning has generally two comprehensive dimensions: individual development and autonomy on the one hand and strengthen or even maintain employability on the other (Glossary, [http://www.young-adults.eu/glossary/listview.php?we\\_objectID=202](http://www.young-adults.eu/glossary/listview.php?we_objectID=202)). It could be said that lifelong learning include all purposeful learning activity undertaken in an ongoing way with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, while career development is the lifelong process of managing learning, work and transition in order to move towards personally determined and evolving preferred futures (Bezanson, 2003).

The analysis of the two case studies leads to the conclusion that the education programmes distribution is not sufficiently relevant in terms of the labour market needs. Moreover, it is not sufficiently rational in terms of the ratio of labour market needs and the price for the implementation of particular programmes, and the provision of the required quality and number of teaching staff. This leads to a huge dispersion of programmes in various schools and various environments, and a low average number of pupils who attend a particular programme per one school. Furthermore, these circumstances make job of the LLCG Centre quite difficult, because this Centre is not able to offer many choices of career to youth. Some urgent actions are needed, due to the fact that Croatia had a negative net migration with foreign countries that amounted to -22 451 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). According to the analysis presented in this report, these actions should include:

- the development of qualifications based on competences and learning results
- the harmonisation of education programmes with the labour market needs
- the creation of a system of vocational education and training that allows for lifelong learning and mobility and
- the establishment of a quality assurance system.

Another challenge in the harmonisation of education and labour market in Croatia lies in the fact that the share of persons participating in LLL in Croatia is really low. Lifelong learning is a precondition for employability and sustainability on the labour market and the fulfilment of personal potential and development of active citizenship. Persons without qualifications or specific competences have a less opportunity to find employment and are at greater risk of social exclusion, and thus also of poverty. They can participate in the LLL programmes of the

public open universities only if they are able to finance them. Also, there are many persons who, despite completing formal education, do not possess the specific knowledge and skills necessary for functioning in today's society.

Factors such as rapid changes in the labour market, ageing population and increasing global competition indicate the need to make use of all available knowledge and skills, regardless of where and how a person has acquired them. The validation of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning opens up new opportunities to individuals who have acquired certain knowledge and skills over their lifetime to obtain a formal recognition of such achievements and thereby become more employable and/or create the preconditions for their further education.

The system and processes for validating non-formal and informal learning have not yet been developed in Croatia. According to the Croatian Strategy for education, science and technology (2014), European trends, best practice and strategic/policy recommendations for the development and implementation of a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning represent starting points for the implementation of such a system in Croatia. Young people are an important part of the population that should, in addition to attending formal education, become much more involved in other various forms of lifelong learning. It is crucial that the outcomes of such forms of learning could be validated by a system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which is planned in this Strategy.

Moreover, well-functioning partnerships of all relevant labour market stakeholders, including employment services, social security services, education and training providers and social partners, are needed. The collaboration and partnerships are vital to ensure complementarities of services and truly manage careers, but the culture of the collaboration in both analysed cases is very low. It could be concluded that the lack of coordination between different institutions is one of important reasons why the analysed policies do not answer the needs of young adults. As European Commission (2013) mentioned, collaboration that would promote partnership should be established. It includes:

- partnerships at the local level between local employment offices and other stakeholders to ensure a co-ordinated strategic service offer and easy referral of individuals to nearby support services
- enhanced cooperation with employers and providers of education and training services in order to improve the way in which the training offer is tailored to demand
- the development or optimisation of sub-contracting for specialised services.

The analysis also shows that young adults, in both regions, are not well informed about programmes that Diopter and LLCG Centre offer. This stems from the structure of the users, as well as from the share of young people in NEET status in that structure. Furthermore, the programmes are not accessible to youth in NEET status, even though open public universities are the second chance for youth with low level of education. It seems that education in Diopter appears to substitute the lack of employability, while the main subject of the LLCG Centre is to inform youth about the labour market needs. "In this context, a new approach is needed which envisages guidance as a continuously accessible service for all, which overcomes the distinction between educational, vocational and personal guidance, and which reaches out to new public. Living and working in the knowledge society calls for

active citizens who are self-motivated to pursue their own personal and professional development. This means that systems of provision must shift from a supply-side to a demand-side approach, placing users' needs and demands at the centre of concern." (Memorandum of Life Long Learning, 2000:17). At the same time, the curricula of education programmes should give the possibility to acquire the demanded knowledge, skills and competences. Their creation, therefore, needs to be based on the previous development of the profession and qualification<sup>7</sup> standards and may be realised only through partnership with all the stakeholders (employers, trade unions, chambers, local government representatives, and all other interested parties).

All the past analyses (WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6) showed that the current network of educational programmes is not rational and is expensive. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the quality of processes and mechanisms which determine the network of programmes and enrolment quotas. In this process, as mentioned in the Development strategy of the vocational education system in the Republic of Croatia (2008 – 2013), the most important thing is to clearly define measurable indicators that are based on the labour market needs and the economic development strategies, and to define the roles and responsibilities of all the relevant stakeholders of this process. It is necessary, in this connection, to define clearly the criteria for (planning and) equipping schools, to set clear and measurable criteria and mechanisms for the curriculum implementation approval, but also for systemic monitoring of the compliance to the above criteria. However, in reality this Strategy was never implemented, and youth, as well as local communities, still wait for its implementation. The slow implementation of strategic documents greatly contributes to the fact that youth will go on depending mostly on their parents in their life possibilities and choices, since the process of finding adequate and well-paid employment, which would contribute to their independence, is still burdened with many obstacles.

Generally, the relatively high level of centralisation of LLL policies for youth characterised Croatia. Although there is an expectation that all LLL national documents are implemented at the regional and local level, this seldom happens, since local self-government units rarely specify and adapt national needs to the needs of their citizens. Thus, most benefits for the youth are granted at the national level, whereas differences among regions, have not been adequately overcome.

As mentioned in the Policy Mapping, Review and Analysis – Croatia (Bouillet & Domović, 2016), it is important to emphasise that most public policies were developed under a strong influence of European documents, especially in the period of Croatia's accession to the European Union and immediately after Croatia becoming a member state. The existing LLL policies and strategies are mutually compatible, with a clear intention to improve the living conditions of youth in Croatia. However, it is questionable to what extent the shapers of the political and administrative frameworks also create the conditions for their application, as both a lack of synergy of the three different areas at the national level and of the national, regional and local level can be observed. The data collected by the case analysis also have

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<sup>7</sup> A profession here is understood as a set of jobs whose main tasks and obligations are characterised by a high grade of similarity. The profession standards should specify job descriptions, activities performed within a working place, and competences that are precondition for an efficient performance of tasks in this area of employment. The qualifications should define the level, scope and profile of competences needed to be acquired at the end of the learning process.

confirmed that public policies are not sufficiently harmonised with the actual needs of different youth in different local communities. Besides, there are insufficient mechanisms for checking the implementation of the set measures, for providing a system of quality control and for long-term evaluation of the effects of their practical application. The inclusion of youth finding themselves in a vulnerable position is particularly questionable, as the policy documents addressing them are very general and, as a rule, do not lead to significant changes in their employability and to the improvement of their life quality. In other words, turning the good wishes formulated in the documents into reality still lies ahead. In the process, public policies should be harmonised with the needs of the respective local communities.

Due to various factors such as (Domović & Vizek-Vidović, 2015):

- a lack of human capital who could enforce changes
- a general lack of coordination between various stakeholders in education
- inherited mindset from the previous political regime which manifests in the lack of readiness to accept personal responsibility for implementation of policy decisions
- the prevalent belief among policy makers that education system is an expenditure and not an investment in the future
- as well as prolonged economic crisis,

a serious apprehension appears that most of the planned reforms will be remembered only as declarative intentions and easy-given promises that could not be fulfilled.

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# Work Package 7

## Case Studies

### National Report: Finland

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## Executive Summary

This national Working Package 7 report presents two cases, which integrate both policy and functional region as the unit of analysis: youth and social policy in the functional region Southwest Finland and youth and social policy in the functional region Kainuu. The case selection enables us to examine how an EU-level policy, the Youth Guarantee, is interpreted at a national level in the Finnish Youth Guarantee, and how the regional and local implementations of this national level policy, Ohjaamo low-threshold guidance centres for young people, reflect and acknowledge the significantly different socio-demographic contexts and opportunity structures of the two contrasting functional regions.

Despite the significant budget-cuts made to its financing, the cross-administrative Youth Guarantee Programme is one of the top programmes of the Finnish Government, and its aim is to ensure that young people have access to education, training and employment, and to prevent them from being excluded from the society. The European Social Fund has a key role in funding the regional/local Ohjaamo Centres, which have a target group that includes all young people under 30-years-old living in the region or municipality. In the launching of the national Ohjaamo Programme and the regional/local Ohjaamo Centres, an important starting point has been the trust in that the regional and local actors are the ones who know best the situation and needs of their own area. Definitions of activities have been intentionally broad in the national policy, so that they have left enough room for regional or local interpretations.

There were clear differences in the policy emphasis between Southwest Finland and Kainuu. While the main focus of the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku was on employment and education, the respective policy measure in Kainuu, the NUPPA Centre, emphasised increasing the overall wellbeing of young people and tackling social exclusion as its main goals. Whereas Southwest Finland confirms the idea that young adults' life courses should follow a linear path by focusing more on giving individuals responsibility and helping them become productive in the labour market, the Kainuu region is committed to a policy that includes more human and social perspectives, looks more to improve the wellbeing of each young person, and, therefore, tends to think more about biographical and de-standardised life experiences.

The differences between the two functional regions and their LLL policy implementations stem largely from the differences in their economic and social conditions. Life opportunities available to young people are more versatile in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu, where youth unemployment rates are higher and also the level of wellbeing of young people is lower than in Finland on average. There are much fewer educational opportunities available for compulsory school graduates in Kainuu than in Southwest Finland. The structural risk of dropping out of the standardised life trajectory is hence much more significant in Kainuu than in Southwest Finland.

Despite the changing economic structures implying de-standardisation of life courses and significant regional differences in opportunity structures available for young people, the societal expectations related to standardised 'normal' life course are strongly present in Finland. Facilitating smooth and linear transitions from compulsory education to further education and finally to working life is seen as a key LLL policy priority. Quick transitions and

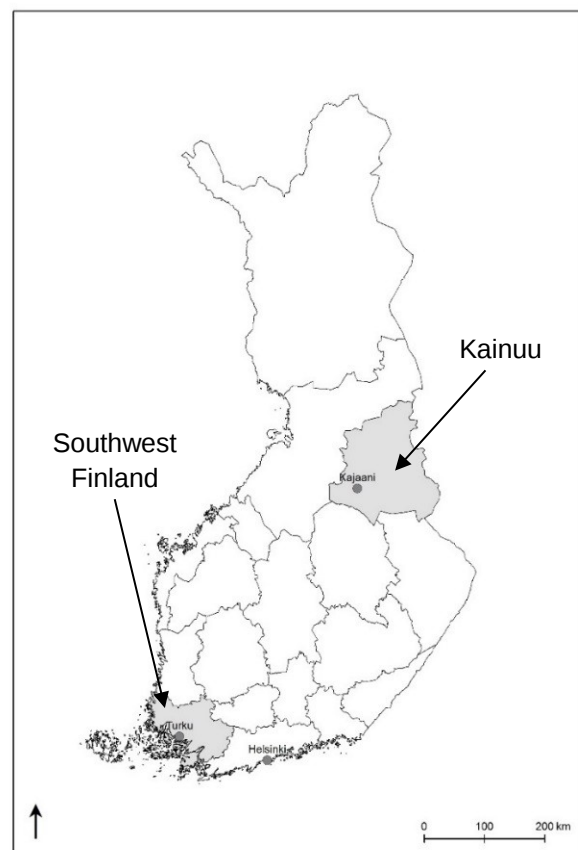
unfragmented trajectories are seen as an economic necessity as years not spent in education or employment are years wasted in the economic sense.

The ideal-typical biographies of young adults presented in this report showed clearly how the target group of the LLL policies is not a homogeneous one, but consists of individuals with different cultural and social resources and horizons for action. Hence, also their needs, challenges, and motives in participating in LLL policy measures vary. For those young adults who were using mainly information services and 'lighter' guidance services, the reason for participation was to get help either with finding a job or with figuring out the next steps to take with regard to education or employment. The value they saw in the policy measure was that they could use it as an extra tool to help them progress on the life course trajectory they were already on. With regard to the young adults participating in more in-depth services, such as rehabilitative workshops, the need that defined their participation was related to the fractures in their life courses and especially educational trajectories, which were typically caused by factors, such as disadvantaged social background, mental health problems, and insufficient support in one or more field of life. Many of the interviewed young adults they using the 'normal' life course as a yard stick against which they compared their own biographies and defined their success or failure in life.

When looking at the LLL policy measures analysed here in relation to young adults' life course construction, one can emphasise several aspects. One of the main objectives of the LLL policies is to strengthen young adults' social participation and their agency by including them in the decision making about things that concern their own lives. For that purpose, the holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults has been adopted by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. Despite this, the main goals of the policies usually are related to education and employment, and career guidance is a central element of these policies. From the life course perspective, career guidance can play an important role in many people's lives, helping them make more control over their own futures. However, increasing employment should not be the major rationale for such provision, and managing career guidance through performance outcomes without understanding complex processes related to career decision making and dynamics of career construction, can have unintended effects on individuals' life courses.

## 1. Introduction

Finland consists of 19 regions of which two contrasting ones were chosen for further analysis and comparison in the Young Adultt (YA) project: Southwest Finland representing the urban and marine southwest, and Kainuu, which represents the rural northeast by the Russian border (Figure 1). With regard to the NUTS2 level, Southwest Finland belongs to South Finland, and Kainuu to North and East Finland. The two functional regions differ significantly from each other in terms of both socio-demographic features and the educational and labour market opportunities available for young adults (Rinne, Järvinen, Kinnari, Plamper, Silvennoinen, Tikkanen, & Vanttaja, 2016; Rinne, Järvinen, Silvennoinen, Tikkanen, & Plamper, 2017; Silvennoinen, Eskola, Järvinen, Rinne, & Tikkanen 2017). In terms of policy planning and implementation hierarchy, regions can be placed between national and municipality-level government authorities. The regions are governed by regional councils, which serve as cooperation forums for the municipalities of the region. The regional councils are responsible for general regional policy planning as well as policy programmes within the region. The council draws up plans and programmes together with central and local government authorities as well as enterprises and associations operating in the region. In drawing up the programmes, the council takes account of the development objectives and strategies presented in the regional scheme, the regional and business policy objectives, and the environmental impact of the programmes. (Rinne et al., 2016.)



**Figure 1.** Southwest Finland and Kainuu (source: Maanmittauslaitos, 2016)

For the Work Package 7 (WP7) of the YA project in Finland, we selected youth and social policy as our case in both of the functional regions. This choice enables us to examine how an EU-level policy (the Youth Guarantee) is interpreted at a national level (national Youth Guarantee, coordinating *Kohtaamo* project), and how the regional and local implementations of this national level policy (*Ohjaamo* Centres and their sub-projects) reflect and acknowledge the significantly different socio-demographic contexts and opportunity structures of the functional regions Southwest Finland and Kainuu. The importance of the cross-administrative Youth Guarantee Programme, which is a top-down policy, in the Finnish context is highlighted by the fact that it is one of the top programmes of the Finnish Government with its aim to ensure that young people have access to education, training and

employment, and to prevent them from being excluded from the society. As the aim of WP7 is to integrate both policy and functional regions as the unit of analysis, analysing youth and social policy is the best choice for highlighting the differences of the two Finnish functional regions due to that one of the central dimension of disparity between the regions is related to the wellbeing of young adults. In addition, one important focus group of the YA project is young adults in vulnerable situations, and the Finnish youth and social policies selected for this WP7 case study target especially those young adults who are in the most challenging situations with only few of the resources that are required to be able to participate in education or transition into the labour market. Furthermore, in the Finnish context, youth and social policy is intertwined with both education and labour market policies, which means that by selecting youth and social policy we will be able to take into account also some of the key features of the other two policy sectors when relevant.

Thus, the selected case studies are significant for the YA project since they enable the analysis of the dynamics and interaction of EU-level, national, and regional LLL policies. Furthermore, the selected policy projects are cross-administrative and implemented in both chosen functional regions, which makes regional comparisons possible. They are, however, adapted to local contexts by taking regional conditions into account, which enables us to analyse the significance of the socio-demographic context and local opportunity structures in planning and implementing of LLL policies targeted at young adults. The main target group of the chosen policy case is young adults in vulnerable life situations, meaning that the chosen cases are strongly connected with the main objectives of YA project.

### *1.1 Youth Guarantee in the European Union*

According to the EU, the Youth Guarantee, to which all the EU countries have committed to in 2013 (European Council, 2013), is both a structural reform to drastically improve school-to-work transitions and a measure to immediately support jobs for young people created as a response to the financial crisis in Europe, which has, among other things, led to increasing youth unemployment. The aim is to ensure that all young people under 25, after leaving education or becoming unemployed, are provided with concrete and good-quality support to find a job, a traineeship, or an apprenticeship, or get into continued education within four months or less (European Commission, 2015a). Thus, reducing youth unemployment and preventing long-term disengagement of young people is at the centre of this umbrella policy for youth employment (Eurofound, 2015). The idea of a youth guarantee emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in the Nordic countries; Finland implemented their first youth guarantee in mid-1990s (ILO, 2015). Indeed, the Youth Guarantee is based on successful experience in Finland, Sweden, and Austria showing that investing in school-to-work transitions for young people pays off. The Finnish Youth Guarantee is referred to and claimed to have helped to reduce unemployment amongst young people, with over 80 per cent successfully allocated a job, traineeship, apprenticeship, or further education within three months of registering. (European Commission, 2015b; Eurofound, 2015.) However, the claims of the Finnish success rate have been argued to be exaggerated (e.g. Lähteenmaa, 2016).

An important way in which the EU supports the implementation of the Youth Guarantee at national level is financial support especially through the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), which provide funding 'targeted at the inclusion of young people in the labour market and at developing their human capital' (European Commission, 2015c). One of the priorities of the ESF is improving access to employment by helping young people make the transition from school to work or training. As employment is seen to have a

central role in helping young people integrate better into society and everyday life, yet another priority is helping people from disadvantaged groups to get jobs, thus, enhancing their social inclusion. (European Commission, 2017). The YEI supports exclusively young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), including the long-term unemployed or those not registered as job-seekers, in areas where the youth unemployment is especially high. National Youth Guarantee programmes are based on the European policy framework and they must meet certain criteria, but the design and implementation of the programmes varies. Some common features can, however, be recognised as all the national Youth Guarantee programmes include three types of policy measures: education and training for employment, including the provision of professional guidance and help for early school leavers to return to education, employment intermediation services, such as job-search assistance and personalised follow-up of career plans, and active labour market policies affecting labour demand, such as hiring subsidies and public work programmes (ILO, 2015).

## 1.2 Youth Guarantee in Finland

In the public discourse about social exclusion of the youth in Finland, three waves can be distinguished. In the first one, which started in the 1980s, the concept of social exclusion was connected with the sociological research tradition focusing on disadvantage and poverty, and it was quickly adopted into the vocabulary of researchers, media, and the public. The second wave emerged in the early 1990s when, as a result of the severe economic depression, the attention was more clearly on those young people who were not in education or employment. The most recent, third wave started in the late 2000s and grew stronger in the beginning of this decade with the focus and aim on identifying and localising the group of 'socially excluded young people'. (Järvinen & Jahnukainen, 2001; Aaltonen, Berg, & Ikäheimo, 2015).

While the first youth guarantee policy was introduced in Finland already in the mid-1990s, the current Finnish Youth Guarantee scheme was introduced in 2005, albeit it has been revised since. At that time it was called *Nuorten Yhteiskuntatakuu* ('Youths' Guarantee to Society') with the aim of guaranteeing all unemployed young people under the age of 25 and recently graduated 25 to 29-year-olds an active option suited to their individual situation and needs when unemployment had continued for three months. In 2013, this guarantee was combined with an Education Guarantee according to which all comprehensive school graduates were guaranteed a study place in general upper secondary school or vocational education and training, an apprenticeship, or a place in a workshop or rehabilitation. Together they formed a policy programme named *Nuorisotakuu* ('Youth Guarantee'). The implementation of the policy and reaching its goals were hindered by the prolonged recession and the high general unemployment level. (Lähteenmaa, 2016.) The Youth Guarantee is one of the top policy programmes of the current Government, the cabinet of Juha Sipilä formed in 2015. The related programme is called *Nuorisotakuuta yhteisötakuun suuntaan* ('Youth Guarantee towards Community Guarantee'), and in the Strategic Programme of the Government (2015) it is stated that:

*"Cooperation between the public, private and third sectors in efforts to support young people will be intensified. Young people's life management skills and employment will be supported by means of strengthening social welfare and health care services as a part of the youth guarantee. The best practices of municipalities will be gathered together and the most effective ones will be adopted across the country."*

- *The youth guarantee will be developed into a model in which responsibility for a young person in need of support is allocated to a single place.*
- *All comprehensive school graduates will be guaranteed a place in education, working life or rehabilitation.*
- *Outreach youth work and job seeker coaching activities as well as mental health services for young people will be strengthened.*
- *Pay subsidies for young people and the Sanssi card will be developed in order to make work more attractive.”*

The implementation of the Youth Guarantee is the responsibility of national, regional, and local actors, especially municipalities, employment administration, and educational institutions. Also employers and companies participate by offering jobs and on-the-job learning possibilities to young people.

A central part of the Youth Guarantee, a programme for one-stop, low-threshold guidance centres called *Ohjaamo*, was launched in 2015. The implementation of the programme is coordinated by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and it is funded mainly through ESF but it has also additional national funding. A national coordinating *Kohtaamo* project has been established to support the design and implementation of this measure, develop a common digital platform and internet-based guidance, and evaluate results. There is currently an Ohjaamo guidance centre in 40 municipalities in Finland providing low-threshold support to young people below the age of 30. The forms of support include personal advice and guidance, support in life management, career planning, social skills, as well as education and employment support. The aim of the programme is to strengthen and simplify services for young people and eliminate the duplication of activities. The experts at the Ohjaamo Centres work as employees of their host organisations but are based in the Ohjaamo Centre's common premises. The aim is that the Ohjaamo Centre operates as a support for young people until a longer-term solution for their situation is found. There are a number of government authorities, such as experts from public employment services, municipal social and health services, municipal youth services, the social security office, educational institutions, and workshops, but also third sector organisations, in the cooperation network of the Ohjaamo Centres. A very central aspect of the Ohjaamo Programme is that young people have an active role in the design and evaluation of the Ohjaamo Centres and that they are involved in planning of the daily activities. In the launching of the Ohjaamo Centres, an important starting point has been the trust in that the regional and local actors know best the situation and needs of their own area. Definitions of the activities have been intentionally broad so that they have left room for regional or local interpretations. (E.g. European Commission, 2016; Määttä, 2017; Kautto, Korpilahti, Pudas, & Savonmäki, 2017.)

In years 2013–2015, Prime Minister Katainen's Government effectuated the Youth Guarantee with a yearly appropriation of 60 million Euros. 28 million was directed to the economic affairs and employment administration, and 32 million to the area of responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Even though the Youth Guarantee is one of the top programmes also of the current Finnish Government lead by Juha Sipilä, its budget has been cut drastically; there were major budget cuts first in 2015 and then in 2016 when the Government cut 30 million from the yearly appropriation. (Aaltonen, 2016; Lähteenmaa, 2016.) According to the Government's mid-term review of its action plan (Prime Minister's Office, 2017), the budget of the Youth Guarantee will be only one sixth of what it was in the



previous Government's term. However, the role and importance of outreach youth work has been emphasised by the current Government, and no drastic cuts have been made to its appropriation. The reason behind why outreach youth work, which provides highly individualised support for the youth and young adults in very vulnerable situations and with complex problems, seems to be the most valuable part of the Youth Guarantee for the Government has been argued to be the very individualistic idea of helping people as individuals and not to support disadvantaged communities or youth groups. This can be seen to go seamlessly together with the prevailing neo-liberal ethos as the problems and vulnerabilities are attached to the individual young people. (Lähteenmaa, 2016.)

The Government's approach to the Youth Guarantee has been criticised, for example, on keeping it standing only in name with no real resources (Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi, 2016; Lähteenmaa, 2016), downplaying the importance of cooperation between different relevant actors (Niemi, 2016), as well as making fickle stop-go decisions and drastically weakening the financing causing uncertainty and worry in the field (Lähteenmaa, 2016). While the Ohjaamo Programme is, according to current knowledge, going to be continued and established as part of the permanent operations of the policy field, there is not so far any specific funding allocated to that purpose; hence, the worry is what happens after the ESF funding ends (Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi, 2016). More generally, the Youth Guarantee has been criticised of having nowadays a too narrow understanding of social exclusion. Those young people who do not get a study place right after completing basic education or do not complete their studies, who are unemployed and customers of TE Offices, and who are not actively participating in any other measure (i.e. who are 'off the radar') are considered, in the Finnish Youth Guarantee, to be socially excluded. Before, the discourses of social exclusion saw it as a wider process (not a static circumstance) that could take place on several different dimensions, which were not all related to education and employment. The starting point of the Youth Guarantee, that social exclusion can be defined only in relation to education and employment, shows a way of mechanical thinking, which leads to the main focus of the Youth Guarantee: supporting the transitions to employment, education, or, to a much lesser extent, rehabilitation. (Kiilakoski, 2014.)

In a rather short time, the Youth Guarantee has reached a strong symbolic status in public discourses in Finland. The Youth Guarantee and social exclusion of youth and young adults form the dominant backdrop against to which the discourses on the current situation of both young people and the Finnish society are constructed. On one hand, the Youth Guarantee has brought the precarious conditions of youth and young adults' lives to the lime light, but on the other hand, it can be argued that the Youth Guarantee dominates the discourses in a way that other relevant issues, such as the basic youth services, are under the threat of being displaced, and the multidimensional understanding of issues related to youth and young adults clouded. When the customer and productivity viewpoints are emphasised in the discourses, there is a threat that the understanding of youth and young adulthood becomes very narrow. (Kiilakoski, 2016; Gretscher, Paakkunainen, Souto, & Suurpää, 2016.)

With regard to the views of the Finnish national level experts interviewed initially for the Work Package 5 of the YA project, the policy expert from the field of youth and social policy raised the issue of (regional) polarisation as one of the main challenges and highlighted the importance of regional policies in this regard.

*"I would say that polarisation is the one challenge that emerges strongly. (---) For us it shows itself as a regional issue, like how education is organised, how education is accessed, what are the available possibilities. There are differences, it can be seen at*

*the level of the population, we have a much higher degree of immigrants in some places than in others, and it is one thing that contributes to this polarisation development. The capital region is a different field of problems than, for example, Kainuu. (---) And I do see that one of the big challenges for us with this big group of young people is, is how the regional policy is constructed.” E\_FI\_NAT\_1*

According to this youth and social policy expert, the main objectives of the national level policy are, firstly, to support young adults' social participation and to include them in the decision making about things that concern their own lives, and, secondly, to support the regional and local policy actors of the field with financial and information guidance.

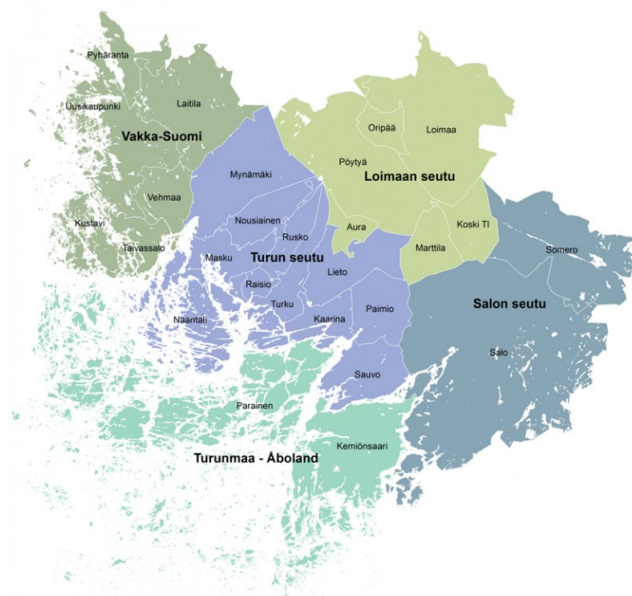
*”This social participation, which I understand as a very broad concept, and finding employment, and this lifelong learning, this like finding a job and a study place. These are for us a two very different types of things. The social participation is part of our general policy, it is one of our most important values with which we do a lot of work. It is connected to the way in which young people are included in the decision making that influences them. (---) Then when it comes to the labour market, there we, now we are talking about targeted youth work and there we have three main things. We have two forms of support, one is supporting the field of youth workshops and then we have outreach youth work. (---) The third thing is the multi-sectoral cooperation groups that are mandatory for municipalities. With regard to them it is not a money issue, it is information guidance that we do.” E\_FI\_NAT\_1*

According to the national level expert in the field of labour market policy, the main policy objective in relation to young adults revolves around securing interruption-free educational pathways. Also this expert highlighted the central role of the Youth Guarantee.

*”In the recent years it has, of course, been this Youth Guarantee and the activities related to Ohjaamos and the national Kohtaamo project. And more generally the idea that we aim to secure that people wouldn't fall after compulsory education and after general upper secondary and vocational education into different traps or gaps, and that the educational paths would be smooth.” E\_FI\_NAT\_3*

## 2. Case 1: Youth and Social Policy in Southwest Finland

Southwest Finland (Figure 2) consists of 27 municipalities and it is located by the coast of the Archipelago Sea. While Southwest Finland encompasses mainly urban and marine areas, the region includes also some rural parts. Southwest Finland has a population of around 473,000 inhabitants, which makes it the third largest region in Finland. The capital city of the region is Turku, which, with a total population of around 186,000, is currently the sixth biggest city in Finland. Turku is surrounded by smaller towns some of which are rather wealthy and from which many people commute to Turku for work or study. Southwest Finland is the second largest economic area in Finland with strong links to the Stockholm business area. The main industries of the region are marine industry and metal construction. However, over the past few decades, the traditional industries have been complemented by the growing service sector. Southwest Finland is also a strong educational region with 75 post-compulsory educational institutions, two universities, and four universities of applied sciences. (Regional Council of Southwest Finland, 2010; 2014; Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, 2013.)



**Figure 2.** Map of Southwest Finland (source: Regional Council of Southwest Finland)

The example of a concrete LLL policy measure in the field of youth and social policy selected for analysis for WP7 in Southwest Finland is the one stop, low-threshold guidance centre Ohjaamo, which is an integral part of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee at a regional level. The Ohjaamo Centre is funded by the ESF (till the end of 2018) and the employment appropriation of the city of Turku. The Ohjaamo Centre belongs to the administrative branch of the Employment Services Centre of Turku; hence, it has an emphasis leaning to the direction of labour market policy and, to some extent, education policy in its operations.

## 2.1 Regional Policy Context

In the regional strategy of Southwest Finland (Regional Council of Southwest Finland, 2014), the main goals related to youth and young adults include involving them in the decision making processes and development activities of the region, and developing a regional work and training model and career guidance structures and practises for young people, as well as improving students working life, entrepreneurial, and innovation skills. The balance between skills supply and demand in the region is strongly emphasised.

*“Skills (‘osaaminen’) are strengthened when education is provided in a close cooperation with the labour market. The skills and know-how required in the working life are the starting point. Good-quality, accessible, and lifelong guidance guarantees that individual’s skills and potential are used in the right way. It is of utmost importance that young people’s connection with and transition to working life is secured with training and guidance models that can be applied to different age groups. These models must be developed in close cooperation with the industry and commerce by taking into account their needs as well as the existing operation models. A special additional challenge is securing employment and connection with the working life of recently graduated, immigrants, and those in disadvantaged positions and under the threat of social exclusion. In that regard, the importance and development needs of guidance activities of the educational institutions that are based on students’ individual needs is highlighted. The goal is that the skills demand of the labour market and the skills potential of individuals are in balance.”* (Regional Council of Southwest Finland, 2014, p. 30.)

In addition to the regional strategy, there is also a regional education strategy in Southwest Finland (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, 2013). It sets broad goals, which include strengthening of skills and securing the quality of education by making sure that, for example, the general awareness of the region’s educational opportunities improves, the attractiveness of the fields with a high level of employment opportunities and needs increases, education meets the changing needs of the labour market, educational services improve the wellbeing and life management skills of the region’s residents, and educational and guidance services have a clear customer-orientation. The target groups of the strategy include especially NEETs and young immigrants, but also young entrepreneurs as well as young people with higher education degrees.

In the Southwest Finland region, the Youth Guarantee and the Education Guarantee have been under active development since 2005. Various different development projects, models, and approaches have been created in broad-based cooperation between several actors in order to guarantee access to education for young people, to prevent educational interruptions and social exclusion, and to support young people’s transitions into the labour market. Particular attention has been paid to cooperation of relevant policy actors, especially during transition phases, as well as to realising the Youth Guarantee with regard to some special groups, such as young immigrants and youth with special needs). The main emphasis of the LLL policies targeted at youth and young adults is clearly on education and employment as the focus is on facilitating smooth school-to-work transitions, and reducing young people’s exclusion from education and work.

The LLL policies are governed by several coordinating institutions and education institutes on different levels in Southwest Finland. The role of the municipalities of the region is also important. Many of the policy projects in Southwest Finland are examples of models where

several actors work together, and networking is utilised to achieve the goals. Information and good practices are shared in order to find cost-effective and functional solutions. The goal is to offer young people guidance that is both effective and correctly timed so that each of them can find the right place for themselves, and to help meet the labour demand in the area. (Rinne et al., 2016.)

In the field of youth and social policy, one of the main policy measures is the low-threshold guidance centre Ohjaamo, which is located in Turku (Rinne et al., 2016). Based on the assumptions of the prevalence of the standardised normal life courses, but also taking local living conditions into account, the aim is to provide help for young people who need educational support and personal guidance in order to eventually reach the labour market and become employable, such as young entrepreneurs who need instructions and advice on how to run their businesses (Rinne et al., 2016; Rinne et al., 2017). The national level policy, the Ohjaamo Programme, was explicitly designed so that the definitions of the structures and activities are broad in order to leave enough room for regional or local interpretations. Hence, when planning the measure, fitting the measure to the local and regional needs was enabled and encouraged.

## 2.2 Story of Case 1

### **The Policy Measure, Correspondences, and Implementation**

The Ohjaamo Centre in Turku collects several services for under 30-year-olds under one roof offering employment and rehabilitation services, as well as information and guidance. The general aims of the Ohjaamo Centre are to build a service management and multidisciplinary service model for young people as well as to support and rehabilitate them to enter the labour market. The main approach of this LLL policy measure is lowering the threshold for youth and young adults who are seeking their way to services by minimising bureaucracy and making services more flexible. The experts working in the Ohjaamo Centre have actively participated in its planning and development. The main problems both the national Ohjaamo Programme and the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku aim to tackle are youth unemployment and school drop-out.

*“Previously they [services targeted to youth and young adults] have been perhaps more scattered. Now that these have been combined into one work community, the idea has been that these service processes would become quicker and more easily approachable for the young people, that there would be a familiar place where they could get comprehensive services, so that it wouldn’t be like, first you go here [district] and meet someone. And they talk about employment contracts. And then they send you there [another district] and... So the system would be customer-oriented in that sense, it is probably the main point here.” E\_FI\_SF\_5*

The Ohjaamo Centre provides services related to education and employment (information and guidance services, labour market coordinator, education coordinator, career planner, etc.) and different pop-up services offered by several ‘external’ actors (e.g., sexual therapist, psychiatric nurse, vocational guidance counsellor, career planner, housing counsellor, adult education counsellors, TE Office’s employment adviser, and rehabilitative work services). Young people are guided to services that fit their needs and wishes (e.g., help with writing a job application or CV, or with finding a place in a rehabilitative workshop). In addition to offering services for young people, the services of the Ohjaamo Centre can be utilised also

by professionals who work with young people, such as teachers and career planners. An important part of the operations of the Ohjaamo Centre are monthly themed exhibitions and pop-up events. Also youth participation is very much emphasised by the experts.

*"People draft aid applications here and we provide help with them. Here you can print out appendices, scan, and take care of these things for free. (---) We also offer guidance to young people with for example debt problems, by first dealing with the problems here and then maybe requesting assistance from a debt advisor. Then we have also social workers who can offer a lot of support for the daily life." E\_FI\_SF\_3*

*"And the third essential objective of the Ohjaamo is tied to one of our central themes, which is youth participation, in that young people are involved in developing this operation." E\_FI\_SF\_5*

*"Naturally, we try to do our best to promote and facilitate the youth's own interest to take care of their own business as much as we can. For example, now that we had the election, we interviewed candidates from Turku and then encouraged young people to vote; it is a simple example. Even though we are politically non-attached and have no official opinion on these matters, we do want young people to promote their own interests." E\_FI\_SF\_3*

The target group of the Ohjaamo Centre is under 30-year-old youth and young adults living Turku, although some of the information services are also available to non-residents. A special emphasis of the policy is on those young people who are not in education, employment, or training. Young people can access the Ohjaamo Centre's services without any referrals (from, e.g., a doctor or an employment official), and participation is voluntary. The target group is defined by the funders (ESF, the city). As the target group of the national Ohjaamo Programme is very broad, the actual addressee profiles of the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku did not differ from the official target group.

*"But we have an extensive target group, as it is under 30. We have these 15-year-old sneaker dudes and then those who may already have a university degree and kids, who have been in working life and have experience." E\_FI\_SF\_3*

There are approximately 46000 young people between the ages 15–29 in Turku, so the size of the overall target group of the policy measure is considerable. One of the experts estimated that there had been 5500 visits in the Ohjaamo Centre (at the time of the interview, it had been open for little over a year).

The Ohjaamo Centre has adopted a holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. In addition to acknowledging the existence of these factors, they are addressed either by providing individualised support for the young adults or by finding other service providers (mostly public or third sector actors or other policy projects) that have available the forms of support that suit the needs of the young adults. The logic behind this kind of an approach, according to the expert interviewees, is that young adults have to reach a certain level of functional abilities, skills, as well as physical and mental wellbeing in order to be a situation where the main goal of the policy measure, such as entering education or the labour market, can be reached. While this type of a perspective can be derived from the national policy, it has been strengthened at the Ohjaamo Centre as a result of the experts' experiences during the first year of its operation as the example in the interview excerpt below illustrates.

*"The educational guidance and study support and finding a job have definitely been the central themes. But now there are these pop-up operators, and we have noticed that these problems tend to pile up in a sense, as there may be examples where a young person has come here to apply for a job. And they have ended up using a sex therapist's services. And we have realised that getting a job may be dependent on some part of their own sexual identity, and that there is so much stress there that the job is not a priority."* E\_FI\_SF\_5

While the holistic approach taken by the measure on its participants' lives means that the different life spheres are acknowledged and their overall wellbeing is taken into account, the issue of conciliation between the different life spheres of the participants did not really emerge in the interviews beyond that. For example, none of the experts raised the issue of family life or family responsibilities in the interviews. This is likely due to the relatively young age of most of the measures' participants as well as to the comprehensive and affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC; 'day care') system in Finland in which all children under school-age have a subjective right to participate and the fee depends on family income and the number of children (ECEC is completely free of charge for families with a low level of income). Hence, if a young adult, who has enrolled into the policy measure, has a child or children, they are not very likely to affect the parent's participation in a policy measure to a significant extent.

Facilitating young adults' autonomy and reducing their biographical uncertainty is also closely related to the holistic approach. The importance of helping the participants to improve their skills related to everyday life management, learning and studying, career management, and working life was emphasised by the experts. Increasing motivation and ability to get involved with their community and decision making related to their own lives were also significant aims. The importance of facilitating participants' overall wellbeing and life management skills was seen as something that is necessary for them to be able to participate in education and become employable. The dominant national policy ethos and seeing young people as future employees who need to be ushered into the use of the labour market were rather strong in the talk of the experts.

With regard to tackling the so-called wicked problems in the lives of the participating young adults in vulnerable situations, a central tool of the Ohjaamo Centre is network collaboration. By working together with, for example, employment officials and services, education institutions and special needs education professionals, social services, mental and physical health professionals, and addiction treatment centres, and, thus, by bringing together a wide range of professional skills and representatives of the relevant jurisdictional fields, it is possible to address the multilevel wicked problems in a way that would not be possible for a single policy measure or actor working alone. However, when compared to the experts working in the respective LLL policy measure in the other functional region Kainuu, the experts in Southwest Finland had experienced significantly more problems in this cooperation.

As said, the experts working in the Ohjaamo Centre are actively and systematically involved with several different policy actors and networks. The main external cooperation partners of the Ohjaamo Centre include the TE Office, Municipality's Welfare Division, Education and Cultural Services, Employment Committee, Employment Services Centre, and Youth Services. There is cooperation also with third sector actors (e.g., Helsinki Deaconess Institute and the Evangelical Lutheran Church), outreach youth work, projects supporting immigrants, rehabilitative workshops, local/regional employers and companies, the Defence

Forces, Criminal Sanctions Agency, schools and educational institutions, Child Welfare, and the local Youth Council. The forms of collaboration vary based mainly on the main objective of the partner. With regard to the private sector, cooperation with region's companies and employers includes mainly practical training, work-try-outs, and on-the-job learning periods. The cooperation with public sector institutions and actors is typically related to education, employment, social security, as well as physical and mental wellbeing of the young adults. The cooperation with the other policy institutions and actors is mainly coordinated and developed by using well-established, formal network collaboration with the other municipal and regional actors.

According to the interviewed experts, the discrepancies and conflicts between national and regional/local level policies cause significant challenges to the cooperation between the LLL policy measure and some of the regional actors. The impacts of the policy measure are closely monitored by the national level policy and the Employment Services Centre of the city under the administration of which the Ohjaamo Centre operates, and, also in this regard, the sometimes nonparallel main emphases can cause challenges to the experts' work.

*"Well, sure, collaboration is going well at the level of our daily work with the customers, but when it comes to making structural decisions about, for example, the allocation of resources, time is often wasted, because all sectors have their own interests and the city reforms often conflict with the national one. We now have this national background project that steers these Ohjaamo Centres, and often it is in conflict with the city's own interests." E\_FI\_SF\_5*

*"The funders have their own expectations for results, and they have the actual numbers of starting and finishing customers that they require. And the Employment Services Centre of the city is of course expecting us to have a positive impact on youth employment, and they are constantly monitoring the numbers we employ with the city employment appropriation. They monitor how many go to rehabilitative work activities, and how many people we get off from the black list." E\_FI\_SF\_3*

The organisational level differences between the local and regional policy actors with regard to, for example, budgets, organisation of operations, steepness of hierarchies, and management models can make close cooperation rather difficult from the viewpoint of allocation of resources and division of work. In addition, some forthcoming reforms in the municipal government related to unemployed youth were causing uncertainties in the field.

*"After all, Turku is part of this Municipal Employment Experiment, which means that the under 25 year old unemployed youth will in the future be the municipality's responsibility. So TE Office will no longer service them. And an employment services unit or this Employment services centre will then take them on and they will, the youth will just show up there, so, so then from early August on the latest. So they will then handle all like TE Office services, all the way from like the making of the investigation, so will be this like municipal TE Office. We have gotten into this like, sort of like a limbo now that Ohjaamo pretty much takes care of this employment of the under 30 year-olds and things and these services, so how do we like fit into the big picture, that is like a challenge, a big challenge for us." E\_FI\_SF\_3*

*"It is kind of a problem that all of these people have their own bosses who breathe down on them and say what they must do and dictate their daily schedules. So not everything fits our work within the Ohjaamo Centre. These are matters for negotiation,*



*and we always get different demands from own teams and units. They can be very different; the government and the municipality have differences in their procedures, tasks and organisational models and even matters of authority.” E\_FI\_SF\_5*

*“Information systems are a big challenge for us. We have people from different organisations, all of whom are using a different information system. And they all enter their own results in their own systems. We have really struggled with getting our results out, when people mark them in their own systems and the systems don’t communicate with each other. One of my young people can visit many places here within Ohjaamo meaning that the problem is doubled and cumulates constantly.” E\_FI\_SF\_3*

It seems that the interviewed experts of the Ohjaamo Centre were working under quite a lot of stress caused by the discrepancies between their main backdrop, the national level policy, and the local policy interests and reforms, and also by the difficulties related to managing with the multijurisdictional and, in some cases, bureaucratic cooperation network of different institutions working in the field. In addition, the experts were unsure about the future of the Ohjaamo Centre and felt that they had to constantly justify its existence to local policy makers in the midst of the ongoing and forthcoming structural reforms.

For the interviewed addressees of the Ohjaamo Centre, the motivation for participating varied greatly due to the wide definition of the target group and the variety of services available. For those young adults who were using mainly the information and ‘lighter’ guidance services, the reason for participation was to get help either with finding a job or with figuring out the next steps to take with regard to education or employment. The value they saw in the policy measure was that they could use it as an extra tool to help them progress on the life course trajectory they were already on.

With regard to those young adults who were participating in rehabilitative workshops aimed at young people in more vulnerable situations and with lower functional abilities the need that defined the participation was related to their fractured life courses, which typically entailed severe social challenges as well as series of what they saw as ‘failures’, such as having difficulties with learning at school, dropping out of education, and not being able to find or keep a job. In this sense, they were using the ‘normal’ life course as a yard stick against which they compared their own biographies. For those young adults, the measure’s role was to, in a way, get them back on track on a more standard life course, when compared to their fractured biography so far, as they often hoped to eventually be able to participate in full-time education or work.

Generally speaking, the ideal futures that the young adults imagined they would have in ten year time were mostly rather conventional, and their understanding of adulthood was quite normative. All of them mentioned that they would like to have a job, preferably a stable, interesting, and personally fulfilling one. Being graduated from upper secondary or tertiary education, having an own apartment or house, as well as having a spouse and close and warm relationship with family and friends were also often included in the image of the ideal future. Happiness, safety, and regular lifestyle were important for many of the young adults’ life projects. However, the most often mentioned future wish among the participants was that “by then I hope I know what it is that I want to do in life”.

*“Well, I hope that then [in ten year time] at the latest I will know what I’m going to do. And that I would have had studied and, like, found a direction, and I would have some nice job, I hope. A job that would be versatile enough, so I don’t get bored doing*

*something monotonous, a job where I would have a chance to interact a lot with a lot of different people, like a lot of interaction with people.” Y\_FI\_SF\_3*

*“I don’t really plan that far [ten years] ahead, but I think I hope that I could be in contact and spend a lot of time with my father and friends and family, and, like, it might be nice if I could get things sorted in a way that I could have a place in two cities, so that I could also meet with my friends in [city] and do the things that I like with them. I think I probably will have a job somewhere, probably working with cars.” Y\_FI\_SF\_5*

The young adults participating in the more ‘in-depth’ services felt that taking part in them had affected their lives also outside the measure. An often mentioned important aspect of participation in the Ohjaamo Centre’s activities was that it helped the young adults to gain or maintain a normal rhythm in their lives, which they found to be very difficult in a situation where there is nothing to do during the weeks. Some of the young adults talked about how straining life is when there is nothing to do, and that the longer one stays at home the harder it becomes to ‘get back’ and become active again.

*“Now that I’m on this gap year, so when I quit school and applied right away to this type of youth activity thing so that I could maintain my rhythm.” Y\_FI\_SF\_5*

*“[Participating in the LLL policy measure] has the effect that, like finally I didn’t have to just stay at home by myself, I got to go out and meet people, talk with others. That has had a very positive effect on my life. And getting a kind of routine into life, coming here.” Y\_FI\_SF\_3*

### ***The Policy in a Biography***

Here, two ‘ideal-typical’ biographies constructed of the life stories of the young adults participating in the Ohjaamo Centre’s activities in Southwest Finland are presented. In order to protect the anonymity of the young adults in vulnerable situations that were interviewed for the YA project<sup>1</sup>, no biographies of individual young adults are presented. That means that “Harri” and “Niko’s” life stories told here do not trace back to any individual young persons living in the Southwest Finland region (or elsewhere), but are analytical constructs formed of more than one life story of young adults following similar paths, having faced similar interruptions in their life courses, as well as highlighting similar challenges and needs.

“**Harri**”, a young man in his mid-twenties, is an addressee of the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku. He has graduated from a university of applied sciences and is looking for a job after a short period of unemployment. He contacted the Ohjaamo Centre in order to get help with finding employment.

Harri is from a rural municipality located in Southwest Finland. His parents divorced when he was five, and he has lived with his mother and siblings, and, eventually, step-father and half-siblings, but his relationship with his father has always remained close as well. Harri describes his childhood and primary school years as ‘normal and uneventful’. He thinks he was an above-average student in most of the subjects, and he liked going to school – especially because he had a lot of friends there. Friendships were an important part of his

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1 For more details about the interviews conducted in the functional region Southwest Finland, see the Finnish National Report for Work Package 5 of the YA project (Tikkanen, Järvinen, Eskola, Rinne, & Silvennoinen, 2017).

time also in lower secondary school. Even though transferring to a much bigger school located further away from his home was a little bit stressful for him in the beginning, he got used to the new school environment soon. His achievement level at lower secondary school was not quite as good as in primary school, but he still did well and liked especially the social aspects of school.

After compulsory education, Harri enrolled into a general upper secondary school in his home municipality. He chose general upper secondary education over vocational education and training, because he was planning on applying to study engineering at a university, and thought that general upper secondary school would be the best route to access the university studies. He graduated in time and applied to study engineering at a university and, as his 'backup' option, at a university of applied sciences both of which are located in Turku. He did not get accepted into the university but got a study place at the university of applied sciences to which he then enrolled. However, before actually starting his studies, he enlisted to the national compulsory military service and served for nearly nine months. In the spring after the military service, he applied again to the university as he would have preferred to gain a master level degree, which he thought would be more competitive in the labour market, instead of the bachelor level degree available at the university of applied sciences. Again, he did not get accepted, so he started the studies at the university of applied sciences and, eventually, graduated almost in target time.

As Harri wanted to find employment in the summer after his graduation, he contacted the local TE Office (Public employment and business services). He sent some job applications, participated in two work life coaching courses focusing on, for example, how to write a good job application and CV. He received some personal counselling at the TE Office, but did not find it very useful, because he felt that the counsellor talked down on him and did not trust his abilities to make decisions by himself. In the autumn, he found fixed-term employment for seven months at a subcontractor of a large company. He liked his job and his colleagues, but the employer could not continue his contract after the term ended. Due to the somewhat negative experiences of the local TE Office, Harri decided to look for support for finding employment elsewhere, he only registered at the TE Office as an unemployed job-seeker. Some of his friends had used the services of the Ohjaamo Centre, so he went there. His goal is clear – he wanted help with finding employment but also information about applying to and studying at a university with a bachelor's level degree already completed. He thinks that if he will not find employment, he might try to continue his studies at the university he previously applied into.

At the Ohjaamo Centre, Harri has mainly utilised the services of an employment counsellor, which have included mapping his interest and skills as well as looking for potential employers. At the time of the interview, he had been to a couple of job interviews and was waiting to hear the results of the latest one – the first two jobs he did not get. Even though the counsellor suggested some of the Ohjaamo Centre's more in-depth services, such as workshops, for Harri, he was not interested because he was confident that he would find a job soon as he felt that the region's employment situation in his field was good and that he was also ready to move out of the region for work.

**"Niko"** is a young man in his early twenties. He is also an addressee of the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku. He has completed compulsory education but has no other educational qualifications. His life course has been quite fragmented, and his motivation in participating in the Ohjaamo Centre's activities stems from his need to 'get his life together' by maintaining a

reasonable daily rhythm, having something meaningful to do, and getting support in planning his future steps.

Niko has lived in the same city his entire life. He has never met his father and has lived with his mother, step-father, and half-siblings until he was 15. He has a very problematic relationship with his parents, especially with the step-father who Niko describes as a violent man with an alcohol problem. Also his mother is a heavy drinker and has behaved abusively towards her son. Due to these issues and his own behavioural problems, Niko was taken into foster care in his teens. Once he turned 18, he moved into his own apartment.

In primary school, Niko was diagnosed with dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which manifested themselves with severe problems in learning, concentrating, and behaving in class. This led to him being transferred from a 'regular' class to a much smaller special needs education group in the beginning of the third grade. While the special needs teachers had more time per an individual student and were, thus, able to support students' learning more, Niko found that attending a special needs class made things worse for him, because the group was really restless and the students behaved very poorly, which made concentrating on trying to learn and moderate his own behaviour even more difficult for him. His achievement level was very low, but he was never held back a year. At the time of transitioning from primary to lower secondary school, things at home were getting worse, which was reflected on his behaviour in and out of school. Things escalated to a point where the local social workers organised him a place to live in a group home for children and adolescent. This is a period in time of which Niko clearly does not want to talk about and even thinking about it makes him upset and agitated. He eventually continued his lower secondary studies from the group home and graduated from compulsory education one year after his age cohort.

After compulsory education, with the support of the social workers of the group home Niko applied to several different vocational programmes provided in a vocational special needs education and training institution. As his grades were very poor, he got accepted only to a programme in the mechanical sector that was low on his preference list. He started these studies in the autumn, but skipped school a lot and, after a couple of months, dropped out. One of the guidance counsellors working at the vocational school suggested to Niko that he could enrol into preparatory training for VET, which he did. However, he continued to skip school also in the preparatory training and eventually just stopped going there completely. Niko feels that the reasons why he dropped out of education were the difficult situation in his personal life, difficulties in understanding of what was being taught, and that he was not really interested in the field he was studying. On the other hand, he did not actually know what he would like to study. The applications to different VET programmes he had sent were not based on his own interest but the suggestions and recommendations of adults around him.

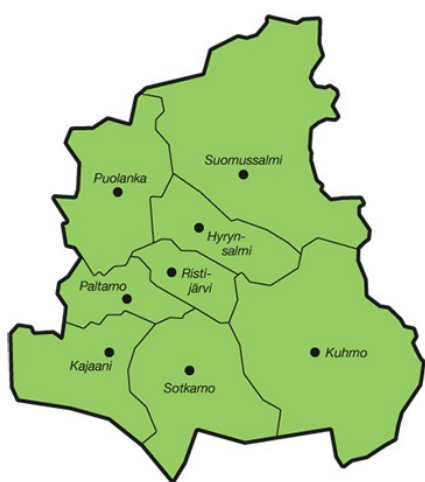
Starting from the lower secondary school, Niko had been spending a lot of time drinking and sometimes also doing drugs with his friends. He often felt that there was no point in trying to study or look for a job, because he thought that he could not manage with studies or work even if he tried. During the two years after dropping out of VET, Niko participated briefly in some support measures and workshops suggested to him by, for example, the experts working in outreach youth work, but dropped out from them mainly because he did not feel like he belonged there, had problems following the schedules of the measures' activities, and spent rather time with his friends.

After turning 20, Niko started to feel that his life was going to waste and that he should start doing something that would stop his life 'from spiralling out of control'. He had quite a lot of debt due to several quickie loans he had taken, used alcohol to self-medicate his symptoms, which were likely related to his ADHD, and had severe problems with his circadian rhythm as he would usually wake up late in the afternoon and went to bed around five or six o'clock in the morning. Niko did not, however, really know what to do or where to start with taking control of his life, so around five or six months passed by. Then he was contacted again by an outreach youth worker, who talked things over with him and guided him to one a rehabilitative workshop organised in collaboration with the Ohjaamo Centre. Niko attended the workshop for almost a year during which he received also personal counselling and professional help with his drinking habit and circadian rhythm. After the rehabilitative workshop, he is now participating in the more education and employment oriented services of the Ohjaamo Centre and is planning on applying to a vocational school to study either information and telecommunications or electrical engineering both of which he finds potentially interesting. Niko still struggles especially with his circadian rhythm and, occasionally, with feelings of depression. While he is motivated to continue his studies in the future, he is rather worried about keeping up with his classmates as he fears that learning might cause him problems like it did before. Hence, he feels that he needs more time to take his life into control and come to terms with his past in relation to both his relationship with his family and the repercussions of some of the poor choices he has made along the way.

In many ways, Harri and Niko represent the opposite ends of the 'addressee spectrum' of the Ohjaamo Centre. Harri is very goal-oriented young man with a reliable support network of family and friends, good study and job searching skills as well as high functional abilities in general, thus, using the services only as an extra boost to his job hunting. While he feels that it is nice to get some help, he thinks that he would probably manage to find a job by himself just as well. Niko, on the other hand, is in a much more vulnerable situation and, despite the support he has already received, in need of multidimensional, in-depth services of which he is mostly aware also himself. For Niko, the meaning of the policy measure is far more comprehensive than for Harri.

### 3. Case 2: Youth and Social Policy in Kainuu

Kainuu (Figure 3) consists of eight municipalities, which are primarily rural. The region is located in northern Finland, and while it is larger in terms of acreage (Kainuu is roughly the size of Belgium) than Southwest Finland, it is much more sparsely populated. The population of Kainuu is around 75,000, which makes it the second smallest region in mainland Finland. The capital city of the region is Kajaani, which is the only municipality of the region that can be described as mainly urban. However, with its 38,000 inhabitants, Kajaani is notably small for a region's capital city. Compared to Southwest Finland, there are much fewer post-compulsory educational opportunities in Kainuu; there are no universities (albeit a separate unit of the University of Oulu is located in Kajaani) and only one university of applied sciences. Altogether, there are 21 post-compulsory educational institutions in the region. The young people living in Kainuu are, in many cases, forced to leave their home towns due to the scarcity of educational opportunities in the region. (Regional Council of Kainuu, 2015; 2016; Kainuu Social Welfare and Health Care Joint Authority, 2014.) In comparison to the other functional region, Southwest Finland, Kainuu is a less wealthy region with a decreasing population and fewer life opportunities available for young people. In addition, the general education level of the population is lower, and unemployment and youth unemployment rates are higher as is the dependency ratio.



**Figure 3.** Map of Kainuu (source: Regional Council of Kainuu)

The concrete example of the youth and social policy selected for analysis for WP7 in the functional region Kainuu is the one stop, low-threshold guidance centre Ohjaamo called NUPPA, which is an integral part of the Youth Guarantee at a regional level. The NUPPA Centre, which belongs to the administrative branch of the municipal Youth Services, receives funding from ESF (through the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the

Environment, till the end of 2018), the State, and in the future also the Regional State Administrative Agencies. In the organisational structure of the NUPPA Centre, the future has been taken into account so that if the project does not receive further funding, NUPPA Centre can be subsumed under the structures of the local youth services quite easily due to, for example, the small number of its employees. Next, some of the central aspects of the organisation and objectives of this LLL policy measure are presented.

### 3.1 Regional Policy Context

The main regional policy document, Kainuu Programme, incorporates the Regional Programme for the years 2014–2017 and the Regional Strategy 2035. With regard to youth and young adults, the main issues revolve around the negative population growth rate and the aging of the population, as well as the high level of youth unemployment in the region. Due to the scarcity of educational opportunities after upper secondary level and the poor employment situation, many young people move from the region to other parts of the country to study and work, which is strongly reflected on the population structure of the region. In the Kainuu Programme, the central question related to young adults is, on one hand, how to get the region's young adults to stay in the region or at least to return there after studies, and, on the other hand, how to attract young people, especially young families, to move to Kainuu from the other Finnish regions and abroad as well. The plans and goals of the Programme include fighting social exclusion, implementing more measures supporting the development of children and youth, maintaining and developing educational offerings as well as stronger marketing of them to young people, paying special attention on reducing youth unemployment and increasing entrepreneurship among young people, supporting active participation, highlighting the importance of creative culture as a source of wellbeing and sense of community, and targeting guidance to healthy life style for young people and those who are long-term unemployed. In the Kainuu Programme (Regional Council of Kainuu, 2014), it is stated that:

*"In order to strengthen wellbeing in the region, it is necessary to promote residents' attachment to working life and other meaningful activities maintaining functional abilities and health as well as sense of community and participation – especially with regard to young people and those with handicaps or other restrictions. (---) Working capacity and wellbeing at work are increased in a way that contributes positively to the attractiveness of the working life, especially in relation to young people and those who are unemployed. The sense of community and opportunities for participation are strengthened to improve wellbeing, to make the sense of having possibilities to influence one's own surroundings more concrete, and to increase mutual understanding and cooperation between different population segments (including immigrants)."*

*"With regard to young people's skills and individual paths to employment, special emphasis is placed on improving their working life skills and attaching them to working life faster. More resources are allocated to decreasing youth unemployment, making sure that there are enough study places available, and implementing the Youth Guarantee. A special emphasis in the regional development work is put on children and young people. The goal is that their lives are safe, they can trust adults, find personal fulfilment, and want to develop their skills with a strong trust in their own abilities, and that the level of their wellbeing is high. The aim is that an increasing number of young people have the desire and skills to become entrepreneurs. Moreover, the aim is that*

*especially young people take part in the regional development work and participate in improving their life circumstances more actively. Young people's development to active citizenship is supported and, thus, the risks of social exclusion are decreased."*

In implementing LLL policies in Kainuu, a wide range of regional actors from various administrative bodies are involved. Also many third sector actors are actively involved in the field. The main policy objectives are related to supporting the general wellbeing of young people and reducing their risk of social exclusion. The Youth Guarantee is being actively implemented all across Kainuu, and the aim is to offer young people exactly the services they need. Workshop projects help strengthen young people's ability and capacity to seek training or employment. Funders of the Youth Guarantee in Kainuu include the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of North Ostrobothnia, the EU, the ESF, and the Public Utility of Education of the City of Kajaani. In Kainuu, there are active employment, education, and rehabilitation related workshops targeted at young adults in several municipalities. (Rinne et al., 2016; Rinne et al., 2017.)

In the Kainuu region, in addition to the economic perspective, social and human perspectives are also very much emphasised in regional LLL policies. In the Kainuu welfare plan for children and young people, the fact that the region's children and young people are in poorer health than the rest of the country on average is highlighted as a major challenge. One of the region's main goals is to reduce the number of young people left outside active policy measures by implementing the Youth Guarantee.

The LLL policies and policy measures are well organised, and different institutions and actors work in collaboration within region. This is not made only possible but also necessary by the fact that there is a rather limited amount of resources to be used for this purpose, and there are only a relatively small number of people living in the region. Out of the three policy fields central for the YA project (labour market, education, and youth and social), the youth and social policy sector is best represented in the (concrete) LLL policies in the Kainuu region. There are also several policies that can be categorised as belonging to the labour market policy sector. However, in the mapping process of Kainuu's LLL policies targeted at young adults in the Working Package 3, only one policy measure oriented clearly towards the education policy sector emerged (although its goals include also improving general life management skills and reducing social exclusion, which are typical goals for youth and social policy). While goals and objectives related to educational policy are, of course, taken into account in many of the youth and social policy documents and measures, as well as in more general policy plans and programmes, it seems to be that educational policy objectives are in almost all the cases subsumed in more 'comprehensive' LLL policies in this region. (Rinne et al., 2016.)

One of the most important LLL policy measures in the field of youth and social policy is the low-threshold guidance centre NUPPA, which is part of the national Ohjaamo Programme. NUPPA is an Ohjaamo centre, but its name, which is an acronym for 'a service place for young people' ('Nuorten Palvelupaikka'), has been chosen to highlight its policy emphasis and close connection to the local and regional youth services. The national level policy was explicitly designed so that the definitions of the structures and activities are broad, thus, leaving room for regional or local interpretations when planning the measure.



### 3.2 Story of Case 2

#### **The Policy Measure, Correspondences, and Implementation**

The NUPPA Centre brings all of Kajaani's youth services under one roof and provides young people with free and confidential counselling, advice, life management support, hobby activities, and expert services. The aim is to implement the principles of lifelong guidance and to create services for long-term and urgent situations as well as to construct an operating model for the various service providers operating in Kajaani. The main approach of the LLL policy measure is taking a comprehensive approach to young people's life and providing tailored support for their individual needs, which is something that the experts planning the measure wanted to highlight also in the centre's name instead of calling it just Ohjaamo. While the main emphasis of the national level policy is on youth unemployment and school drop-out, the central problem the NUPPA Centre aims to tackle is social exclusion of youth and young adults. The NUPPA Centre belongs to the administrative branch of the local Youth Services.

*"Our operation is based on a youth work perspective, not education and working life like Ohjaamo guidance centres usually are; instead, our focus is to help the young people get their life and everyday activities under control. And it is precisely this youth orientation that is our driving force. The policy emphasis starts from our regional needs. (---) And we wanted to keep this broader perspective instead of just pushing work, work and studies, because you can't go out there if the basics are off. If the foundation isn't right, it leads to kids going off to study and school and then dropping out when they realise that they don't have the resources or they have made the wrong choice."* E\_FI\_K\_3

Services of the NUPPA Centre include, for example, different rehabilitative workshops that aim to a situation where the young person is able to move on to education, rehabilitative work experience periods, information services, a youth club, small group activities (cooking, grocery shopping, physical exercise and games, household management, outdoor activities, voluntary work, first aid courses etc.), and individual guidance and support.

*"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 them from winding up institutionalised."* E\_FI\_K\_2

The target group of the NUPPA Centre is all the under 30-year-old youth and young adults living in Kainuu. A special emphasis in the target group of the policy is on the young people in the most vulnerable positions under the threat of social exclusion or already socially excluded. Young people can access the NUPPA Centre's services through multiple different channels and they do not need any referrals (from, e.g., a doctor or employment official) to gain access, and participation is voluntary. As the target group of the Ohjaamo guidance centres is very broad (i.e. all youth and young adults of certain ages), the actual addressee profiles of the NUPPA Centre in Kajaani did not differ from the official target group.

*"This house is for all young people. You don't have to have the Donald Duck type black clouds above your head with lightning bolts, but you can come here in both joy and sadness; it can be a so-called light and nice matter of, for example, asking for help to do an internship abroad and finding out what you need for it." E\_FI\_K\_*

There are approximately 6800 young people between the ages 15–29 in Kajaani. One of the experts estimated that there has been little over 4000 visits in the NUPPA Centre in the previous three-month period. The number includes the participants of the workshops and other sub-measures, young people having meetings in the facilities of the NUPPA Centre, visits to the youth club in the evenings (young people can come to hang out, play pool, shoot darts etc.), and so forth. Thus, not all the over 4000 visits have been related to in-depth services, and one person can visit more times than one.

As mentioned above, the NUPPA Centre has adopted a holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. In addition to acknowledging the existence of these factors, it address them either by providing individualised support for the young adults or by finding other service providers (mostly public or third sector actors or other policy projects) that have available the forms of support that suit the needs of the young adults.

*"[The goal is] that we would have as few young people as possible outside services, so that they would get the services they need. Then again, if we think about reducing for instance long-term unemployment, our goals include that we wouldn't have unemployed young people, or at least that there would be fewer of them, and that we could work with education institutions to support the youth so that there wouldn't be these negative differences at schools or education institutions. And that young people would get an occupation and finish comprehensive school and continue on the next path." E\_FI\_K\_3*

With regard to the different life spheres of the participants, the issue was not so much about allowing conciliation between different life spheres, but about rehabilitating and activating the young people to expand their life to a wider range of life spheres, such as education or work, as a significant part of the measure's addressees, especially those receiving more long-term support, are young people living in very challenging situations. Like in Southwest Finland, none of the experts raised the issue of family responsibilities in the interviews, which is likely due to the relatively young age of most of the measures' participants as well as to the comprehensive and affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC; 'day care') system in Finland in which all children under school-age have a subjective right to participate and the fee depends on family income and the number of children (ECEC is completely free of charge for families with a low level of income).

The holistic approach on participants' lives the measure takes is closely related to facilitating young adults' autonomy and reducing their biographical uncertainty. Also the importance of helping the participants to improve their skills related to everyday life management, learning and studying, career management and working life, social relationships and communication, and time management was emphasised. Increasing motivation and strengthening the ability to take responsibility of one's own actions and choices were also significant aims. These skills and abilities are central for young adults not only on the path of becoming able to take more control of their own life and make choices and decisions about it, but also for reducing the uncertainty that is related to their future life courses.

*"One of our tasks is to have these groups where they start off with tiny steps and according to their own resources. But we may also encounter issues like having loans and insufficient liquidity, and then we have to think about what to do in those cases. Or someone is losing their apartment or something like that, where their whole life is falling apart. Or in situations where a person's bank account has been closed and they have no money and can't use their card, we help to figure out where to get money for food and the food for today." E\_FI\_K\_2*

*"This a participatory operation: we work together with the group that we have, and they get to influence the contents of the activities. Of course, the ability to throw out ideas and present your thoughts may vary quite a lot, as some people have a huge amount of ideas. It is a whole other thing, though, if they are realistic. Then again, others seem to have no ability to come up with ideas. But we listen to everyone when we are, for example, planning our activities, and in a way everybody's contribution can already be seen there." E\_FI\_K\_2*

*"Our services are based on the young people's voluntariness and their needs. The young people define what they need and what they want. That's our starting point, we don't want our employees telling the youth what's best for them, but the young people themselves know what they need and want. And always according to their own resources, and what they are capable of handling." E\_FI\_K\_3*

*"We can provide a rhythm for their daily life. And contents for those weekdays. We organise everyday activities, such as cooking and exercising, which they can utilise also in the future; one example is learning how to cook meatballs, which is a skill that will help them in their daily lives. We also learned how to play badminton, which is also an activity they can take with them to their daily lives." E\_FI\_K\_2*

Given the main emphasis and goals of the NUPPA Centre, dealing with the so-called wicked problems the participants have in their lives is a very important issue. One central tool in this regard is network collaboration. By working together with, for example, employment officials and services, education institutions and special needs education professionals, social services, mental and physical health professionals, and addiction treatment centres, and, thus, by bringing together a wide range of professional skills and representatives of the relevant jurisdictional fields, it is possible to address the multilevel wicked problems in a way that would not be possible for a single policy measure or actor. The experts working in the NUPPA Centre are actively and systematically involved with several different policy actors and networks. It is, for example, part of the local Youth Guidance and Services Network, which includes all actors and institutions involved in working with youth and young adults. According to the Youth Act 7 a § municipalities are required to have a multi-jurisdictional Youth Guidance and Services Network of the local authorities for planning, development, and implementation of the youth services. The network must include representatives from educational, social and health, employment, and youth affairs administration and the police forces. The network may include also representatives from the Defence Forces and other administrative fields. The network cooperates with actors and institutions providing youth services.

The main internal cooperation partners of the NUPPA Centre include outreach youth work, rehabilitative workshops, the Finnish Cancer Society (Good Day project focusing on everyday life management skills), special youth workers, youth club, youth information workers, Family Centre, adult social work, TE-Office's expert services, Sosped foundation

(support for mental health issues), Evangelical Lutheran Church (especially a project targeting young homeless people), the Young Church association (social support for young people under the threat of social exclusion), Recreational Fishers (activities for families), and the Association of the Unemployed. The most important external partners are mental health services, the A Clinic Foundation, the multi-sectoral joint employment service (TYP), The Martha Organisation, the psychiatric rehabilitation unit for young adults of the Kainuu Central Hospital, Rehabilitative Work Experience, social services, Police, the Defence Forces, local and regional schools and educational institutions, local and regional employers, and different youth projects.

*"It's about co-operation, where a partner contacts us and then a young person is directed to the workshop. After that we take care of the young person's business together, make plans, and just make concrete observations of how they are doing. Have they been to their appointments, have they been able to commit, how things have gone. In these cases we have meetings with the official and the young person to discuss their matters and think about how to continue. We try to figure whether this current workshop is still the right place or should the person be already moved somewhere else. So most typically we have this kind of network meetings." E\_FI\_K\_2*

The forms of collaboration vary based mainly on the main objective of the partner. With regard to the private sector, cooperation with region's companies and employers includes mainly practical training, work-try-outs, and on-the-job learning periods. The cooperation with public sector institutions and actors is mainly related to education, employment, social security, as well as physical and mental wellbeing of the young adults. The latter is also the main focus in collaboration with third sector actors. The cooperation with the other policy institutions and actors is typically coordinated and developed by using well-established, formal network collaboration with the other municipal and regional actors.

Overall, the experts were happy with the way the cooperation with the internal and external partners is working. Many of the actors in the field have known each other and been working together for a long time, so the cooperation network is well-established in many aspects. However, there were sometimes problems with the cooperation with other, more short-term LLL policy projects. The cooperation is challenging if a project expects that the NUPPA Centre's experts will send them participants but the project fails to communicate its goals, operations, and relevance.

*"At some point there were all these projects popping up, and the question we had was that what the difference between these projects is. And that could you provide us information about what it is that we are supposed to guide young people to. Give us a short text describing the things that a young person needs to know about what is being offered. If we don't get that then we cannot guide anyone there, and then some people were offended that we did not guide any young people to their project." E\_FI\_K\_3*

*"Network co-operation is one of the most challenging work forms. (---) With regard to networks, the important things include managing the network, the turnover of people, and the information flow about what we are doing. The network must be serviced all the time. Also the people, many of the people in the network go through changes in their work forms, so you have to always be alert about what is going on. Network co-operation is like a living creature, like an amoeba, it lives and changes all the time." E\_FI\_K\_3*

*"There have been some changes at KELA, when some tasks were moved there from the health and social services. In Kainuu, the regional government is already handling these services, or they were at the regional government and then came the reform of the Social and Health Care Joint Authority. And in municipalities we have the technical sector and education, but then the health and social services are again on the outside, which makes co-operation more difficult. In a way, we have already been living the life that is becoming reality for the rest of the country with the health and social services reform and the regional government reform. These different changes are happening all the time, and we must be aware of them. Plus we have to keep track of our partners there because their actions affect our operations, so you've got to be awake all the time."* E\_FI\_K\_3

Based on the expert interviews it seems that the NUPPA Centre is a well-established part of the youth and social policy sector in Kajaani and not affected by the current Government's unsteady policy making as much as the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku is. The latter is likely due to the fact that the NUPPA Centre has been planned from the start to be 'light' enough so that, if necessary, it can be merged into the other structures of the local youth services. Hence, the experts of the NUPPA Centre were not worried about the future after the funding period of the ESF ends. Also the cooperation network of the NUPPA Centre appears to be functioning more smoothly than the one of the Ohjaamo Centre, albeit the collaboration in Kajaani has its own challenges and requires constant input.

All the young adults interviewed in the functional region Kainuu were participating in one rehabilitative workshop meant for young people in more vulnerable situations and with low functional abilities, that is young people who were not, at that moment, not able to participate even in part-time education or work. Their motivation to participate in the measure was similar to those young adults from the functional region Southwest Finland who were participating in the more in-depth services of the Ohjaamo Centre in Turku. The need that defined their participation was related to the fractures in their life courses and especially educational trajectories, which were typically caused by mental health problems and insufficient support in one or more field of life. Typically, the vulnerability of their life situation was not related to an especially disadvantaged social background.

Generally speaking, the ideal futures that the young adults imagined they would have in ten year time were mostly rather conventional, and their understanding of adulthood was quite normative. All of them mentioned that they would like to have a job, preferably a stable, interesting, and personally fulfilling one. Being graduated from upper secondary or tertiary education, having an own apartment or house, as well as having a spouse and close and warm relationship with family and friends were also often included in the image of the ideal future. Happiness, safety, and regular lifestyle were important for many of the young adults' life projects. There were no regional differences in this regard. The participants of the policy measure felt that the rehabilitation the workshop provided would help them to overcome their challenges and, thus, aid them to become full members of community and to return to the 'normal' life course entailing education and work. The importance of stable, positive social relationships was highlighted by the young adults in their desired futures.

*"I hope that it [life in ten year time] would be balanced. Even though it sounds boring, like to have something routine, or like a regular rhythm and safe things around you, like family and friends and such. I hope that my life would have gotten stable by then."* Y\_FI\_K\_9

*"Well, I hope I have a study place or like school and job, first school and then a job. I think I wish for love, family. Friends and buddies, new acquaintances. Just like basic things." Y\_FI\_K\_8*

As was the case with the young adults participating in the respective policy measure in Southwest Finland, many of the interviewed participants of the NUPPA Centre felt that participation in the measure had affected their lives also outside the measure. An often-mentioned important aspect of participation in a LLL policy measure was that it helped the young adults to gain or maintain a normal rhythm in their lives, which they found to be very difficult in a situation where there is nothing to do during the weeks. Some of the young adults talked about how straining life is when there is nothing to do, and that the longer one stays at home the harder it becomes to 'get back' and become active again.

*"[Participation in the measure] is a reason to wake up in the morning." Y\_FI\_K\_7*

*"It gives rhythm and content to life. (---) It is not good for someone in my [mental health] situation just to stay at home, it makes one too passive. It's like, it helps you to get better and heal if you get out of home, meet people, and test your own limits." Y\_FI\_K\_9*

Another aspect that emerged from the young adult interviews in this regard was the importance of social contacts and peer support. For some, the peer support that they gained from the other young adults in the policy measure was a very meaningful thing. Meeting people who had had similar experiences and challenges in their lives or having a safe and confidential peer group around them was an empowering experience for them. Although, getting acquainted with the group took sometimes a while.

*"I've become a much stronger person thanks to the workshop, many there have had similar experiences, it has helped a lot." Y\_FI\_K\_8*

*"At first I didn't feel like I belonged here at all. Not because the people would have been mean or not have accepted me into the group, but our backgrounds were just so different. (---) But like, it is nice to spend time with them, and it feels much more like we are a tight group now." Y\_FI\_K\_9*

### **The Policy in a Biography**

Here, an 'ideal-typical' biography constructed of the life stories of the young adults participating in the NUPPA Centre's activities in Kainuu is presented. As with the case 1, in order to protect the anonymity of the young adults in vulnerable situations that were interviewed for the YA project<sup>2</sup>, no biographies of individual young adults are presented. That means that "Emma's" life story told here does not trace back to any individual young person living in Kainuu (or elsewhere), but is an analytical construct formed of more than one biography following similar paths and interruptions as well as highlighting similar challenges and needs. Due to the low number of interviewees in the Kainuu region, only one ideal-typical biography is constructed for case 2. However, all the interviewed young adults were participating in the same service, a rehabilitative workshop, and had notably similar needs and reasons for their participation due to the specific target group and nature of the service.

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<sup>2</sup> For more details about the interviews conducted in the functional region Kainuu, see the Finnish National Report for Work Package 5 of the YA project (Tikkanen et al., 2017).

**“Emma”** is an addressee of a rehabilitative workshop for young adults with low functional abilities provided by the NUPPA Centre in Kajaani. She is in her mid-twenties and has graduated from vocational education a little over a year ago. She is participating in the workshop because she is very aware of her need to have support to recover from her mental health problems and to improve her functional abilities.

Emma was diagnosed with a chronic physical illness in the early years of primary school. While she was mostly able to attend school normally despite her condition, she feels that her learning and grades were not as good as they would have otherwise been. Her relationship with her parents has always been warm, but the parents did not have much knowledge about the health care system or different forms of available support, and, hence, Emma finds that she was left without adequate support during the first years after the diagnosis. For example, her parents let her make some of the decisions about her treatment, which she now finds a bad thing as she was a child and not able to comprehend all the implications of the options available. Despite the challenges caused by the illness, she initially liked going to school and enjoyed learning. However, some time after the diagnosis, many of her classmates started bullying her. The bullying was severe and continued all through the primary and lower secondary school. Even though teachers noticed the bullying at some point, Emma feels that they tried to downplay the issue and did not really do much to make it stop. For a long time she did not tell her parents about the bullying, but eventually told them because her lower secondary school teacher contacted her parents because she was regularly skipping school. Her parents were sympathetic and contacted the school a few times, but nothing changed. Emma had a couple of friends at school in the first years of primary school, but eventually they distanced themselves from her because they did not want to get bullied too. After that, her main positive social contacts were young people with whom she interacted in online discussion groups.

Emma's physical condition improved considerably towards the end of primary school, and she has had no major problems due to her physical illness since. However, the bullying and the feeling of not getting enough support at home and school affected her mental health greatly, and she got depressed and developed some symptoms of social phobia in the last years of compulsory education. After graduating from lower secondary school, she wanted to continue her studies. Even though she did not like going to school because of the bullying, she still enjoyed learning and was dreaming about working in a technical field especially with computers, which was something she felt she was good at because she had spent so much time 'fiddling' with them all the evenings and weekends. She had also always been good in mathematical subjects at school. Given the bullying and problems she had with her mental health, applying to a vocational school was something that she was quite ambivalent of. She definitely wanted to continue her studies, especially as she was very aware of educational qualifications being a requirement to have real access to the labour market in the region, but, at the same time, she felt apprehensive about the social relationships at school. Eventually, she did not apply to the vocational school right after compulsory education and spent the gap year getting professional help for her depression. This time, Emma's parents took more initiative and were an important source of emotional and practical support for her.

In the spring of her gap year, Emma was feeling better and decided to pursue to continue her studies and applied to a vocational school to study the technical field she was interested in. She did not really know but she suspected that she could have fairly good chances of finding employment in the field, which was also one of the reasons she chose the study field in question. She was also interested in further studies at tertiary level in the university of

applied sciences located in the region. She got accepted to the vocational programme and started her studies the next autumn. The start of the first semester was a very stressful time for her as she felt the repercussions of the years of being bullied. However, as there was no bullying in the student group at the vocational school, she made some new friends, and her ongoing contact to the mental health services provided her with support, she started to enjoy her studies. The only issue at that time was that, according to Emma, the quality of teaching was not quite what she had hoped for. They had a lot of independent work, not as much contact teaching as she would have liked to have, and they were often left unsupervised at school without clear instructions about what they were supposed to be doing, which she found particularly frustrating. As her study skills were rather good, she managed to learn and get good grades, but many of her classmates struggled and many dropped out. During her final year of the vocational studies, her mental health problems worsened again. She did not really know why, but, in retrospect, she thinks that the approaching graduation, inadequate support for learning at school, and the question about what to do after graduating caused her stress, which contributed to the deterioration of her mental health. Despite the mental health problems re-emerging, she was able to graduate almost in time, but had to abandon the plan of continuing her studies at the tertiary level straight after vocational school.

After graduating, Emma did not apply for further education or look for a job. She went back to therapy and 'just stayed at home and felt poorly'. The mental health professionals she was in contact with asked her if she would be interested in attending a support group or a workshop for young people with mental health issues, but she felt that she did not have the strength to go out and meet people. As her mental health started to, after almost a year, improve again, Emma felt that she needed to start doing something, because the idea of leaving the house and interacting with new people started to feel more difficult by each passing day, and she started to worry that if she did not 'get out of the house' soon, it could become impossible for her to do so in the future. Hence, with the help of her parents, she started to look for a suitable support measure and found information about the NUPPA Centre and its activities online. After some hesitation, she contacted a NUPPA youth worker, and together they decided that a low-threshold rehabilitative workshop for young adults who have challenges with their functional abilities would be a good place for her to start.

Emma has been going to the rehabilitative workshops for over six months. Although she finds most of the workshop's activities, such as cooking, going grocery shopping, and taking outdoor exercise, quite easy, she has been surprised how meaningful the peer support of other young adults with similar challenges and experiences has been for her. These positive social contacts have reduced her fears related to social situations. She enjoys also the structure that the participation in the workshop has provided to her weekdays and thinks that it is a good way of practising for full-time studies and going to work both of which she sees in her future. Emma is planning to continue to participate in the workshop at least another six months or so as she believes that it is important to give her mental health enough time to recover and take things slowly. She also plans to use this time thinking about whether the field she studied at vocational school is something she wants to continue on or if some other field would be more suitable for her. Due to her positive experiences at the NUPPA Centre and the rehabilitative workshop, she has been considering whether a job in the field of youth work could be something she would enjoy.

The LLL policy measure, the rehabilitative workshop, has been a good fit for Emma's needs and abilities as it provides her with a safe environment where to both recover and plan the future. As she has never had problems with learning and studying per se, she is quite



confident that she will reach her educational and occupational goals once her mental health and functional abilities improve enough.

## **4. Analysis of the Stories from the Perspectives of Governance, Cultural Political Economy, and Life Course**

In this chapter, LLL policies in general and youth and social policy in particular are examined in relation to their background, different policy levels, as well as the role and relevance of regions. This is done by applying the three main theoretical perspectives applied in the YA project: governance, life course, and cultural political economy,

### ***4.1 Globalisation, Europeanisation, Standardisation, and Governance at a Distance***

Globalisation has been described as resulting in the re-scaling of politics and policy (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011). This is complicated by the rise of a new mode of governance at a distance through QAE techniques and evaluation data, and the consequent positioning of the nation-states and local spaces. This all rests on the provision and translation of information about subjects, objects, and processes, and brings new limits and possibilities for agents (cf. Hansen & Flyverbom, 2014). The new architecture of governance relies on the production and mobility of data (Ball, 2016; Clarke, 2012). The expanding practices of evaluation produce knowledge about education, which may allow the nation-state to extend its capacity to govern across territory and into the classroom practices through standardisation, commensuration, transparency, and comparison, and have also severe unintended consequences to the behaviour of educational agents. Simultaneously, states are increasingly incorporated into the global accountability regime that helps the “national eye” to govern with the “global eye” (Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003). (Rinne, in press.)

Places are the locus where all scales conflate, from the supra-national through to the national and local. There, the educational system becomes “real schools” embedded into a web of multi-scalar and multi-actor relations. The degree of freedom of agents in defining and implementing strategies, taking decisions, and accessing resources relies on those relations, but is never fully determined by them nor straight carry out the intended aims. Most reforms are changing the situations, but also influenced by various educational policies, interest groups, the working of the economy, public and cultural meanings, and ways of conceiving the specific issues, evaluation results, and other factors. This applies to all aspects, such as teacher training (Cramer et al., 2012), how to handle educational disadvantage (Gideonse, 1993; Cramer et al., 2012, 97–98), and the involvement of other actors (Du Bois Raymond et al., 2011; Dale et al., 2012). (Kazepov, Robertson, & Rinne, 2015; Rinne, in press.)

The globalisation and Europeanisation of educational policy do not involve only language, concepts, classifications, and preferences *per se*, but entangle in their webs a shared sequence of new cultural and political myths, sagas, and beliefs produced in a new space of meanings that swear allegiance to communality and progress. At the same time, affected by those myths, our collective understanding of education as a whole and its relationship to concepts like equality and social justice, or economy and culture is reshaped. (Lawn & Lingard, 2002: 299–303; Sultana, 2002; 1995; Pereyra, 1993; Rinne et al., 2002; Simola et al., 2002; Dale et al., 2016).

Among other international organisations (IOs), the OECD has become one of the major agents of the internationalising, globalising, and, thus, converging education policy processes (Taylor et al., 1997; Ozga & Lingard, 2007). While it is primarily concerned with economic policy, education has taken on increasing importance within that mandate of the OECD, as it has been reframed as central to national economic competitiveness within an economic human capital framework and linked to an emerging ‘knowledge economy’. The OECD has developed alliances with other IOs such as UNESCO, the European Union, and the World Bank to actively promote its policy preferences. (Grek 2009, 24–25)

IOs cannot be understood as “mere epiphenomena” of impersonal policy machinery. Rather they are also seen as purposive actors who are “armed with a notion of progress, an idea of how to create a better life, and some understanding of the conversion process”. They have become the “missionaries of our time” (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999, 712). The data defined and collected by the OECD and other IO’s on education is contributing to the creation of a governable space of comparison and commensurability: “the European Education Space” (Nóvoa & Lawn, 2002).

The changes in governance due to the new steering tools, usually used by the expert community, has been widely noted. Although there has been presented also criticism towards the ideas of “steering at a distance” as a general note, it is helpful to understand that the principles of calculability and measurability, usually used in the private sector, originating from economics, were increasingly transferred to fields previously regulated by old bureaucratic statutes and professional norms usually located in the public sector. Rose (1999, 152) refers to the new governing technology based on accountability and assessment to which the public sector is subjected as “governance at a distance”. (Rinne & Ozga, 2011, 67) The concept of governance at a distance then emphasises how behaviour of the governed actors is directed by the processes of collection and use of information and data by the authorities, who seek to conduct the actions and behaviour of those who are the targets of these data. However, this form of governance does not replace the traditional bureaucratic hierarchical governance, but rather complements it. Governance at a distance may be seen

as reconciling “decentralised action (subsidiarity, self-responsibility) with centralised assessment (standardisation) to facilitate exchange and valuation in the vast spaces and to make long distance control something the actors aim to achieve by pursuing their interests” (Rottenburg & Engle Merry, 2015, 22; Piattoeva et al., in press.)

To ensure conformity, *standards* are often institutionalised processes involving different kinds of certification and formalisation. The more successfully the standards are mobilised and institutionalised, the less visible and noticeable they become. Many standards are thoroughly interwoven into the very fabric of our everyday lives, operating upon us in ways we scarcely recognise them. Actually, there is a huge invasion of politics of standardisation going on. Standardisation allows building uniformity in time and space by creating common standards and establishing political control at a distance on work and communities of practice. Standardisation helps the State and public authorities to compare and rank individuals and groups and to create a common language shared by professionals, policy-makers, and evaluators. Standards rely on a form of classification and measurement that defines limitations and exclusions in shaping the policy. They are based on scientific and expert knowledge, which give them legitimacy. Normand (in press) emphasises that standardisation is a strong policy instrument of power and coercion that effectively replaces traditional rules of authority, hierarchy, and bureaucracy. Standards are grounded in the name of modernisation and modernity and claimed to promote “New Reason”.

The power of standards is at the very core of LLL policies and policies related to disadvantaged youth and young adults as well. From the life course perspective, it is important to note, however, that both policies and life courses are always embedded in a certain socio-historical context and a local opportunity structure. For instance, educational and labour market in any geographical location entail complex interactions between economy, employers, education providers, demography, as well as local, regional, national, and international policies. These interact with each other so that changes to one may result in changes to others (Hodkinson 2008). It is evident that the above-mentioned global, societal and political changes have changed the institutional mechanisms shaping individual life courses, making this dynamic process more global, standardised, and distant while being local at the same time. However, it is not the single individuals, but populations that are allocated to and streamlined through the institutions of society across the lifetime (Mayer, 2004), and the socio-historical and institutional context is different to each generation. Most Finnish young adults interviewed in this project were born in the early or late 1990s, and their life course experiences are, thus, related to post-Fordist life course regime (Mayer, 2004) characterised by increasing de-standardisation and discontinuity across the lifetime. When they were teenagers or just slightly older than that, they faced the global recession of the first decade of the new millennium during a sensitive period in their life. As a generation, they have experienced the risks and uncertainties of present society, related to school-to-work transitions in particular.

#### *4.2 Implementation of European LLL Policies in Finland from the Life Course Perspective*

The scale of governance is on the move in Europe. Of course, this is a more global phenomenon and partly resulting from the policies of the supranational organisations like the OECD and especially the European Commission. Also, within the countries, there are controversial transitions going on between national, regional, and municipal levels. (Kotthoff et al., 2017.)

Education systems and LLL policies in Europe and beyond seem to still abide to an 'ideal', late-industrial (Mayer, 2004) standardised life course which sets expectations of normalcy and separates young adults lives in two phases, first full time education and later full time employment, which for women include one or two breaks of fulltime motherhood. While many young people combine work and study, the institutions of the education system and the labour market offer mostly full time options, and, when there is some flexibility, it is mostly of an informal type. Combining or even blending various statuses in one's career are not viewed positively by the educational and social security institutions, nor by individual employers in the labour market (Kovacheva et al., 2016, 33). (Kotthoff et al., 2017.)

Despite the changing economic structures implying de-standardisation of life courses, the societal expectations related to standardised 'normal' life course are strongly present in Finland. Facilitating smooth and linear transitions from compulsory education to further education and finally to working life is seen as a key LLL policy priority concerning both educational and labour market policies. Deviation from this standardised trajectory is seen as a threat to both the individual and the society (Rinne et al., 2016, 34; Kotthoff et al., 2017).

It seems that the main policy objective in relation to young adults' life revolves around securing interruption-free educational pathways. Based on the analysis of policy documents and expert interviews alike, we are able to recognise an ideal path that young people are expected to follow. After basic education they, supported by efficient guidance, should quickly find a career they are interested in. Then they apply to an educational institute, get in, commit to their studies, are motivated, complete their degree within the given target time, and find a job immediately after having graduated. Smooth and quick transitions are seen as an economic necessity. Years not spent in education or employment are years wasted in an economic sense. If traditional education is not suitable for a young person, they will be offered internships, workshops, rehabilitation, job-seeking training, or similar activities that are assessed to be better suited to them. (Rinne et al., 2016, 12; Kotthoff et al., 2017.)

In the Finnish LLL policies, identifying the risk groups that experience the most difficulties in meeting the societal expectations related to the 'normal' life course is a general theme. The early school leavers, school drop-outs, and young unemployed people are seen as belonging to the group of 'youth at risk'. In educational policy, minorities are also brought up (Rinne et al., 2016). A fear is that the inactivity of young people belonging to various 'risk groups' poses a threat to social order. This was evident, for example, in Aikalisä (Timeout) programme of the Finnish Government, in which being outside education and work, and thus dropping out of the standardised life trajectory, was seen as leading to deviant behaviours (substance abuse, crime), which, in turn, was seen as a threat to social cohesion in the country (Rinne et al., 2016, 40; Kotthoff & al., 2017).

The policies leaning single-mindedly on the prevalence of so called normal life courses do not take into account the fact that a career progression is often non-linear and strongly influenced by actions, events, and circumstances that lay beyond the control of an individual. According to the *Careership* theory (Hodkinson & Sparkes 1997; Hodkinson 2008), career-related decision making is bounded by a person's horizons for action, which enable the person to see opportunities within them, but at the same time prevent the person from seeing what lies beyond them. Horizons for action are influenced by social position, as well as embodied dispositions (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), which, in turn, are connected with each other. Dispositions often become deeply ingrained, but can and do change over time. They influence the ways individuals think and act within their horizons of action, which are both objective and subjective. (Hodkinson 2008.) Concerning young adults interviewed in this

study, their horizons for action were more or less restricted. Interestingly, in many cases they were still using the 'normal' life course as a yard stick, a *standard* against which they compared their own biographies and planned their futures.

Career decisions and progression, and, thus, life courses of individuals are always positioned and the position always matters (Hodkinson 2008). In relation to social class background, studies show that compared to successful or average young people, the young people who struggle with education and employment more often come from a disadvantaged background and are children of poorly educated parents. Class background, therefore, essentially determines the way these young people perceive their own opportunities and whether they believe in their chances of being successful in the competitive education and labour markets (Rinne et al., 2016, 29; Kotthoff et al., 2017). Further, social class position is not only connected with beliefs about the life course opportunities, but life courses coming true as well. According to a longitudinal study on the educational and labour market careers of Finnish NEETs, the risk of dropping outside education as well as its consequences are not equal to all compulsory school leavers in Finland; the children of parents with weak labour market positions, with low education, and low income have not only a greater probability of being excluded from education and the working life than the rest of the population on average, they also have most difficulties in getting rid of the NEET status, advancing in their career, and reaching a stable labour market position. (Järvinen & Vanttaja, 2013.) Similarly, a recent study on the intergenerational transmission of social disadvantage in Finland (Vauhkonen et al., 2017) revealed that there is a clear impact of a disadvantaged family background on individual's adulthood outcomes in terms of low level of education, unemployment, and being a recipient of social assistance.

One must note, however, that there are tensions abound that derive from target group construction that are prioritising specific groups or isolating particular individual or collective traits, thus setting them apart from the group as a whole. Such practice, nevertheless, risks missing the point by disregarding that the target groups – however constructed – are impacted by individual, structural, and institutional forces and factors at once. Further, they also jeopardise achieving the aim of improving social inclusion by constructing dominant representations that have stigmatising effects, produce self-fulfilling prophecies, and narrow down aspirational horizons (Rinne, 2015; Kotthoff et al., 2017). From the life course perspective, it is important to note that how young people perceive their own social position has a significant influence on how they act. The challenge for the policies targeted at youth and young adults in disadvantaged positions, in turn, is that the choices and decisions young people make as well as the rationale behind them are partly tacit. That means that individuals cannot always completely articulate their likes and dislikes. Further, life course choices and decisions are often made based on partial information (Hodkinson 2008).

The ideal-typical biographies of young adults presented in this report showed clearly how the target group of this study and, hence, LLL policies is not a homogeneous one, but consists of individuals with different cultural and social resources and horizons for action. In many respects, Harri and Niko represented the opposite types of 'customers' of the policies. In comparison with Niko, Harri had more cultural and social resources as well as broader (in terms of both objective and subjective) horizon for action. While Niko was in a much more vulnerable situation and in need of multidimensional support, Harri was using the services only as an extra boost to his job seeking. However, especially in Niko's biography and in Emma's as well, it became clear how meaningful the peer support of other young adults with similar challenges and experiences can be. Although career guidance and other services can

be valuable in one's life course, it seems that in many cases much more power lies in totally non-institutionalised close human relationships (Jahnukainen & Järvinen 2005).

### *4.3 National Governing Bodies and the Aims of Adult Education and the Youth Guarantee in Finland*

The nation is “the space” or the “bounded sphere” and the basis of the national policies, and “political culture” is a kind of a “historic amalgam of national discursive traditions as well as heir to institutional forms and frameworks”. There are heavy historical bounds and the national education policy is strongly framed: “systems are anchored in territorial, material, and linguistic determinations that cannot easily be circumvented, let alone dispensed with”. (Barbier, 2008, 2; cited in Dale, Kazepov, Rinne, & Robertson, 2016.)

The economic, social, and educational orientations and aims of LLL policies are deeply embedded in historical, political, and cultural contexts, as well as broader sets of social relations at national and regional levels. Although understanding LLL policies will, therefore, need to be attentive to these path dependencies, LLL policy making is also substantially influenced by supranational initiatives and strategies, which provide advice and, to some extent, frames to national/regional/local solutions. Further, due to the intrinsically contested nature of policy making in democratic societies, the objectives of LLL policies will often attempt to balance distinct purposes (e.g., economic, social, educational) and conciliate between individual and societal aims (such as personal development and freedom vs. economic growth).

Against this background, LLL policies will always reflect tensions and contradictions, and often unveil selective interpretations of problems, explanations of their causes, and preferred solutions, which makes it crucial enquiring into their distinct orientations and different objectives if we are to understand their mutual compatibility and fit as well as their potential implications and intended and unintended effects on young adult life courses. (Kotthof et al., 2017.) Despite the multidimensionality of the life courses (Mayer, 2004), in Finland, young citizens are primarily seen as members of the labour market and the present day ideology has pushed “the socio-political importance of education [...] to the side and replaced [it] by the idea of a business that serves the needs of various consumer groups” (Rinne et al., 2016, 34).

In the Finnish case, for example, criticism about the idea that life courses of young adults should follow a linear and unique path in LLL policies is very evident. However, this does not exclude differences between the two Finnish functional regions: while Southwest Finland confirms this idea by focusing more on “giving individuals responsibility and helping them become productive in the labour market” (Rinne et al., 2016, 46), the Kainuu region (following what it is known as the *Kainuu model*; for more details see Rinne et al. 2016) is committed to a policy that includes more human and social perspectives, looks more to improve the wellbeing of each young person, and, therefore, tends to think more about biographical and de-standardised life experiences.

If we look at the conceptual basis of the governance approach, which calls attention to the important shifts in perspective in the political field, the leverage that the functional regions have in relation to LLL policies is fundamental to understanding both the different structures that govern and characterise their programmes and their relevance to define the particularities and needs of young adults. From this leverage emerges a holistic view of

governance where, as mentioned in different YA project documents, different public and private actors, together or separately, aim to produce common goods and services and solve collective problems. (Kotthof & al., 2017.)

Based on the national reports of the YA research, the governance and leverage of the functional regions in the participating countries can be separated into at least three groups. One of the groups includes the countries with a unitary system of government and which are carrying out different reforms of decentralisation. Finland is in a transition phase where “the planning and implementation of LLL policies is the responsibility of the central government but is also based on considerable municipal autonomy” (Rinne et al., 2016, 5). Thus, the State is seen as a regulator of service provision (and not as a service provider) “as well as the assessor of the services provided in the employment policy, social policy, education policy, and youth policy sectors” (op. cit., 41). (Kotthof & al., 2017.)

The main actors in the field of Finnish *education policy* are the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Board of Education. The Ministry of Education and Culture is the highest authority in the field of education policy and is responsible for all publicly funded education in Finland. The Ministry is responsible for preparing educational legislation and its share of the state budget for the Government. The Finnish National Board of Education is the national development agency whose tasks include implementing national education policies, preparing the national core curricula and requirements for qualifications, developing education and teaching staff, as well as providing services for the education sector and administrative services. The Finnish National Board of Education publishes data on, among other things, the costs of education, educational institutions, student numbers, applicants, and graduates.

In Finland, *child and youth policy* coordination structures within the central administration are divided between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture. These ministries share a common programme work related to Finnish child and youth policy. This programme work is directed by detailed legislation through the Youth Act and Child Welfare Act. While the Child Welfare Act obligates the municipalities to create a plan for the welfare of children and youth, the Youth Act, in turn, obligates the state administration to design a national youth policy development programme for improving the living conditions of young people. (Määttä & Erikson, 2015.)

The cross-administrative Youth Guarantee Programme, which is based on a Public-Private-People-Partnership model is one of the top programmes of the Finnish Government, is aimed to ensure that young people have access to education, training, and employment and to prevent them from being excluded from society. The Youth Guarantee will offer everyone under the age of 25, as well as recent graduates under 30, employment, a study place, a place in on-the-job training, or rehabilitation within three months of becoming unemployed. The Youth Guarantee consist of various elements: 1) the guarantee of employment, 2) the educational guarantee, which offers everyone who has just completed comprehensive school a place in further education or training, and 3) the young adults’ skills programme, which is intended for young people who lack a post-basic education qualification entirely. Through the skills programme, it is possible to complete a vocational or specialist vocational qualification or initial vocational education as part of the programme. This training can be provided at an educational institute or in the form of apprenticeship training.

When looking at the policy measures analysed here in relation to young adults’ life course construction, one can emphasise several aspects. First, one of the main objectives of the LLL

policies is to strengthen young adults' social participation and their agency by including them in the decision making about things that concern their own lives. For that purpose, the holistic perspective on the lives of the young adults has been adopted by taking their life circumstances as well as their personal strengths and challenges systematically into account. Despite this, the main goals of the policies usually are related to education and employment, and career guidance is a central element of these policies. From the life course perspective, as Hodkinson (2008) has stated, career guidance can play an important role in many people's lives, helping them make more control over their own futures. However, increasing employment should not be the major rationale for such provision, and managing career guidance through performance outcomes without understanding complex processes related to career decision making and dynamics of career construction, can have unintended effects on individuals' life courses.

#### *4.4 Finland – Country of Decentralisation and Regionalisation*

Socio-historical conditions and institutional arrangements build the tracks that individual trajectories are bound to follow. While the education system defines and governs educational careers by its age-based regulations and hierarchical school types and tracks, the organisation of the labour market, including labour law, defines and regulates employment opportunities and trajectories. (Mayer, 2004.) Finland has been a typical unitary state without any federal elements. Until the changes in the 1990s, the regional level of the administrative machinery was weak. Since then, the regional administration has been strengthened through internal re-organisation and by creating new regional organisations for regional development. The development of the Finnish labour administration has its historical roots in Finnish society, and under the neoliberal regime it had to adapt to major changes in the same way as society has had to. The tripartite cooperation between the labour administration, the employer organisations, and the worker organisations has a fairly long tradition in Finland. The labour legislation in Finland, as well as in other Nordic countries, has been developed through cooperation between the labour market organisations and the Government. The development of labour legislation and formal labour relations between labour market organisations are both central elements in the evolution of governing the labour market. (Temmes & Melkas, 2000.)

The major changes during the past few decades in welfare state policies and especially in the administration that is responsible for planning and producing welfare state services are also relevant features of the development of the Finnish labour administration and governance of labour market. During the first half of the 1990s, characterised by the economic recession and the great changes it caused in the labour market, both labour legislation and social legislation were substantially revised. The Governments ever since have carried out measures to increase flexibility in the labour market. In general, the revisions have reversed the earlier approaches, which gave more protection to the rights of the employees. The new approach emphasises more the flexibility of work and the rights of the employers and enterprises. (Temmes & Melkas, 2000.) In Finnish labour market policy, a key actor is *The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment* (formerly Ministry of Labour), which directs and supervises the entire labour administration. It is responsible for the planning and implementation of national labour policy and for labour legislation, and allocating resources in employment policy.

Ever since the post-war era, the cornerstones of the Finnish education policy, labour policy, youth policy, and social policy alike have been inclusion and universalism. However, since



the recession in the beginning of the 1990s and the financial crisis in 2010s, there have been considerable budget cuts in the welfare state, shifting the emphasis to a more selective and market-oriented direction, with education strongly affected. Centralised steering, especially of education, was drastically reduced in the 1990s, while the decentralisation, deregulation, and decision-making powers of local administration were increased. (Rinne, 2014/NESET; Berisha, Rinne, Järvinen, & Kinnari, 2017.) Due to these changes, the role of regional level planning and implementation of LLL policies has increased in Finland during the past few decades.

In Finland, at the level of normative measures, deregulation and decentralisation have simultaneously meant a change in control and governance systems, and the transition to a completely new type of administrative culture that highlights the importance of evaluations. This related redistribution and decentralisation of power has largely taken place since 1988 beginning with the free commune experiment in Kainuu, the state subsidy system, and municipal legislation that were renewed as its result.

The fuzzy concept of a broad "evaluation experts network" has led to a situation in which a number of different actors have the mandate to assess the success of public policy measures, while no one has the exclusive right to their operation, much less the related rule-making rights. As a result, the evaluation of political measures has expanded and become more scientific and politicised, and the importance of the data it produces has increased.

#### *4.5 Rise of Regional Governing Force and Differences of the Regions*

In terms of policy planning and implementation hierarchy, regions can be placed in between national and municipality-level government authorities. The regions are governed by regional councils, which serve as the cooperation forums for the municipalities of the region. The regional councils are responsible for general regional policy planning as well as policy programmes within the region. According to the principles of network governance (Määttä & Erikson, 2015), the council draws up the plans and programmes together with the central and local government authorities and the enterprises and associations operating in the region.

The regional administrative actors mediate the policy texts and policies from national to local level. At the same time, regional actors also mediate the "correct understanding" of the policies, including framing of the problems, naming of the target groups, and selected vocabularies. A cultural political economy perspective helps us to view the policies from a wider angle than the one that the "self-understanding" of the policy texts and actions, as such, reveal. At the level of implementation of the policies the terminologies (economic, social, cultural, etc.) used are taken for granted when looking at the phenomena and potential solutions. This is where the power of framing comes into play. At the implementation level, practical issues are often the main focus, while more general connections between the phenomenon and society are not discussed. Practical policies as well as "higher level" policy documents are, however, always based on some perspective. This higher level understanding has constructed the "problem" and a "reality" around it. Often the administrative understanding unpoliticises the subject matter and presents it as if a clear-cut solution, based on, for example, economic vocabularies and principles, exists for the problem. This way political solutions turn into technical solutions. This phenomenon can be heard in the expert interviews. Yet, a large portion of the problem's framework is not brought up and is left outside of the reality constructed by the policies.

The differences between the two regions we are comparing largely stem from differences in the economic and social conditions of Southwest Finland and Kainuu. Life opportunities available to young people are more versatile in Southwest Finland than in Kainuu, where youth unemployment rates are higher and also the level of wellbeing of young people is lower than in Finland on average. There are much fewer educational opportunities available for compulsory school graduates in Kainuu than in Southwest Finland. The structural risk of dropping out of the standardised life trajectory is hence much more significant in Kainuu than in Southwest Finland. Furthermore, the labour market in Southwest Finland is much larger and more versatile than the labour market in Kainuu. It is more likely for young people to find employment in the open market than in Kainuu. Elder (1998) has emphasised that each life phase affects the entire life course, thus resulting in cumulative advantages or disadvantages. In this respect, the life course is a self-referential process meaning that one acts and makes decisions on the basis of prior experiences (Mayer, 2004). While the life courses of many interviewed young adults consist of series of 'failures', the experts of the region emphasised that their aim is to create a 'series of small successes' to the lives of young adults, which would strengthen their self-confidence. This, in turn, would have a positive effect on their future life courses.

In Kainuu, the negative population development trend is intensified by young people moving out of the region for jobs or education. One of Kainuu's main challenges, therefore, is to find a way to get people to move to Kainuu from elsewhere in Finland or from abroad. The scarcity of educational and labour market opportunities is reflected in young people's lack of faith in the future which is one of the LLL policy challenges in Kainuu. In Southwest Finland, in turn, the greatest LLL policy challenge identified by the interviewed experts is the increasing polarisation and segregation among young people and young adults.

Large-scale labour markets and wide network of educational institutions in Southwest Finland are ensuring the wide-range supply of skills in the region. Instead of large-scale labour markets, in Kainuu there are single big employers. The fact that there are only a few educational institutions and no university-level education in the region is, in turn, connected with the limited supply of skills in Kainuu.

However, despite the above mentioned differences, there is a mismatch in skills supply and demand in both regions. In Kainuu, due to a both limited higher education opportunities and young people's willingness to move away from the region without coming back, there is a demand for highly educated experts. In addition, there is a demand for workers in the metal and wood industries. In Southwest Finland, there is a demand for engineers and workers in marine, metal and automobile industries. One must note, however, that not only local employment opportunities, but also individual value orientations play a significant role in occupational choices and decisions (Mayer, 2004). What is common for the both regions is that one reason for the mismatch between skills supply and demand is, at least according to the views of interviewed experts, the low-attractiveness of the traditional male-dominated industries among young people. Even though there is a shortage of labour, for example, in the metal industry, young people's occupational aims and wishes are targeted at the fields where employment prospects are worse, media being an example of these fields. One predicament of education policy is how to adapt the aspirations of young generations to demands of labour market.

The above-mentioned differences between the functional regions are reflected in regional LLL policies as follows: while in Kainuu the youth and social policies are emphasised the most, in Southwest-Finland the focus is more on educational and labour market policies. In

Kainuu, LLL policies are more comprehensive by nature, and providing support for youth and young adults in their life management is at the core of the policies. In Southwest Finland, on the other hand, the focus is more on facilitating smooth school-to-work transitions for youths and young adults. Furthermore, while in Southwest Finland reducing young people's exclusion from education and working life is high on the political agenda, in Kainuu the policies are more focused on reducing young people's overall social exclusion.

The projects in Kainuu cite youth wellbeing as a main goal more often than the projects in Southwest Finland. Most youth policy projects aim to comprehensively improve the wellbeing of each young person. They provide everyday skills, improve life management, and prepare the youths for studies or work. Many projects stress the youth's own active participation and take their plans and wishes into account. While in Kainuu, young adults are required to take responsibility of their own life courses, the multidimensionality of life courses is taken into account in policies as well. Further, in accordance with the national objectives, all projects emphasise the importance of cooperation between the different actors and different regions in order to provide the most appropriate services to each individual.

The differences between the regions in cooperation between the actors and institutions involved in skills formation seem to rise from practical factors like region's size and the severity of the youth unemployment. In a smaller region, with smaller number of actors involved in education and employment issues, it seems to be easier to coordinate policies, programmes and projects related to training and tackling marginalisation. One should also bear in mind that the number of persons in the target group (youth at risk, the marginalised/disadvantaged/ unemployed) makes a difference for coordination of policies and measures.

The practical execution of publicly funded projects varies a lot. In many cases the realisation depends much on the person's planning and organising the practices. (However, this is different in projects funded by EU as, for example, ESF funded projects tend to be rigid and bureaucratic in nature.) Several studies on youth projects in Finland have shown poor effectiveness and heterogeneous quality. In the areas of high youth unemployment, the worst-off young have to attend youth projects repeatedly in order to maintain their right to unemployment benefits. Unemployment of an individual is still seen as a sign of moral deviance.

What comes to the level of coordination, we can conclude that in many cases vertical coordination of the projects is quite strong, but at the same time horizontal coordination is weaker. Projects in a given region are typically not very well informed of each other. They mostly concentrate on carrying out their own function without having spontaneous interaction with each other. State wide policy programmes are implemented and monitored from above to make sure that the policy aims, decided by the government, will be met. Meeting the aims is measured by the number of participants in a programme.

One common issue of the EU influence refers to the wide-ranging participation of the European Social Fund in the different LLL policies across Europe including Finland. With very few exceptions almost all the programmes are at least partially funded by ESF as part of a holistic set of aspirations. The fact that LLL policies are mainly funded by the ESF could perhaps be detrimental to their real relevance in the regions for the sake of achieving EU priorities. Thus, instead of following patterns directly related to local or regional problems, general European directives could be far from the specific realities followed by each country

leading to a weak relation “between regional LLL policies and European LLL policies” (Kotthof et al., 2017).

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In Finland, there is a lot of critical notes on the implementation of the LLL policies. The criticism is composed of several strands, but the most important one is voiced against a concept of education, which “is increasingly seen as a private good” (Rinne et al., 2016, 35). This has not only led to a situation in which “young citizens are primarily seen as members of the labour market” (op. cit., 34), but also to structural quality changes. In this context it is important to notice how “the education network has been streamlined, which means that institutions have been merged and closed down” (ibid.), at the same time that “skills that are essential in terms of the functioning of civil society and democracy make way for skills that increase productivity” (ibid.). Compared with the other European countries, the LLL policies in Finland earn the forceful criticism of an increasingly labour market dominated education system including LLL policies. (Kotthoff & al., 2017.)

Finally, taking into account the key aspects exposed in the Finnish LLL policies as well as the different criticisms presented in national reports, at least two potential *unintended* effects can be observed related to the intended improvement of educational opportunities for young adults. The first one has to do with the tendency to prolong the learning processes of young adults simply to prevent them from falling into unemployment and to be seen in the statistics

on the number of unemployed persons in a given region. This does not only give the impression that learning in this case could be meaningless, but also that the LLL policies developed do not really meet the needs of young adults. If we add to this that in many cases such LLL policies respond mainly to macro-economic objectives, Biesta's rather provocative question, "what's the point of lifelong learning if lifelong learning has no point" (Biesta, 2006, 176), does not appear that provocative anymore, when comparing some severe critical comments of the LLL project concerning Finland. (Kotthoff & al., 2017.) In interests of the subjects and objects of governance do not match.

The second *unintended* effect, related to the previous one, is to create the exaggerated expectation that young adults can be offered the same educational opportunities. This is even more unlikely if there is a tension between "learning to be" and "learning to be productive", which "overshadows" the objectives of the LLL policies (Lowden, Valiente, & Capsada-Munsech 2016). In this sense, LLL policies related to issues such as migration or social background should be regarded as a priority when developing LLL policies, which are consistent with the idea of providing young adults with the same opportunities, especially those in situations of greater vulnerability. A similar effect of creating exaggerated expectations can be observed with regard to the financial funding of LLL policies; that is, there must be a coherent approach between the expectations generated in LLL policies and their funding, because in some cases what could be expected in theory cannot be developed and implemented in the field because of dwindling financial resources. (Kotthoff et al., 2017.)

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## **Work Package 7**

### **Regional/local case studies**

### **National Report – Germany**

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## Executive summary

YOUNG ADULLLT focus on Life Long Learning (LLL) policies, which support young adults in their life course. WP7 is one embedded part of the whole project. Its analysis based on the results and insights of the previous WPs and offered further insights for the following WPs.

### Objectives of Work Package 7

This WP conducts case studies in selected sites in the project countries

- first, in order to analyse policies and programs at the regional and local level identifying policymaking networks that include all social actors involved in shaping, formulating, and implementing LLL policies for young adults;
- second, the WP aims to recognize strengths (and best practices) and weaknesses (overlapping, fragmented or unfocused policies and projects), thus identifying different patterns of LLL policy-making at regional level, and investigating their integration with the labour market, education and other social policies but also their impact on the target groups.

In the **first chapter**, the introduction, we clarify the above mentioned task of this report and explain German-wide basics of the case construction. Those are especially:

- the case studies are located in FR Rhein-Main and Bremen, which were selected in the previous WPs.
- the, in WP5 elaborated, task-pyramid with its levels (basic skills, compensation of individual deficits, empowerment and qualification) and with its aim of employability. This task pyramid is applicability throughout Germany.
- the presentation of the four discourses which are identified as dominant. The discourses are “work as a vocation”, the “shortage of skilled workers”, “the lack of training maturity (of young people)” and “gender equality/reconciliation of work and family”.

In **chapter two** we introduce in our first case study, the part-time vocational training for young mothers (FR Rhein-Main) by presenting the regional scenery (2.1), which is mainly characterized by a prospering economy and at the same time big inequalities, precarious conditions and opportunities for young adults, especially for those with poorer economic, social, and cultural capital, a vast amount of LLL measures and the dominant aim of employability and a loose coupled system of involved actors in the skills system.

Starting point for our case study is the part-time vocational training of an independent service provider, rooted in the women's movement, the VbFF ('Association for the professional promotion of women').

In chapter 2.2 we present the story of the case and follow two young mother's trajectories through the measure and get in touch with the above mentioned basics of the case. In the end of chapter 2.2 we come to the conclusion that to some extent a focus on qualified training, holistic support, and individual autonomy is nurtured by the expectations of the Jobcenter relying on an activating welfare approach, the organisation rooted in the feminist women's movement and the life plans of the young women. In chapter 2.3 the story telling is followed by the analysis from the three theoretical perspectives (CPE, LCR and GOV). The following issues salience in this section: a) the VbFF did not refer back to the dominant discourse about the shortage of skilled workers. Instead they insist on their traditional gender equality approach. b) The discourse about the training maturity affects the VbFF insofar as they have to apply access procedures to get sure that the participants can complete the vocational training. c) the different involved actors/discourses are not congruently and not consistently referring to each other. They follow each their own rationalities with according consequences for the life courses of the young adults.

In the **third chapter** of this report, we will analyse the selected case study of the FR Bremen: "*institutionalisation and schooling for young adults*". Starting point of the case construction is the so called 'Werkschule'. The analysis follows a threefold structure: firstly, after a brief introduction that locates and constructs the case within its context (3.1), we provide an analytical account of the case's main story through the study of the emergent development of the policy from two different angles: a top-down policy perspective and the participants' perspective. In order to gain a more differentiated understanding of the *Werkschule*, we use different levels of vertical interaction (i.e., transnational, national, regional, local, organizational, interactive and individual) and the theoretical perspectives in terms of correspondences, implementation and originalities. This includes reviewing the interaction between the actors at the different levels and their reaction towards the policy functioning (3.2). Thirdly, we study the *Werkschule* through the lens of the three theoretical perspectives (CPE, LCR and GOV) of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project (3.3). Here we look at the immediate local context, the individual life trajectories (LCR) and subjective meanings of the young adults (CPE) and their interactions with the providing organisation and the broader framework of policy-making at the

transnational and/or European level (GOV). By analysing the wide range of discourses and interactions from the macro-structural level to the micro-structural level, we are able to offer a more abstract and at the same time more differentiated analysis of our case.

In **chapter four** we provide a comparative analysis of both cases in the regions and deepen some aspects of the analysis. Some of the results are:

The ultimate goal of both case studies is to create employability, yet they are located on different levels of this pyramid. In the Werkschule, the holistic approach is rather a means to the end of enhancing employability (due to the assumed deficits of the target group), in the case of VbFF a holistic approach is also motivated by the aim of emancipation in which labour market integration is a means to the end of autonomy and independence.

In the Werkschule, young people refer to the measure in terms of last rescue after a learning career characterised by failure and demotivation which brings them back on track of a standard biography. In VbFF, biographies of young women are characterised by aiming higher despite of; and aiming higher is encouraged by the feminist project workers for whom emancipatory policies imply overcoming or reversing disadvantage and not only securing inclusion while maintaining and reproducing social disadvantage.

In terms of implementation and organisational routines we noticed consequences with regard to recruitment and selection. VbFF stands under pressure of securing the successful progression of the participants throughout the standardised training which takes place outside the project in professional school and private companies. Therefore entrance tests have been institutionalised. Once the women have entered the project, support prevails which is tailored flexibly to the needs of the individual participant. In the Bremen case, selectivity at the beginning is lower to legitimise as measure for the most disadvantaged.

## 1. Introduction

The project YOUNG ADULLLT focus on Life Long Learning (LLL) policies, which support young adults in their life course. Background of our research is the observation that many young adults face difficulties in their transition from school to working life. This phenomenon is not new but increased during the financial crisis in 2007/2008 and deteriorated in the last years in many regions in Europe. LLL promised imminent (economic) growth for the individual and the society and at the same time social inclusion. Young adults in vulnerable positions are target group of such approaches and in the focus of this research. YOUNG ADULLLT focuses the various LLL policies in Europe and analyse them in their embeddedness in a competing and partly ambivalent policy landscape. The objective is to yield insights into their implications as well as intended and unintended effects on young adult life courses.

WP7 integrates the different empirical perspectives of the project and bases its analysis on the results and insights of the previous sub-studies in the project. It based on the mapping and review process in WP3 (cf. Bittlingmayer et al. 2017; cf. Kotthoff et al. 2017). It relies of the insights of the quantitative sub-study in WP4, which shows the specific living conditions of young adult in the selected regions (Schaufler et al. 2017). The data base and the insights of the qualitative analysis in WP5 (cf. Verlage et al. 2017), with its analysis of the young adults and experts' perception of policies, forms the ground of this report. Further it takes the insights about the regional skills supply and demand of the labour markets into account (cf. WP6: Weiler et al. 2017). WP7 itself sets a specific focus on specific policies in the selected regions and offers further insights for the following WPs.

### **Objectives of Work Package 7**

This WP conducts case studies in selected sites in the project countries

- first, in order to analyse policies and programs at the regional and local level identifying policymaking networks that include all social actors involved in shaping, formulating, and implementing LLL policies for young adults;
- second, the WP aims to recognize strengths (and best practices) and weaknesses (overlapping, fragmented or unfocused policies and projects), thus identifying different patterns of LLL policymaking at regional level, and investigating their integration with the labour market, education and other social policies but also their impact on the target groups.



WP7 is about regional/local case studies. The regional/local level is crucial because it could be understood as the melting pot of policies (discourses, programs and initiatives) of higher levels, like the European, national or federal state level and the policies and actors on site like Jobcenter, municipalities, independent service providers, schools and the people itself. This also shows that regional/local case studies could not be limited to the events on the local level. In YOUNG ADULLLT we understand single LLL policies as emerged conglomerates of processes on all different levels, from the European macro level down to the individual level of (participating) individuals. We are aware that we do not take the cases for granted but rather construct them by using the insights of the previous WPs and by using certain theoretical approaches. Those are cultural political economy (CPE), life course research (LCR) and Governance (GOV). Based on these theoretical perspectives certain guiding research questions for the regional/local case studies are developed. While the CPE perspective draws our attention to the fundamental discourses in the field of LLL and the construction of target groups by the different actors, the LCR perspective sensitises for the complex interactions between institutional regulations and individual biographies. And last but not least emphasizes the GOV perspective the interaction and the coordination within the LLL policy landscape. In this national report we bring the analysis of those different approaches together by drafting a dense description of the constructed cases.

In accordance with the WP7 proposal three major issues were focused in each case study. *First*, reasoning on correspondences: we took the insights of the three theoretical approaches on the different levels (transnational/national, regional/local, organisational, interaction and individual) into account and analyse the interactions among and between them. *Second*, reasoning on implementation: we analysed the interactions between different actors (e.g. operators and addressees, operators and other organisations) and also between discourses and organisations and individuals. *Third*, reasoning on originalities: we grasp the peculiarities of each case study.

In the preparation of WP3 the participating German partners in the project have chosen two contrasting Functional Regions (FR), in which LLL policies are analysed in greater detail: the FR Rhein-Main and the FR Bremen. The differences appear in several perspectives. Socio-economically, the FR Bremen is weaker than the FR Rhein-Main. While Frankfurt am Main, as the core City of the Rhein-Main region, is a prospering international finance and transport hub, the Cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven still suffers from the decline of the marine indus-

try. In a governance perspective it is striking that in Bremen local municipal and federal state level coincide, while the Rhein-Main region is part of three federal states. Despite their contrasting differences these FRs are united by the development and implementation of LLL projects, which aim to improve the living conditions of young adults.<sup>1</sup>

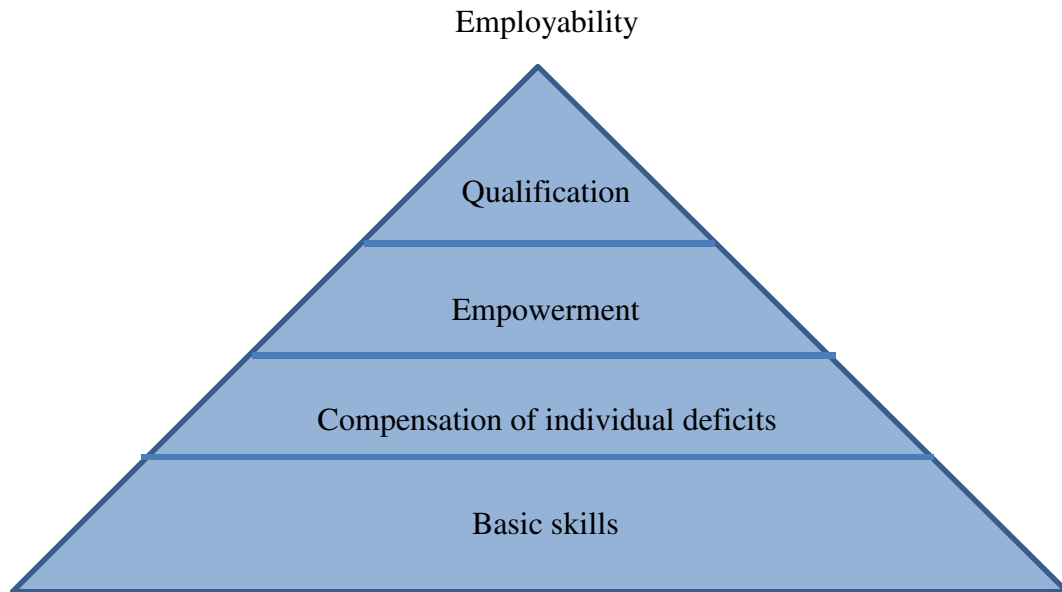
LLL policies are measures across different policy sectors, most notably education policy, labour market policy and social and youth policy. A vast amount and variety of LLL policies, measures and initiatives can be found in the regions ranging from a low level of materiality and concreteness (e.g. discourses, strategies) to very concrete measures as well as policies, which are formally initiated and run by institutions (e.g. ministries) and policies which are informally initiated and run by networks. (cf. WP3: Kotthoff et al., 2017: p. 17) LLL policies in Germany form a functionally differentiated system and unfold their full potential in combination with each other. This system can be envisioned as a pyramid of needs and tasks (see figure 1, cf. WP5: Verlage et al. 2017: p. 28).<sup>2</sup> On the bottom we have policies which address basic, sometimes even existential needs of the young adults. On the next level we have policies aimed at compensating individual deficits which are seen as barriers for training or employment. These policies (and the young adults concerned) address multiple problems and deficits with regard to basic skills – which they construct and reproduce at the same time. The next level can be characterised by empowerment, even if we see that aspects of empowerment can be identified at all levels. After stabilizing the young adults at the level of compensation, more or less in terms of stopping a downward trajectory, the level of empowerment has the task to enable the young adults “to climb up“. At the top level of the pyramid we have the policies which provide regular qualifications. In fact, the different policies share the overall orientation towards employability and independence through standard employment with the only difference that the top level provides direct access while the lower levels aim at providing required prerequisites. (cf. WP5: Verlage et al., 2017)

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of similarities and differences in the regions, especially with regard to the LLL landscape, demographical, labour market, health and education aspects we relate to the national reports of WP3 (Kotthoff et al. 2017) and WP4 (Schaufler/do Amaral 2017).

<sup>2</sup> This applies for Germany overall, even if it is developed in WP5 with regard to the analysis of the policies in the FR Rhein-Main.

*Figure 1 Task Pyramid of LLL Policies*



Most LLL measures can be ascribed to the education policy sector with the overarching aim of an ‘activation regime’ and thereby an increase of individual problem-solving capacity for structural problems. A prominent attempt is activating the unexploited potential of low skilled workers or those people whose potential lies dormant and undetected as for instance women who are housewives or have other familial responsibilities, such as child care or home health care of relatives (cf. WP4: Schaufler et al. 2017, WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016). The trend towards activation implies a particular challenge for a system like the German one where education and training are closely connected with the labour market. A prominent example for this particular skill system in Germany is the dual system of apprenticeship training and its extension of the so-called ‘transition system’ of pre-vocational education and training catering for those young people who do not enter into regular VET. For instance, VET schools are part of the educational system while the apprentices hold contracts with companies who are their employers and thus representing the labour market. A detailed presentation of the dual vocational system is offered by the WP3 national report (cf. Bittlingmayer et al. 2016). Interwoven in this structure is the still living discourse about work as a ‘vocation’ instead of work as a ‘job’ reflected by the duration of apprenticeships in the dual system between three and three and a half years and the implied separation of productive and reproductive roles and tasks of men and women. Moreover, independent service providers are incorporated into the system as

they can offer additional support and expertise in a rather flexible and autonomous manner and are relatively free in implementing and conducting their measures (cf. Parreira do Amaral et al. 2017, Weiler et al. 2017). There are some other German-wide discourses which are in the one or another way tied back to the activation discourse and which are important to know for perceiving the whole scenery of the following cases:

The so called “Fachkräftemangel” is a discursive concept referring to a diagnosed shortage of skilled worker, which is as an issue of increasing importance in Germany. More and more companies complain that they do not find well qualified workers. The reasons for this development are seen in the demographic change. An Example: Hesse will lose 4% of their labour force potential till 2020 and 9% more till 2030. That means 400.000 to 600.000 persons of working age. At the same time in Hesse live over 400.000 low skilled workers. Their qualification gained significantly in importance. Against this background it is hardly surprising that on the level of the federal states/the regional levels this discourse contributes to a shift in social and labour market policies towards the activation or workfare paradigm. (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016)

Wedded with the discourse about the shortage of skilled worker and also identified in the WP3 (cf. Bittlingmayer et al. 2016) is another rising discourse in Germany: the lack of training maturity (of young people), which represents a strange situation in Germany. On the one hand, the companies complain that they do not find qualified workers, on the other hand, there are still more young people looking for vocational training than offered apprenticeship places. Companies justify this situation with the argument that too many young people are not fit enough to start a vocational training. At the same time we notice problems of matching between the wishes and expectations of the young people and the jobs and apprenticeships they are offered. The school leaving qualifications required for the attractive occupations are often higher than those young people have achieved. In the last decade a lot of effort was invested in Germany to develop instruments to measure the construct “training maturity” and to prevent and compensate the lack of training maturity; with the result, that more and more measures of vocational orientation and of competence measurement have been implemented and they take place more and more early in young people’s school trajectories. This is how an ascribed lack of competence has been transformed or `translated` into ascribed lack of orientation of young people. At the same time, the other part of the skills use system gets out of sight and out of discussion: the “training maturity” of companies.

A fourth German-wide discourse is about the reconciliation of work and family life (cf. Bittlingmayer et al. 2016). Germany is everything else but a forerunner in the field of gender equality. We have to notice that the term “reconciling work and family” is a discursive term itself. The core behind this construct is the issue of gender equality while reproducing that primarily women are responsible for the upbringing of children. Even if reconciling of work and family life is only one aspect of gender equality, in the national German discourse sometimes it seems to be the same. The holistic discourse about gender equality is broken down to the reconciliation of work and family life, which in theory affects men too and then is a discussion about certain situations in life and no longer a discussion about the whole complex of gender equality. But nevertheless it is an important discourse in Germany with a trend which fluctuates over time, but in sum is getting more important. Despite all adversities there is a change in the discourse in Germany from the conservative towards the modern female role, especially if we take bigger timeframes into account. But there are also conservative counter-discourses, like a recent law pushed through by a conservative party which is colloquially referred to as “Herdprämie” (fire-place-benefits), a welfare benefit for families who do not send their children to the Kindergarten in the first 3 years with (mostly) the mother staying at home with the children instead of going to work. So, we see that this issue is an arena of interests and ideologies, which are in a permanent struggle.

Now that we presented current German-wide structures of the vocational education and dominant discourses we come to the core of this national report: the reconstructed case studies of the two FR. We start with FR Rhein-Main (chapter 2) and introduce in our case study by presenting the regional scenery (2.1). After drafting the scenery we present the story of the case by providing a thick description of the interdependent activities of the main actors (individuals and institutions). We close the story by explicating the correspondences, implementation and originalities of the case (2.2). The story telling is followed by the analysis of the case. For this purpose we use the three theoretical perspectives (CPE, LCR and GOV) of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project. We continue with the reconstruction of the case in the FR Bremen, the so-called *Werkschule* (chapter 3). The analysis of our second case follows the same threefold structure: firstly, after a brief introduction that locates and constructs the case within its context (3.1), we provide an analytical account of the case’s main story through the study of the emergent development of the policy from two different angles: a top policy perspective and the participants’ perspective. In order to gain a more differentiated understanding of the

*Werksschule*, we use different levels of vertical interaction (i.e., transnational, national, regional, local, organizational, interactive and individual) and the theoretical perspectives in terms of correspondences, implementation and originalities. This includes reviewing the interaction between the actors at the different levels and their reaction towards the policy functioning (3.2). Thirdly, we study the *Werksschule* through the lens of the three theoretical perspectives (3.3). Here we look at the immediate local context, the individual life trajectories and subjective meanings of the young adults and their interactions with the providing organisation and the broader framework of policy-making at the transnational and/or European level. By analysing the wide range of discourses and interactions from the macro-structural level to the micro-structural level, we are able to offer a more abstract and at the same time more differentiated analysis of our case. In chapter 4 we provide a Comparative analysis of both cases in the regions.

## 2. Case study 1: Part-time vocational training for young mothers (FR Rhein-Main)

This chapter provides the case-study of the FR Rhein-Main. The selection of the LLL policy we took for the Rhein-Main region into consideration based on the results and insights of previous WPs. We construct the case according to the project's three theoretical perspectives (CPE, LCR, GOV), locating the case within its context, thereby not only taking into account the immediate local context, but placing the case with the broader framework of policy-making including macro-structural conditions, such as on the transnational and/or European level, as well micro-structures, such as individual life trajectories and subjective meanings of the young adults and their interactions with the providing organisation.

### 2.1 Short account of the case study

Rhein-Main is a very wealthy area characterized by Frankfurt airport (the biggest working place in Germany with ca. 80.000 jobs) and the Frankfurt bank district (Seat of the German and the European Central Bank). The GDP per capita per year in Frankfurt and some neighbouring municipalities is higher than 80.000 EUR (Rhein-Main region: 38.880 EUR. Germany: 32.500 EUR). These figures reflect the outstanding importance of this city for the region and beyond. The region and Frankfurt itself are rather stratified, suggesting that the whole

population does not benefit from this economic strength. There are huge differences between districts of Frankfurt and cities within the region with regard to unemployment, income, qualification and rents and consequently different chances for citizens. (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016, cf. WP4: Schaufler/do Amaral 2017)

At the same time, the FR Rhein-Main is undergoing rapid economic changes that increase the demand for high skilled workers in a strong and dynamic labour market. We observe a lot of effort to set-up structures with the aim to facilitate actors to develop a coherent strategy to coordinate the various approaches of lifelong-learning, which have often a high labour market orientation. These developments take place against the background of the demographic change and an anticipated shortage of skilled workers. (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016, cf. WP6: Weiler et al. 2017)

The FR Rhein-Main offers a broad variety of jobs in finance, air transportation, service and media attracting workers from all over Germany and worldwide who compete with the potential workforce from the region. Particularly the core of the region attracts high skilled workers with the consequence that less skilled jobs are marginalised and stigmatised. For NEETs and early school leavers this labour market segmentation increases precarious conditions. As regards life plans and life trajectories, especially in the metropolitan core, young people seem to postpone life projects of family and own children. While uncertainty and the prolongation of educational trajectories affects all young adults, those with poorer economic, social and cultural capital suffer from limitations like increasing educational requirements for jobs and increasing living costs. One effect of these limitations is their late independence from their parents. Especially, young adults under 25 – who are recipients of welfare benefits (Hartz IV) – are prevented from gaining autonomy as regulations imply that they only have access to social benefits through their parents. (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016, cf. WP4: Schaufler/do Amaral 2017)

The vast amount of LLL measures in the FR Rhein-Main was already mention in WP3. The LLL policies in the region are situated at the intersection of education, labour-market, and social youth policy and marked by an activating approach. Most of the LLL policies follow more of a utilitarian humanist perspective than an emancipatory humanism perspective. This means that the LLL policies aim to foster the young adults' employability by improving their skills and educational trajectories with LLL policies rather than presenting education as a goal

in itself. (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016) Employability as the dominant aim of the policies was also a result of WP5 (cf. Verlage et al. 2017).

WP6 highlights the Importance of the work of the independent service provider in the skills system. WP6 also highlights the connection of the different actors among each other. For the functional region Rhein-Main, we noticed a dense network of cooperation. This cooperation is often organised marketwise (e.g. customer – contractor relationship between public institutions and independent service providers in order to offer a specific skills formation service), but it can also have different patterns, especially when we look at the cooperation between the institutions and workers or individuals from the target groups. In sum up, the skills system in Frankfurt can be described as a “loose coupling” (lose Koppelung) of involved actors. We see a dense mesh of actors, measures, cooperation and locations and opportunities for contact. The system works without a central actor who is responsible for the whole system. Instead all participating actors work with a relatively high degree of independence for their own interests or in line with their public mandate. The aim each actor has to fulfil (with regard to the cooperation) is the result of a common process, which of course does not mean that these processes are democratic or free of hierarchy. This WP6 result is linked to the WP5 task-pyramid (see figure 1), because the loose coupled actors are largely the operator of the tasks.

Taking into account the results of the previous WPs and here described context, the following three LLL policies from the FR Rhein-Main were selected for a deeper analysis in WP3 and WP5:

1. VbFF (‘Association for the professional promotion of women’) is an independent service provider. Its main feature is to develop support measures with a special focus on the training and professional development of women. It has its roots in the women’s movement and is established in Frankfurt am Main since 1978. They offer a part-time training for young mothers and support them to complete their apprenticeships. By using the, in WP5 developed, task pyramid (see figure 1) we can locate the VbFF it in the Rhein-Main landscape of LLL measures. We locate the VbFF in the qualifications level, but are aware that strong elements of the empowerment level are implemented. This policy is introduced later in a greater detail.
2. Fachoberschulen (‘professional high school’) are courses of general education with a professional focus organized in professional schools. The courses address young people with



at least an intermediate school leaving certificate. Certificates provide access to higher education in universities of applied science (not regular universities). There are different forms of organization, disciplines and professional focus (e.g. engineering, construction technology, nutrition, social services). In accordance to its objective, we locate it in the very top of the task pyramid in the qualifications level.

3. The *Perspektive mit Plan* ('perspective with plan') (PmP) is a measure offered by an independent service provider for further education, the Zentrum für Weiterbildung (ZfW) ('Centre for further education and training'). Background of this measure is the finding that young people, who depend on social benefits, have often multiple problems at the same time. The plurality of the problems can prevent the search for a job or a VET place which makes it impossible for them to get into the labour market. The measure provides consulting and support for young people between 16 and 26 commissioned by the City of Frankfurt and the Jobcenter, which are at the same time the funder. PmP offers an individual tailor-fitted support. The concrete support the measure offers depends on the needs of the young person. Possible Interventions can be individual case work for coping with the everyday life, group trainings, competence trainings, stabilisation, guidance, clarification of the life situation, initiation of assistance measures, long-term, intense social-pedagogical support at the transition into vocational training, further education or Work, development of personal and professional perspectives. We locate the PmP on the compensating level of above mentioned task-pyramid.

For constructing the case in Rhein-Main FR and answering the research questions, we focus on part-time vocational training for young mothers. The already above mentioned provider of this training is the *Verein zur beruflichen Förderung von Frauen (VbFF)*, which is located in the City of Frankfurt. The VbFF, founded in 1978, is an example of an independent service provider offering a LLL policy measure mainly directed at the labour market. The VbFF has a history in the women's movement and still refers to a feminist perspective. In accordance with its self-conception the VbFF traditionally did not refer to discourses like securing workforce or training maturity. They are much more related to the gender equality discourse, which was long time located in oppositional circles. One of the reasons for the selection of this policy was the observation of the intertwining of those discourses. A staff member explained the traditional feminist perspective in a WP5 Interview: "*On the one hand of course, that the women get an official apprenticeship and become financially independent, from the welfare*

*offices, from the men. So that they can live their lives independent from any other factors. That is the primary goal. The next goal is that they grow personally”* (E\_GER\_F\_2 – 369ff). For the VbFF staff the transition into work is no end in itself and not synonymous for the integration in the society, but a condition for being able to lead their lives autonomously both in economic terms but also in terms of individual choice.

The exemplary measure addresses the problem of reconciling work and family life as many others measures analysed in WP3. The project addresses mothers up to the age of 25 years living in Frankfurt and having a school leaving qualification. It offers a thirty-hours per week part-time vocational training for young mothers. That means young women are being qualified to conclude successfully a vocational training who would otherwise not have the chance for an apprenticeship according to the dual training system combining vocational school and practical training in a company. The training takes place in the collaborating companies, in vocational schools and in the association itself. The measure is well-established and implemented since 1998 and funded by the Jobcenter, which is exemplary for the “skills ecology” in Rhein-Main (cf. WP6: Weiler et al. 2017)

The VbFF takes an intermediate position between the young women and the vocational schools and especially the companies but also between the feminist women’s movement, the economy and the welfare state with its different sectors of social, education and labour market policy which in turn position themselves differently between individuals and the market. They offer their part-time vocational trainings in different professions, especially as office clerks. In some of the professions the VbFF is the official training company where the young women are employed officially, in other professions the young women are trainees of the companies while VbFF “only” provides additional guidance. As a mediator, VbFF prepares the young women for an application for an apprenticeship by testing skills such as command of the German language, math and general education followed by a detailed interview. During the time of the vocational training the VbFF serves as a contact point for the young women with regard to practical and psychological support such as time management or child care as well as for the vocational schools and employers. The measure ends with the young women having successfully finished their vocational training and applying for a job. Moreover, a concluding interview between the VbFF and the women serves as a self-evaluation. (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016, cf. WP5: Verlage et al. 2017)

It became apparent that the part-time vocational training for young mothers provided by the VbFF is a good example for showing those different interactions from different actors on different levels in the FR Rhein-Main. The following sections show correspondences of multiple levels and perspectives. They show the implementation of a LLL policy on site by accompany two young mothers through the measure. And last but not least they draft a clear picture of the originalities of a measure rooted in the women's movement, and conducted in an activation regime.

## 2.2 Telling the story of part-time vocational training for young mothers

In order to understand how a LLL policy is being 'made', that is designed, implemented and used in terms of discourse, governance and life course, we want to start with and follow an individual participant's trajectory through the measure. In the former chapter, we sketched already the scenery for one of our main actors in this story: Linda (Y\_GER\_F\_3), a 28 year old young mother. She was born and raised in an African country. She has four siblings and six half-siblings. Her father works for a national chamber of commerce and industry. Her mother is self-employed. In sum, we can describe her social background as an upper middle class one. After her school time she moved to Germany in order to develop her language skills and to try settle down in Europe. She came to Germany as an au pair, where she lived with a physician's family. She visited several language courses and got married at that time. After her time as an au pair, she lived in a small village near Frankfurt and worked in a hotel in different reimits. While she worked in the hotel, she got pregnant and gave birth to a child. Her husband wanted her to abort the child and did not accept her decision, which was the reason for their divorce. A colleague in the hotel drew her attention to the VbFF and the possibility to do a part-time vocational training. *"When I worked in the office, the woman [a superior] said, you are doing well. That is something for you. Go for it. You can do an apprenticeship. I know an association"* (Linda – 496ff.). But why should Linda start an apprenticeship with an independent service provider instead of a classical apprenticeship training in the dual-system?

Starting point for the part-time training measure of the VbFF was the observation that it was very difficult for women with children to get an apprenticeship. First, the dual system is both segmented by gender with few vocational sectors being open for men and women and most of the training professions address young men rather than young women (for a detailed analysis

of gender based inequalities of life opportunities see WP4: Schaufler et al., 2017). Second, the requirements for trainees are high. In the dual vocational system in Germany they have, depending on their profession, two to three days in school and two to three days in the company. Regularly the vocational training lasts three years. This means 40h per week work and school and working time is oriented towards economic needs of the company and not towards the opening hours of child care facilities (A detailed Overview about the dual vocational system is elaborated in WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2017). While women in partnerships or with the support of their families have social resources, they can fall back on, single mothers, which live also far away or without family support, stand alone. They do not have the resources to care for their children while they have to work or go to school. At the same time companies know about the problems and will choose those people who have the resources allowing them to concentrate 100% on the training. Statistics show that 70% of the people in apprenticeships, who become single-parents, cancel their apprenticeship (Ott et al. 2011). In the consequence, young mothers and especially single mothers have limited chances to start a vocational training. People without apprenticeships are overrepresented among those at risk of poverty as are single mothers. The general unemployment rate in Germany in the year 2012 was 5,4%, among single-parents it is more than doubled 11,6% (Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2013: 11). Additionally in their situation, without an apprenticeship, without the chance to stand on their own financial feet, they remain in dependence of their partners, their families or the welfare state – and/or live in poverty. Here factors culminate and lead to systematic disadvantage which, in the long run, leads to the fact that women with children are a disadvantaged group in the German society. Linda describes why she opted for an apprenticeship of an independent service provider: *“I could have [a standard apprenticeship]. Actually, there was one [young woman] who left the part-time training [...] as it [normal training] suited her. But she has her mother, she has her family, who picks up the child, she has support. I am alone. And I am happy that I get support here”* (Linda – 972ff). This section shows the intermediate position of the VbFF between the young women and the employers. They present themselves towards their participants and their co-operating employers as a supporting actor who ensures that the apprenticeships are completed successfully. This verifies the picture in WP6 that independent service providers are an important part of the skills system in the region (Weiler et al. 2017).

Linda decided to contact the VbFF and tried to attend the part-time vocational-training. “*I want to make something of myself*” (Linda – 612f.) is a general statement of her, which illustrates that her attitude is in line with the discourse about lifelong-learning, further education and qualification. This attitude is conform to the wishes/demands of a society which attaches importance to an active economic and labour market participation of young people. Her attitude fits also well to the increasingly dominant discourse, we already mentioned above, the shortage of skilled worker in Germany. Programmes have been initiated to tackle the problem. One which is important for the Region Rhein-Main is the “Overall strategy for securing skilled personnel in Hesse” (Fachkräftesicherung 2013; cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016). It is a joint approach of the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration adopted in 2013. As its title suggests, the initiative wants to secure the stock of skilled workers for the economy. Especially two approaches are central for its implementation. 1. Vocational training & further education and 2. Immigration and integration. Over 150 separate measures have been started with regard to this initiative. A central element is the activation of unexploited labour force. On the one hand, these are low skilled workers. The Hessian government tries to implement consistent structures of counselling to make tailor-made post-qualification possible for them. On the other hand, women with children are getting into the focus of attention. The government tries to increase the number of child care facilities and initiates measures which aim at facilitating the way for women back into the labour market. Also the regional experts interviewed in WP6 emphasized the importance of this issue for all actors. From the perspective of an expert from an employers' association, the shortage of skilled worker exist because the loss of attraction of the dual-system. From his point of view the dual-system is marked in the public discourse as a “*supply system for the weak*” (WP6\_E\_GER\_F\_1: 839) and he identified this as one point why young people want to study instead of doing an apprenticeship. Another WP6 expert highlights whereas the role of the employers in this story about the shortage of skilled worker: “*They are looking for engineers, and we did not have any. And then they ask us: ‚Why?‘ and I said: ‚I will tell you something very friendly ‚you did not trained them‘*” (WP6\_E\_GER\_F\_2: 1234ff.).

Linda, as a young mother, with a migration background, willing to develop her professional profile and willing to get a professional qualification is exactly the target group addressed by this discourse. At the same time she fits the target group of the VbFF as she wants to develop and get independent by achieving an occupational qualification despite being a single mother.

After contacting the VbFF by phone, they made an appointment and talk personally. Linda described: „*At that time I lived in a small town and they told me: We are sorry, but we don't accept people living outside Frankfurt. You have to live in Frankfurt and be client in the Jobcenter*” (Linda - 63ff). Linda was perplex and didn't understand: “*But I worked regular, I didn't depend on the state. Why? Why is this a criterion? Why have I to go to the Jobcenter? I don't understand. Then she said: yes. Gave me a number from here and told me to call the Jobcenter and clarify the situation. (Linda – 65ff) [...] I got an appointment [in the Jobcenter]. Should come to the consultation hour. First of all they asked: why are you quitting your job? You earn well, so why? Why do you come to us and ask us for money? I answered: I want to do an apprenticeship and this apprenticeship is only possible here. I am a single-parent, I have a small child and this is the only way to do this apprenticeship: part-time but completed after three years. 'No, we are sorry, if you quit your job, we have to cut 30% your benefits'*” (Linda – 598ff). What happened here? One could say that Linda has understood the message of the discourse of lifelong-learning, further education and qualification but then she is thwarted by the Jobcenter. Why?

The Jobcenter is the main funder of the project and as we know from WP6 a central actor in the skills ecology of the region. It appears as central actor who enables with his financial power a diversity of support mechanisms. (cf. Weiler et al. 2017) At the same time, as the main aim is to get people into paid work, its funding is tied a set of conditions which have to be fulfilled by potential clients<sup>3</sup> and providers. Hence, conditions and regulations have a huge impact on the way the support of the independent service providers is being delivered. Linda was confronted with two requirements she had to fulfil to participate in the measure: *first*, she had to live in Frankfurt. *Second*, she had to be client in the Jobcenter. She did not fulfil any of the criteria. What did Linda do? Even if she did not understand the sense of the criteria she started to fulfil them. She quit her occasional job and moved to Frankfurt. As mentioned above, the housing market in Frankfurt is very tight, but she was lucky and got a flat with the help of a friend. She describes her next appointment with the Jobcenter as follows: “*And then*

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<sup>3</sup> In the terminology of the Jobcenter jobseekers and recipients of support and benefits are referred to as ‚clients‘.

*I went to the Jobcenter: 'Here, I have a new flat, I am living in Frankfurt now'. And they said. 'We are sorry, your flat is too expensive, we cannot pay it'. And I: 'What do you want from me?' And then I said: 'Okay, no problem, I will pay the difference from my own money. I will do a side-job.' Then they said: 'If you can do that, you don't need our support and you should go on with your previous work'" (Linda – 84ff.).* The Jobcenter staff reacts in accordance with their regulations as announced earlier. First, Linda cancelled her Job and hence wilful causes her dependence of the benefits of the Jobcenter. Second, she moved to Frankfurt without the authorisation of the Jobcenter – which is a necessary for beneficiaries. The result was a 30% reduction of benefits. Linda reaction and analysis: *"Okay, no problem. I can live with it, temporary. Yes, she said, yes, how are you coping with that? I think, they say this 30% less because, they want that people give up and say: no, that's nothing I want. But I stayed persistent. I said, no, no, no, okay. I take 30% less. I CAN live with that"* (Linda - 606ff.). After the dispute with the Jobcenter staff she got a new personal contact person in the Jobcenter, who she describes as more *"nice and understanding"* (Linda – 93f.). She gave her three months to find a cheaper flat and paid the rent in the meantime. With the help of a friend and the cooperation with a religious association she found a flat which fulfils the requirements of the Jobcenter. Interestingly the VbFF is not mentioned in her narrative about her interaction with the Jobcenter. This opens scope for interpretation. It becomes clear that the VbFF knows that Linda did not fulfil the requirements. They sent her to the Jobcenter to clarify the situation, but no further support was offered; at least it was not mentioned in the interview. This suggests that the feminist tradition of empowerment of women in terms of emancipation, even in the VbFF, has been – at least partly - replaced by a new approach of support which is conditioned by the funding mechanism.

Linda's odyssey through the Jobcenter can be interpreted in terms of incompatible rationalities in the overlapping sectors of labour market policy and lifelong-learning policy. Here we see that it is not only the measures/policy itself, which is difficult to be assigned to a single policy sector (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2017), even the rationalities of policies (here Jobcenter and VbFF) need not to be congruent. It is easy to imagine that the obstacles Linda faced would prevent many young mothers who have to face even more problems in their lives from participating in the measure. Linda already proved her persistence and her effort to stand up for her independence and professional development. She masters the situation in her own way: *"After a few weeks, I called the Jobcenter again and told them, 'it can't be real, I will*

*inform myself, I will go to a lawyer. I thought about it.' Why? I want to qualify myself and then, they put obstacles in my way. I said, 'No! I will call my lawyer' and then, suddenly, it was okay, well, well. Yes, my lawyer wrote a letter, 'Ms [Linda]) wants to start a vocational-training, please, clarify the 30% sanction'. And, next month I simply got the complete amount, without any comment. That was outrageous"* (Linda - 611ff). On the one hand Linda was in the "lucky" situation to be already in contact with a lawyer because of her divorce. Additionally we assume that her upper-middle-class background is one of the reasons that she was able to turn her outrage and persistence in functional (and successful) resistance.

Already during the process of clarifying the situation and the requirements with the Jobcenter, she returned to VbFF. Like any other women who wants to participate in the training measure she had to do aptitude tests and personal interviews: *"I should do a test, because they want to know, how advanced the women are: do they need tutoring, are they suitable for the job, should the association look for other options?"* (Linda - 556ff) Linda completed the test and the following personal interviews very well and was accepted as a participant. The access procedure is in line with the above mentioned discourse about training maturity. The VbFF uses the same selection criteria for recruiting new clients as the companies (aptitude tests, personal interview, school leaving qualification, German language skills). This is at least the experience Linda made. And this is congruent to the statement of the staff: *"The tests are relatively easy constructed. We just want to ask for knowledge, because we cannot recognize enough in a first short conversation; for example writing abilities or formulation skills. And additional it is important for us in the personal interviews that the woman a) has an idea of the profession, b) an idea of doing an apprenticeship [...] because she don't do only the apprenticeship [...] She goes home, has to do housework, has to care for her children, has to do homework with the children, then has to do her own homework and we try to prepare them, but it only becomes apparent in the situation and we try to find out, has she a realistic idea of that"* (E\_GER\_F\_2: 285ff.). This statement expresses the high expectations the women have to fulfil. But the expectations did not aim at cognitive skills primarily, but on the realistic assessment of the task to complete an apprenticeship as a mother. The example of Elena, another participating woman, elucidates that certain skills are not the crucial access criteria. Elena was born in Eastern Europe. She grew up in poor conditions with her aunt and her uncle. With 18 years she got pregnant for the first time and left school. Because of her pregnancy she married her boyfriend. She completed high school after her child was born at an evening school



and received her leaving certificate. She got divorced, when she was in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level, because of different ideas of life. In order to finance her studies at university she came to Germany and worked as a geriatric nurse. She left her children at her aunt at that time, but she was unhappy to live apart from her children. Because of the high costs she stopped her studies and decided to move to Germany with her family. She first moved with her sister to Germany, but after getting a job, which succeeded her after a few weeks, she brings her family to Frankfurt. Her studies were not recognised in Germany, therefore she was not allowed to continue. She worked for a few months as a house keeper. With the help of the Jobcenter she found the VbFF and started her apprenticeship as an office clerk. Her statements about the concrete implementation of the access criteria show the scope of decision-making the VbFF has: *“I came here and did a test. That was math, grammar test. I didn’t understand the grammar test at all. I couldn’t write anything, because I didn’t understand. But math and logical thinking was good. That’s why I got a place in the VbFF”* (Elena – 72ff.). Beside the scope of decision-making this shows two things: first, that the VbFF does not use the aptitude tests only to assess concrete skills. Second, it shows that the VbFF does not apply the results of the tests very strictly. Apart from this, they offer for example language courses for young women, if their language skills are not good enough. In this way, they are much more open and flexible and supportive than many companies inasmuch as they provide support which is targeted to the women’s needs. The implementation of the access procedure illustrates how the VbFF is subject to the entry requirements for trainees set by the companies. The VbFF depends on the functioning and the successful completion of their participants. Obviously, the companies have the expectation (and obviously this expectation is accepted) that they got “fit” young trainees, so that they do not have to invest in supporting them. Here we made a mechanism on the skills formation side of the skills systems (cf. WP6: Weiler et al. 2017) visible, which was so far under exposed. The independent service provider are not in a neutral intermediate position between the young adults and the companies. In this example, we could show that with regard to the access in the measure the companies dominate the access criteria, without dictating them in each single case.

Now when Linda and Elena are accepted as participants in the VbFF we want to turn our focus to the organizational perspective and look at the policy in practice.

*“In broad terms the structure is two days company, two days school and one day VbFF [for the participating women]”* (E\_GER\_F\_2 – 26ff). For every group of participants two staff

members are responsible, one trainer and one social worker. Both professionals work together and jointly decide how to support the women with their apprenticeship. The trainer is in contact with the vocational school and *“always up to date with what happens with our women in the vocational schools”* (E\_GER\_F\_2 – 33f). The contact with the companies is less closely, especially because most of the companies do not want so much additional communication, but regular contacts are foreseen. With regard to WP6, we see here again the different allocation of power in the skills system. The VbFF use these insights to consider what they can do to *“determine and face problems, review and improve professional and school-relevant content”* (E\_GER\_F\_2 – 38f). The social worker describes her task with the following words: *“And I do with the women: social-pedagogical units. That could be time-management, self-organisations. That could be visiting an exhibition, because for me it is important that the women get to know our cultural landscape. We conduct theatre-projects to strengthen the self-esteem of our women. We do Mother-Child-Meetings to get to know our participants also as mothers and not only as trainees or participants. We offer a three day seminar in an educational institution with the women and their children. The children get child-care around the clock, so that the women can focus on their work, also with methods of leisure time pedagogy to increase their self-esteem and their courage”* (E\_GER\_F\_2 – 39ff).

Beside the special events and the social-pedagogical units the VbFF experts highlight that the women could ask them for support at any time: *“We advise and support them in all questions they have: Whatever they need, no matter what information they need. For example cancellation of the rental agreement or problems with the partner, health issues, everything what happens in life. They can ask us and they do. [...] If the issues are psychological we pass them on. We recommend them other institutions and if the women want, we can also guide them there personally”* (E\_GER\_F\_1 – 236ff.).

This few information show us already different aspects of the organization and the focus of the VbFF. They work in multi-professional teams and take different aspects of a guided part-time training into account. On the one hand the professional aspects and on the other hand social-pedagogical aspects of support. It becomes clear that the VbFF is eager to offer a broad range of support for their participants. This could be seen first of all as rooted in the feminist tradition and approach of empowering women to live *“independently, from the welfare offices, from the men, that they can live their lives independently from any other factors”* (E\_GER\_F\_2 – 370ff.). At the same time it becomes visible that this tradition and the neoliberal

eral ideal of an individualized life of independent and self-optimizing humans fit together very well, at least in this constellation, inasmuch as competencies like time-management and self-organization are functional for the adaption to company-based expectations of a good employee. We see how codes of individualization like independence and living an “own” life are expressed in a feminist perspective as well as in the neoliberal activation regime. Based on this case we come to the conclusion that the feminist approach of providing holistic support is functional for the activation regime in ‘producing’ a self-organised workforce while at the same time the organisation has to adapt to the specific principles and conditions of the Job-center according to which autonomy is not an end in itself but only a means for labour market integration. The dominance of the aim employability, already identified in the WP3 and WP5, is here again verified. Furthermore, we showed the mechanism, which translates a former resistant approach into a function of a hegemonic discourse.

Despite of this asymmetry, both women praise the part-time training and the VbFF inasmuch as it matches their general motivation: *“I want to make something of myself”* (Linda – 612f.) and *“I had other ideas of life. I want to reach something in my life”* (Elena - 26f.). But at the same time they interpret their benefit from the measure in different ways. While Linda is very much focused on the general chance to do an apprenticeship in part-time and complete it in three years while being a mother, Elena focuses more on the chance to do the apprenticeship as a foreigner with limited language skills in Germany. Hence she explicitly praises the additional offers of the VbFF: *“And we also visited museums, which was very important for me, because I didn’t know the City of Frankfurt very well. I could notice what we have seen and what I wanted to visit with my family”* (Elena – 85ff.).

Elena finished her training two or three months before the interview and is now working in the same profession. She is very happy and gives the impression that she did not expect that a woman with her limited language skills could get such a recognized job: *“I am very grateful, because they rely on me.”* (Elena – 1185f). Linda is in her second year and finished the first part of the final exam with good grades. She is optimistic to get a job in the company, where she does her apprenticeship. She answered the question what the best things for her professional development were: *“that I decided to go to the association [the VbFF]”* (Linda – 998f). She highlights especially the lifelong learning aspect of her apprenticeship. She wants to make the most of herself and provide her child the best she can. This shows that she identified

the qualification in the apprenticeship as the basis of her professional career. Intuitively, she refers back to the “skilled” in “shortage of skilled worker”.

### *Reasoning on correspondences, implementation and originality*

How does LLL policy making function the case of part-time training for young mothers. It is interesting to see that to some extent a focus on qualified training, holistic support, and individual autonomy is nurtured by the expectations of the Jobcenter relying on an activating welfare approach, the organisation rooted in the feminist women’s movement and the life plans of the young women. This is the originality of this constellation, which also profits from a dynamic economic region with a need for a diversified workforce, especially in the service sector. However, this constellation is only partly a balance or a win-win-situation between the actors inasmuch as the organisation as well as the individuals have to accept and subject to the conditions of funding and participation imposed by the Jobcenter and thereby – in case of contradictions – have to compromise. This means that it is the individuals and the organisation who need to produce the ‘match’ between labour market needs, funding principles (rooted in policy discourses), individual needs and organisational procedures. For example, the organisation needs to make sure – through their access procedures – to recruit participants whom they expect to complete the measure with success (because they are motivated, persistent, and/or possess certain competences demanded in education and training, e.g. math). The flexible interpretation of the Jobcenter conditions are no contradiction to this inasmuch as it is the responsibility of the organisation in the end, if the training fails. At the same time, Linda’s struggle for getting access reveals that even individuals are not completely powerless in using the policy, even in her case her personal persistence and the resource of mobilising a lawyer cannot be taken as self-evident for other addresses of this policy.

## 2.3 Analysis from the three theoretical perspectives

From a **CPE** perspective LLL in the case of VbFF reflects a complex interplay of different and partly contradicting discourses, the discourse about the reconciling of work and family life, which based on fundamental discourse about gender equality, the activation discourse with its different shapes (foster and demand, training maturity) and the shortage of skilled worker. (cf. WP3: Bittlingmayer et al. 2016)

On the transnational level we see that, already from the early beginnings of the European Union in 1957, in the EWG the equal rights of men and women are codified. The principle of equal payment was anchored in the EWG contracts. Even if this goal was formulated 60 years ago, it is still not fully implemented. Still today new attempts are started on the EU level like the “Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality” (2016 - 2019), the PROGRESS programme (2007 - 2013) with its sections about anti-discrimination and gender equality or the 2006 founded European Institute for Gender Equalities (EIGE). Leaving the transnational level and going to the national level we already mentioned the observation that the discussion about reconciling work and family is a discursive term itself. In Germany we observe that the general discourse about gender equality is broken down to the reconciling work and family life discourse and that especially the general discourse is in a permanent struggle. The discourse in the VbFF itself is characterised by an emancipatory idea of empowering the young women and mothers in terms of providing them the possibilities of an autonomous life of their own which is in line with what the young women are longing for. Funders subscribe to empowering young mothers – with the difference that they mean empowering them to enter the labour market on the conditions of the labour market. While many of the young women participating in the measure find the strength and are empowered to start their own career based on the opportunities given by the VbFF, it is still difficult to find support for part-time vocational training on the part of the employers, even though there is an increasing demand for it on a nationwide level. Part-time training is still an exception which is funded and enabled by additional state funding and pedagogical assistance far beyond normality; and even with financial and pedagogical support many companies are reluctant. Moreover, women still find themselves disadvantaged in terms of payment or in terms of the kind of jobs they perform, meaning more women tend to work in low-skilled service jobs than their male counterparts. They are confronted with a still highly gender segmented occupational system and labour market. In view of these inequalities, initiatives are taken on a European level concerning anti-discrimination and gender equality as for instance the European Institute for Gender Equality founded in 2006.

The connection of reconciling work and family life especially for women and to secure the skilled workforce seems obvious. Even if this point is also mentioned in the “overall concept for securing skilled personnel in Hesse” (Fachkräftesicherung 2013) it seems, that these both issues are not systematically connected with each other on the different levels. Especially be-

low the regional level the connections seem to be out of sight, at least the interviews with the experts give no hints in this respect. This is a surprising observation. One reason for the surprise may lie in the long history of the VbFF. As mentioned above the VbFF was founded 1978. This means that they have established a solid base which allows them to implement their ideas about fostering the professional development of women. Therefore the VbFF is a typical example for an independent service provider that identifies a (social) problem and initiates measures which tackle those problems according to the organisation's values and principles. However, as they depend on external funding, they need to adapt to and integrate new discourses and policies into their grown organisational culture and structure. Otherwise future funding could be at risk. They simply need to be in the skills system analysed in WP6 (cf. Weiler et al. 2017). The part-time training for women was established 1998 and has been constantly growing since then. This shows that the VbFF is able to adapt their existing programme/this measure to changing contexts and keep their work alive. This means they find new arguments for their established measures or slightly adapt measures to the new requirements. It is remarkable that the VbFF does not refer to the shortage of skilled workers as an argument to legitimize their work and this measure. This argument is relatively new and would allow them to promote their measure and secure their existence. Or at least be part of the legitimization. This can be interpreted in two ways: either the organisation is able to take on new discourses superficially to satisfy policy makers and funders without changing their internal procedures and culture, or with each new programme they change also internally – with or without recognising it. The adoption of entrance tests, yet if applied flexibly, can be interpreted in either way and probably both is happening at the same time.

Beside the linkage of reconciling work and family life and the shortage of skilled worker there is another discourse entanglement with regard to last mentioned discourse. There is a strong connection between the shortage of skilled worker and the also very present discourse about the absence of training maturity of young people. Before the term “training maturity” (“*Ausbildungsreife*”) another term was used: training capacity (“*Ausbildungsfähigkeit*”) which until the 1990s referred to the capacities of a company to provide dual training according to the standardised rules. In the 1990s the term was then used for the young people. In order to give it a more ‘clinical’ and objective rationale ‘training maturity’ was coined pointing to psychological and measurable requirements of young people to enter and successfully complete training. The effect is that employers are legitimised to externalise costs related to education

and training of young people (cf. Walther 2015). And the mentioned discourses align the focus away from this unwillingness of the employers to the deficits of the young people. With regard to both discourses we notice that the companies insist to get the all-round “no worries” package of employees and obviously these expectations are accepted from all actors. Based on these conditions, independent service providers like the VbFF come into play and have to promise to guide the young people through the apprenticeship and care for the emerging problems.

So we have the complex situation that the activation discourse leads to different arrangements. On the one hand a transformation of labour market policies under the premise of demand and foster, which manifests for example in rigour expectations placed on people to be independent from the welfare state. On the other hand show our example that these expectations, which are underpinned by sanctions (like cutting benefits), can prevent that people invest in their qualifications and professional development, which would be exactly what the discourse about the shortage of skilled worker expects from the people.

Furthermore, we noticed that a mixing of different understandings of empowerment happens in this field. We have on the one hand the feminist term of autonomy and emancipation, which is at the same time an autonomy and emancipation of the individual ‘against’ economy and politics and we have the welfare state interpretation of empowerment, which understands autonomy and empowerment according to the needs of politics and economy. This discrepancy seems fading, in the sense that the activating welfare states more and more incorporates concepts and approaches originally developed as counter-policies. However, LLL reveals that both emancipatory and economy-driven perspectives historically result from the idea of an autonomous and independent individual.

From the **LCR** perspective the VbFF is a result and an expression of the changes in the female life course in recent decades: on the one hand, the female life course is no longer characterised alone by the reproductive role but also by employment, on the other hand, in the modern female life course the traditional sequence of first education and training and then family responsibilities is being increasingly blurred. The measure reflects that in the dual system of vocational training these changes have not yet been reflected and incorporated at all. Even if part-time training was implemented in the vocational training act (§8) in the year 2005, it is

still an exception and its implementation depends on external funding and assistance, like the one offered from the VbFF. Therefore, it is the combination between economic and labour market policies with a feminist practice which is necessary for innovations.

Lifelong learning implies that the sequence of learning – working - family building is no longer functional for the process of social integration but needs being replaced by simultaneities and reconciliation. LLL could be a solution for a more flexible way of relating education/training, work and family which however requires comprehensive support. Otherwise, individuals are overburdened by doing all at the same time.

In the case of part-time training, young mothers are constructed as a vulnerable target group whose human capital is important for the economy and the welfare state. The development and exploitation however needs special assistance. They are constructed as having deficits inasmuch as they ‚missed‘ training at the right (normal time) before getting a child, on the other hand, they are at risk of dropping out of training if they do not receive sufficient support. Hence there are no differences between the participants in the part time training and the transition system in Germany. The whole system of support for disadvantaged groups in labour market policies/transition systems starts from constructing cases in which individuals are not able to meet the demands of regular training without support, § 243 SGB III).

In constructing young mothers as a particular target group, LLL policies both reproduce and transform the standardised female life course. On the one hand, young mothers having missed regular training at the regular time before getting children is marked as deviating from the normal and therefore requiring special assistance, on the other hand, this policy, even if moderate in coverage and effect creates a new normality of being both an apprenticeship and a mother, i.e. both the possibility and the demand to adapt to labour market needs are being extended beyond parenthood as the strongest marker of adulthood (because not reversible).

From a **GOV** perspective this LLL policy is a measure where the different stakeholders of the labour market and vocational training (employers, vocational schools, Jobcenter and the young women) come together. The VbFF plays a mediating and coordinating role between these actors.



The operation of the measure relies heavily on the Jobcenter funding the activities on the one hand, on the other hand, however, setting access criteria such as the requirement of residence in the city of Frankfurt. The story about Linda show us that the different involved actors/discourses are not congruently and not consistently referring to each other. Remember Linda: she is in line with the dominant discourses. She is willing to engage in vocational training (lifelong-learning, shortage of skilled worker), even though she is a mother (gender equality, reconciliation of work and family life). She is smart enough to complete the aptitude tests (training maturity) but she did not fulfil the requirements of the demanding and fostering (and also sanctioning) Jobcenter as the manifested institution of the activation regime. Each of these policy fields/discourses/institutions follows their own rationality, which makes sense in each of their own perspectives, we do not deny an internal logic. In the combination of the aspects and considering the interdependences this leads to frictions and results which are not in line with neither the idea of lifelong-learning nor with the aims of each of the presented aspects/discourses/institutions. From the Governance perspective we notice definitely a lack of coordination.

Additionally we see that limited time of funding of specific measures is the normality at all levels: from the European projects to the measures in the regions. While on the one hand a common agreement exists on the unlimited validity of the aim e.g. of gender equality, on the other hand most of the concrete measures and action plans are of limited duration.

The case of part-time training can be seen as an implicit, indirect and partly even unintentional coordination as neither the Jobcenter aims at funding a feminist organisation, nor does VbFF aim at setting a neoliberal policy agenda into practice while the young mothers try to cope with their precarious lives longing for a decent future.

### 3. Case study 2: institutionalisation and schooling for YA adults (FR Bremen)

The second case study of this paper concerns the FR Bremen and one of its main LLL policies known as the *Werkschule*. This policy, implemented since 2009 and localised at the VET schools, focuses on the education policy sector. Its aim is to support the transition process of young adults in the VET system. Complementary to the “life stories” entry point developed in

the case study of the FR Rhein-Main, the presentation and analysis of the *Werkschule* follows mainly a history of the policy approach. This approach is mainly focused on the evolution of the policy (mainly in terms of main objectives, target groups, governance patterns) and its emerging process over time.

The methodological strategy employed in our approach is both, deductive and inductive. However, our analysis is also characterised by an abductive attitude, which Reichertz describes in the following way: “the achievement of an attitude of preparedness to abandon old convictions and to seek new ones” (Reichertz, 2007, p. 221). In this section, this attitude is driven by “the presence of genuine doubt or uncertainty” (Reichertz 2004, p. 163) regarding the apparent success of the *Werkschule*.

This chapter is divided into three parts which gradually zoom in and out of the case: firstly, we will give a brief overview of the embedding of the case in the FR Bremen (3.1). This contextualisation will set the frame for our next analytical step, i.e. the telling of the story of the *Werkschule* (3.2), in which we will zoom in the case itself. As we follow a history of the policy approach, we will focus on how the *Werkschule* evolves over time; we will look at different levels of its implementation, its main objectives, its target groups, its governance patterns and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. This analysis is enriched by the interviews with YA adults (beneficiaries from the policy) and the head teacher of one of the ten *Werkschulen* existing today taking into account some of WP5 insights (cf. Verlage et al., 2017, p. 69-81). Thus, the illustration of the case study by means of these interviews could raise new questions on the policy itself and its implementation. Finally, in order to see the broader picture of the *Werkschule* in the FR Bremen, we will zoom out of the case by relating our findings to the three theoretical perspectives (CPE, LCR and GOV) of the YA Project (3.3).

### 3.1 Short account of the case study

As a primary step and before starting with the analysis of our case study, it is relevant to contextualise the *Werkschule* in the FR Bremen. This contextualisation offers a frame for our further analytical steps: first of all, it introduces the *Werkschule* in its local and regional context. This understanding is important in order to comprehend its emergent development and in how far this policy responds to local, regional and national demands. Secondly, the contextualisation enables us to identify criteria for the selection of the case. Thirdly, it provides a use-

ful frame with which we can delimit the case and also compare it in further analytical steps with the other case presented in this paper (cf. 4.1 comparative analysis).

The FR Bremen is a relatively large area in the North-Western part of Germany with roughly 2.7 million inhabitants. The FR Bremen covers the Northern (original) part of the so-called ‘North-Western Metropolitan Region’. This includes urban and rural areas, which are connected through key cities Bremen, Bremerhaven and Oldenburg. These three cities serve their surrounding communities (cf. WP3 Germany National Report, Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, p. 9-11).

The FR Bremen is characterised by an economic disparity: the core of the region is rather wealthy in comparison to the periphery. It also suffers from a demographic decline. Both – the economic disparity and the demographic decline – also affects the lives of young adults and their access to the labour market. There is an increasing demand for high skilled and skilled workers and a relatively small demand for low skilled workers, which helps to explain the high number of unemployed and unqualified young adults, who do not have access to the labour market (cf. WP6 Germany National Report, Weiler et al., 2017, p. 39). These aspects constitute a risk for career paths and young adults with no vocational training or education are at greatest risk of becoming long-term unemployed (cf. WP3 National Report Germany, Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, p. 10). Furthermore, the region/ local context seems to be (highly) influential on the school career of the young adults: for example, to live in rural areas increases the possibility of ‘only’ achieving the lower secondary education certificate (*Hauptschule*).

Additionally, the crises in the ship-building sector and processes of automatization at the harbour led to an increasing number of unemployed young adults. For example, in 2015, 17.5 % of the young adults in the Land Bremen lived on welfare or unemployment benefits. In Bremen City, 437 out of 3.158 unemployed or job searching youth and young adults under the age of 25 (i.e. 14.5 %), do not have a school-leaving certificate (SGB II; cf. WP3 Germany National Report, Bittlingmayer et al., 2016, p. 9-11).

In the whole FR, but particularly in the cities, there is a high concentration of measures, projects, programmes in the sectors of education, social and youth and employment. The different LLL policies we analysed in the FR Bremen were selected because they seemed to respond precisely to the specific economic and labour market situation in the FR Bremen: in the cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven, and the area between these two cities, as well as parts of

Niedersachsen to the west of Bremen (e.g., Delmenhorst and Oldenburg) there is not only a strongly interlinked economy (cf. WP6 Germany National Report, Weiler et al., 2017, p. 37-39), but we can also observe a concerted effort to harmonise LLL policies in order to cope with the difficulties of the region.

These policies are mainly focused on the vocational training sector. The aim is to keep young adults, who are at risk of quitting school before they manage to obtain a degree (early school leavers), in the education system and to prepare them for the labour market. Thus, a series of different LLL policies focuses on social policy and the trajectory from school to work.

Taking into account this context, the following three LLL policies from the FR Bremen exemplify the region's ambition to support young adults during the transition from school to work (cf. WP3 International Report, Kotthoff et al., 2017, p. 158-159):

4. *Bleib Dran* ('Keep at it') is part of Bremer LLL policy landscape since 1999. It responds to the high drop-out rates (of 20-25 %) from VET. It aims at supporting apprentices mainly from the craft-based trades, as they have the highest drop-out rates. *Bleib Dran* is a low threshold counselling which includes conflict mediation and prevention of drop out in all dual education sectors.
5. *Jugend Stärken* ('Strengthening Youth') deals mainly with counselling and case management of young adults in the transition phase from school to work. This policy is mainly directed at young adults aged between 18 and 24. It supports young adults who are not optimally supported by the policies of the regular system. Most of the young adults addressed in this policy come from disadvantaged areas of the FR Bremen and they receive support in their career orientation. *Jugend Stärken* also offers help with regards to family, financial, legal and health issues.
6. *The Werkschule* started in 2009 and was initially co-funded by the ESF and the Bremer Ministries during the first three years of its existence. In 2012, the *Werkschule* was integrated as a regular school of the Bremen education system (§ 25a *Bremisches Schulgesetz*). The *Werkschule* started with six vocational schools; meanwhile, more than 1000 students are attending one of the ten *Werkschulen* in the FR Bremen. Young adults who completed the 8th grade of secondary school education can apply for the *Werkschule*. Most clients of the *Werkschule* have a diagnosed *Lernbenachteiligung* ('disadvantages in terms of learning') – an umbrella term encompassing all kinds of difficulties which put the pupils affected at a disadvantage.

Among these three LLL policies, we chose the *Werksschule* as our case study for WP7 for two main reasons. *Firstly*, it represents a particularly interesting LLL policy, which is deeply embedded in the main national discourses in Germany. In order to tackle youth unemployment, the European Union launched a number of initiatives in recent years, the impact of which is now becoming visible in different countries. Programs like Youth Guarantee (YG) aim at reducing unemployment rates amongst young adults under 25 taking into consideration their economic conditions and their lifelong learning perspectives. In Germany, similar initiatives were introduced following four national issues/discourses (cf. WP5 Germany National Report, Verlage et al., 2017, p. 16): (1) the academisation of VET (at least between 2000 and 2010) and its institutionalization; (2) the discursive concept referring to a diagnosed lack of skilled worker force (*Fachkräftemangel*); (3) the debate whether the individual skill and competence base of young adults acquired at school is sufficient to enter the VET system; (4) the visibility of (informal) learning and modularisation.

*Secondly*, we can draw from various sources of data, e.g. an evaluative study by Gessler *et al.* (2011; 2013). One major advantage is that Gessler and colleagues completed two studies, which also allow insights into the development of the *Werksschule* over a period of two years. Thus, there are already existing research results of this school policy, which does not only present some of its main features and strengths, and therefore could be taken as a point of reference for our analysis, but can also help to understand its potential weaknesses. In other words, these studies do not only help us to trace the evolution of the *Werksschule* and tell its story, but also to contrast them with our recent findings on the policy.

Considering this context, it is possible to identify our case study. We also take into account that, as stated in the WP7 proposal, case studies do not ‘naturally’ exist and are culturally constructed. The effects of the policies might be best researched starting from the local level (where the policy meets the addressees and interacts mainly with the labour market and the education system) (WP7 Proposal, 2016, p. 7). The case study related to the *Werksschule* is the impact of the policy on young adults considering two aspects: on the one hand, regarding its evolution and institutionalisation; and on the other hand, considering the meaning of “schooling” within the policy and particularly the addressees.

### 3.2 Telling the story of institutionalisation and schooling for young adults

Telling the story of the *Werkschule* does not only include examining its development and its potential impact from a policy perspective, but also considering the perception of those young adults who are part of it. This means to present the policy taking into account its origins since 2009, its institutionalisation process since 2012 and most of all its relationship with its beneficiaries and their opinions.

This section provides a presentation of the case's main story from a history of the policy perspective from two different angles: firstly, from a policy perspective, which states the origins and evolution of the *Werkschule* (A). Secondly, we will analyse the policy from the perspective of one participating young adult, who was interviewed in the course of project (B). Particularly, this interview with the young adult does not only show how this person wants to lead his life, but also how he felt pressure to participate in the policy measure and how he interprets it in terms of his own ambitions. This presentation introduces the analysis of the *Werkschule* and particularly the interaction between the actors at the different levels and their perception of the policy's functioning in terms of correspondences, implementation, and originalities.

#### A) Policy perspective

Since its foundation in 2009, the *Werkschule* has not only followed the main four national discourses in Germany<sup>4</sup>, but also one of the central goals of the school plan of Bremen focused on how to develop all students' skills and knowledge. For this purpose, the policy was conceived for those students having trouble with theoretical learning (and needing more time for learning), and willing to have a more practical experience related to finding a job. As one of the head teachers of the *Werkschule* stated: *"In general, students visit the Werkschule after finishing the 8th grade, so after [...] after the 8th grade, [students] who have simply bad results at school [...]. And actually you can tell by looking at them or by (-) where it's obvious*

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<sup>4</sup> 1. The academisation of VET (at least between 2000 and 2010) and its institutionalization; 2. The discursive concept referring to a diagnosed lack of skilled worker (*Fachkräftemangel*); 3. The debate whether the individual skill and competence base of young adults acquired at school is sufficient to enter the VET system and 4. The visibility of (informal) learning and modularisation)

*that they that won't manage to gain a degree because of their bad results at school"* (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, ll. 116-11)<sup>5</sup>.

At the beginning, the project was co-funded by the ESF. However, in 2012, the policy became part of the formal education system by turning it into an officially recognized secondary school type in the state of Bremen. By taking this step, the policy makers secured the existence of *Werkschule* mainly in financial and organisational terms. Furthermore, this decision also had a concrete impact on the continuity of the policy and its establishment: it increased the fit between the school curricula and the regional regulations and thus increased the opportunity for an improved cooperation between the different actors.

In relation to this last point, the “institutionalisation” of the *Werkschule* went hand in hand with the involvement of actors from different social and labour policies and thus allowed for an intensified cooperation with other related projects. This was for example the case with the Project COMPASS, developed for and coordinated together with the *Werkschule*, to provide support to those students leaving the policy with their own mentoring program as well as seminars, advice and networking. The idea within this cooperation scheme was to strengthen the students’ orientation with regard to their lifelong learning goals.

Although these co-operations were not planned very systematically, they certainly helped to strengthen the position of the *Werkschule* in the local policy arena and to initiate coordinated policy making in this FR. It is possible to identify some of the beneficiaries from this institutionalisation of the *Werkschule* at different levels: On the one hand, at a national there are the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* (Federal Employment Agency), and the *Industrie- und Handelskammer* (Chambers of Commerce and Crafts); at the regional level the *Bremer Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur* (Ministry of Science and Culture) and the *Bremer Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Verkehr* (Ministry of Economy, Employment and Transport). On the other hand, at a local level, there are the ten schools and the actors that are part of it, mainly the students.

Although a direct interaction between these two levels is difficult to establish because we don't have concrete data in which the actors meet, we can say that, considering the im-

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<sup>5</sup> In the German transcripts we did not correct mistakes. This is also captured in the English translation.

portance of employers and workers (Weiler et al., 2017, p. 45) in the region, the labour market also benefits from the policy. Furthermore, the demands of skills formation of young adults are driven by the local economic opportunities (Weiler et al., 2017, p. 45-46), which enhances the initiatives of improving and tying up policies like the *Werkschule* to regular structures. However, it would be difficult to confirm in the case of the *Werkschule*, to what extent, as stated in the WP6 National Report, there is a lack of transparency between skill supply and skill demand, as well as a lack of commitment to collective actions or objectives (Weiler et al., 2017, p. 47).

The years following 2012 became essential for the stability of the policy according to two elements, which are connected. *Firstly*, from an organisational point of view, the *Werkschule* guaranteed the collaboration of different professionals, who are, until the present day, working together on behalf of the young adults. Thus, teachers, social pedagogues and so-called *Lehrmeister* (master craftsman with some additional pedagogical qualification) worked closely together as one team, which, according to the head teacher of the school, seems to be a key feature of the functioning of this policy (cp. E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5).

In fact, the policy allows teachers to work more individually with the students, as class sizes are comparatively small (16 students/class at the *Werkschule* compared to 23 or more in regular secondary schools) and the school curriculum, oriented towards practice, is heavily project-based. The work carried out aims at tangible products which are often sold at (local) markets and can lead to an internship of the students of 3-6 weeks offered by a company on an annual basis.

The two main studies on the *Werkschule* (Gessler et al., 2011; Gessler et al., 2013) point out a relative success of the policy by stating how “students whose graduation was rather unlikely a few years ago regained interest in school and finally received their degree. Others, who had social problems at former schools or had to leave their former school due to several problems strengthened their social competencies and identified themselves with the concept and the institution” (Gessler et al., 2013, p. 2-3).

Furthermore, the two studies show that the students feel much more accepted in their classes than at their previous schools and that the practice-based instruction had a strong impact on the young adult’s (school) career: for example, 85 % of the students from the first cohort (2009-12) received a school-leaving qualification (*Berufsbildungsreife*), which according to



the authors of the studies, will improve the young adults' chances of entering vocational training (ibid.). Nevertheless, if students want to achieve a higher school leaving degree, the so-called *Mittlerer Schulabschluss* (secondary school leaving qualification), they have to attend another school. The vocationally oriented school leaving certificate clearly shows the intention of integrating the *Werkshule* school leavers into the skilled craft's sector of the VET system.

*Secondly*, the social-pedagogical and psycho-social care functions of the policy, which have been a key feature of this policy from its very beginning in 2009, seem to be an important aspect for the stability of the project. This function, which aims to develop the young adults' general life skills, could be seen as an integrative and more holistic approach to LLL (Gessler et al., 2013, p. 7f.). This function runs somehow beyond the international utilitarian vision of LLL policies, which aim to prepare young adults for the specific needs of the labour market, thus marginalizing the traditionally holistic approach of LLL policies (i.e., the personal development of human beings and their LLL in relation to the principle of equal opportunity and the idea of the democratization of education and training).

This care function seems to be at the heart of the policy following the idea that the *Werkshule* symbolizes a bridge for those students who "lost faith and hope" (Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft, 2004, p. 12) in the traditional school system. However, it is difficult to assess to which extent this function is still an important part of the policy today, or whether the described 'holistic approach' could be considered in this case as simply necessary to achieve the expectations of the activation regime, which "involves a policy of producing individuals and identities that conform more readily to industry's new rules" (Serrano et. al., 2007, p. 12). However, it is worthwhile to approach this question by having a closer look at the participants' perspective.

Finally, it is important to stress that during its eight years of existence more than 1.000 students attended the *Werkshule*, which over the time went through a multitude of changes. The *Werkshule* did not only expand its focus from the occupational field to other areas of the future VET school (e.g. food, personal services, technology, gardening, and media), but it also extended schooling by one year beyond the regular secondary school duration. The story of the policy is still being written and should be seen as adaptable to the specific context of the region.

## B) Participants' perspective

Before we move into the analysis, we shortly want to outline our analytical approach for this part of the case study. As we are interested in the actors' perspective, we followed a mainly data-based, i.e. inductive analysis strategy. For our joint analysis, we formulated the following research question: What does "schooling" mean for the interviewees? This question provided some guidance for our analysis while it still kept the analytical perspective as open as possible. It also helped us to develop a heuristic, into which we also integrated theoretical perspectives. However, they served as a tool to enhance our sensitivity towards data ("*theoretische Sensibilität*") and to raise a variety of questions in order to gain a better understanding the actors' perspective ("*Fremdverstehen*"). Working with the open research question and the heuristic proved to be very helpful, as it supported the "emerging process" of our data analysis (cf. Suddaby, 2006 and Kelle, 2011).

In the following, we will focus on the participants' perspective, i.e. an interview with a former student of the *Werkschule*. While focusing our analysis particularly on one student's perspective, we will also take into consideration our interview with the head teacher and a second student. The two students and the head teacher share an insiders' perspective as they work within the *Werkschule*, however, they are placed at different positions, levels and therefore fulfil different functions within it. They also have different (cultural) backgrounds and are at a different stage of their life course. Although one or two interviews can only offer exemplary insights into participants' points of view, it can help to gain a broader understanding of what schooling at the *Werkschule* means – particularly with regards to the potential connection between the implementation of the policy and its social-pedagogical and psycho-social care function.

The biographical interview with the student of the *Werkschule* begins with the following statement: "*Okay (prepares to speak), well, I'm [country in the Near East] Born, right*" (Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, ll. 21-22). Being a "Near East Born" seems to frame his own identity. Throughout the interview, he explains and reflects many crucial experiences in his life by making reference to his cultural belonging. For the young adult, being a "Near East born" has various meanings.

For example, being born in the Near East implies for him that he has special family relationships which seem to be influential for his schooling career. For instance, his father is an im-

portant actor in this context, because he forces him to go on with his schooling “because, well, because I’m a [country in the Near East] family, well, there you simply HAVE to do that” (Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 354). Although his mother seems to give moral support (she does not push him: she is “not someone who says ‘learn this’ and learn ‘that’ Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 1351) and the grandparents offered some guidance, the paternal figure is a key part of his life/school career. A career, which could be seen more as an obligation, rather than a personal choice (there seems to be a point in the interview where he liberates himself from his father’s ambition to “*become a big shot*” Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 1275-76).

Furthermore, this second aspect shows how the family contributes in shaping educational paths (cf. WP4 Proposal, 2016) and how it has a potential weight when it comes to define a standardised life course for young adults (and thus allows establishing that what is known to parents is more likely to be accepted). Here the importance of the family is visible, which contrasts to the findings of WP4 where it was “rather invisible in the data sets” (cf. WP4 Germany National Report, Schaufler et al., 2017).

Another important aspect of being a “Near East born” is connected with tackling the problem of learning a foreign language, i.e. German. Not knowing German very well presents a barrier for the young adult. He feels unable to get in touch with his new classmates and also the teachers: “*And I think the reason was that my German wasn’t so good and that I could not see, ahm, a connection*” (ll.459-461). It is interesting to notice that he speaks of a “connection”. This connection seems to depend highly on his language skills – which he only develops gradually. Without these “connections” he also fails within the regular school. Even though he gradually picks up German throughout his later school career (cf. ll 316-324; ll. 399-403), his perceived language deficits still make him feel different from the others (ll 399-403). In the interview, he mentions several school measures which are taken (ll. 256-261, ll. 386-393), however he thinks of them as quite useless as he was only “playing”. A change seems to occur when he enters the *Werkschule*:

*“At the beginning we were a lot of foreigners in the class and after a while these foreigners left due to some reasons. Some just got kicked out or were forced to leave and lots of German-speaking students remained in the class and I benefited a lot from this. And I then talked to them (the German-speaking students) and I noticed that my German got better, even I could see that (Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 627- 633)”*

Apparently, the young adult seems to distinguish his classmates between “foreigners” and “very German speaking students”. This distinction is interesting as it seems to correspond to his own identity construction: he is a “Near East born” with a deficiency in the German language, but proficient in his mother tongue. As many of the “foreigners” (have to) leave the class, he seems to begin to ‘connect’ with the “very German speaking students”. This connection is highlighted by him as very helpful for his success in German.

In order to answer our research question (What does “schooling” mean for the interviewees?) from the young adult’s perspective, we could say that it is not only a way of following a career, but also a strain to go through some concrete personal concerns, e.g. the pressure of his father, language barriers which seem to exclude him from the school system and the idea of failing (and perhaps not following a standardised path). We can argue that some of the personal goals of this young adult are somehow fulfilled by the policy.

In that sense and from a general point of view, the *Werkschule* offers him „definitively something completely new” which could be related to personality, self-awareness and also perceptions of self-efficacy: *“there were also the ups and downs and towards the end of the Werkschule, when I got my degree, I realized that that that I can really manage it”* (Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 589-590). Here, the school leaving certificate is accepted as proof for own success and capability and high identification with school grades and exams for those *“who come from the very bottom [of social hierarchy]”* (*“von ganz unten gekommen”*) (Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 584). However, it would be reasonable to ask if all these perceptions are a direct result of the structure of the *Werkschule* itself (and its social-pedagogical and psycho-social care function), or rather due to his ambition of being “connected” with a policy measure of this kind (not necessarily the *Werkschule*).

From this perspective, it would be difficult to assert that, as stated by policy makers and experts, the features of the *Werkschule* make possible to create this bridge for those who “lost faith and hope” (Die Senatorin für Bildung und Wissenschaft, 2004, p. 12). For the head teacher and policy makers “schooling” could be more related to an organisational problem with regards to school attendance and to the institutional capacity to deal with macro-social LLL policy structures. For example, the fact that the *Werkschule* became part of the formal education system after 2012 is therefore a clear achievement for policy makers, as it also could be the identification with a concept and an institution, as Gessler describes it (Gessler et

al., 2013, p. 2-3). Nevertheless, as already presented, these elements could not be that relevant from the young adults' perspective.

Within this context and after a brief presentation of the evolution of the policy, it is worthwhile analysing the interaction between the different actors and their relationship regarding the functioning of the policy. This analysis follows three complementary reasonings (correspondences, implementation and originalities), which will be explained in the following sections.

This first analytical perspective focuses on the construction of the case study narratives. The methodological procedure follows both a horizontal direction (related to the integration of the three theoretical perspectives CPE, LCR and GOV) and a vertical direction (related to the different levels of analysis – transnational, national, regional, local, organizational, interactive and individual) and to the procedure of capturing a specific 'history' of the case).

In terms of **correspondences**, understood as the interaction both within and between the horizontal and the vertical directions, the study of the policy reveals two significant aspects: On the one hand, concerning the horizontal direction, there is a clear correlation between CPE and LCR perspectives and a fragile connection between the interests of the actors involved in the decision-making process and the CPE features of the measure. On the other hand, concerning the vertical direction, the analysis starts from the regional and individual levels in order to consider the point of view of the actors and is related to the institutionalisation of the policy and its socio-pedagogical and psycho-social care function.

The CPE approach shows that a particular relationship based on trust and confidence emerges at the individual level, which becomes, seen from the LCR perspective, a reduction of the biographical uncertainty towards employment and the appropriation of specific skills. Here the interviewees evoke how they felt comfortable in their school for the first time in their life; i.e. their skills and competences in the technical field were more appreciated than their deficiencies in, for instance, the German language.

Moreover, they also appreciate the interaction and support they seem to receive from the team working at the *Werkshule*. There are in fact true synergies in terms of social capital, the results of which become visible once the students have finished the *Werkshule* in terms of faster access to VET schools, direct contact to companies, recommendations for better apprenticeship positions, etc. As stressed by one of the students the importance of the head teacher's

role in his biography and school trajectory is a key factor. For him it is thanks to some advice and support that he was able complete his degree, which no one in his family had done before: “[The headmaster] is an important person. Because he has always been [...] supportive to me. He opened up ways/opportunities for me and he also motivated me to continue and to stay on the right track. He is really a very good person, who I would recommend to everybody” (Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 931-935)

Most of the students interviewed in WP 5 stated that the *Werksschule* was perceived as a new start, a new opportunity, where they felt motivated enough to engage with rules and regulations and complete their school degree. Thus, they acquired competences such as punctuality, structured work, tidiness, mutual respect, reliability, technical skills, etc. For a few students the *Werksschule* became indeed a sort of “home”, which helped them to reduce their biographical uncertainty and to achieve a certain well-being and to gain social recognition.

Assertions like the latter seem to be a confirmation of the findings in the study by Gessler (2003) between 2009 and 2012. However, the context in which the interview took place could be considered as exerting indirect pressure on the interviewees: the interviews took place in the *Werksschule* and it was made possible because the head teacher suggested that some students should do it. The interviewee might have feel some tension to talk positively about both, the policy and the head teacher. Another point to consider is that the head teacher’s selection of the students for the interviews could have been biased by the idea of presenting only “successful” cases.

On another topic, the measure follows a very similar pattern at both regional and local levels. If we compare these two levels with the transnational and national level, the policy answers in a more focused way to the demands of the region rather than just the premises of programs like the Youth Guarantee (YG) (as is the case of policies like *Jugend Stärken*) (European Commission, 2016, p. 40).

After the process of institutionalisation, the *Werksschule* continues to tackle the issues in the region from a more secure financial basis as a result of continuous funding offered by the Ministry of Education and the Youth Employment Agency. This means that there is the support of local and regional players “typically involved in shaping and implementing the approach” (ibid, p. 49). This can be supported by the head teacher interviewed, when he asserts

that: *“If we haven’t had had the money from the Employment Agency, I have to confess, it would have been difficult”* (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, L.406-408).

In relation to the interaction between stakeholders, which encompasses a governance perspective, there is no relevant indication showing that the alliances at the regional level are also relevant at the upper levels. However, what seems clear is that the interests of local decision-makers are exclusively related to their local area, which is substantially smaller than the FR Bremen. Although this does not generally affect the use of FRs as heuristic tools, it does restrict its value with regard to the analysis of the policy. It becomes evident that the *Werkschule* does not give specific answers to the diverse and unstable economy of the entire FR of Bremen.

The second analytical perspective concerns the **implementation** of the policy, which considers the interactions between the actors in the different phases of the policy cycle. Although the target is more focused on interactions between the street-level operators and addressees, the interview with a head teacher from the *Werkschule* gives some account on how the project started. According to him, it is thanks to the efforts of somebody at the Ministry of Education that the project was developed and that some persons at management-level from VET schools were asked to participate in the project.

Then, the interviewed head teacher decided to join and further implement this policy of which he *“was totally convinced”* (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, L 1259): *“[She] had her thoughts on the disadvantaged and she thought with other colleagues of how to structure (the project) and started a trial run in 2009 with, I think, five classes. And then it has increased since 2010, in 2010 we also joined in. I met [her] in 2009, no in 2007, for some other reason and in 2010 she asked us, if we wanted to start a Werkschule class and we accepted* (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, L 1249-1259)”.

However, even if he asserts to be “totally convinced” of the policy, we must acknowledge that the head teacher mainly points at the strengths and ‘success’ of the *Werkschule*. Drawbacks related to the *Werkschule* are only mentioned marginally, but could be found in the following comment: *“At the beginning we were a lot of foreigners in the class and after a while these foreigners left due to some reasons. Some just got kicked out or were forced to leave* (Y\_GER\_B\_4\_WP5, L. 627- 633)”.

The above quoted comment could lead to different interpretations concerning the implementation (and functioning) of the policy itself. On the one hand it is possible that the policy follows a clear set of rules and if participants in this measure for “some reasons” (like violent behaviour for example) do not obey these rules, they are expelled from the school. On the contrary, it could also be possible that this quotation reveals the weakness of the socio-pedagogical and psycho-social care function of the *Werkshule*. This means that the activating function of the ‘holistic’ approach allows individualising failure and at the same times shows the others what happens, if they do not comply with this specific approach. This is perhaps more related to a narrow idea (male employable young adult) of a holistic approach, which comes rather close to a more utilitarian vision of education (mostly related to a neoliberal ideology focused not only on a lack of employment and the development of work capacities, but also on labour competitiveness).

The implementation is also related to the general organisation of the policy and its strategies to achieve its main objectives. At this point it should be stressed that there is a process of continuous negotiation between the *Werkshule* and the macro-structure (e.g. the labour market, education system etc.) of the local environment. To illustrate this point, it is, for example, very important to point out that the access to the labour market depends to a great deal on the reputation of the school. Companies like to work together with schools that send them reliable students for internships and apprenticeships. It is a win-win situation based on trust and years of experience and exchange.

Finally, the *Werkshule* is among the well-established schools in Bremen. It is considered to have a good reputation as stated by the head teacher: *We have the great advantage that we can ask big companies [for internships and apprenticeships]. [...] Meanwhile companies ask us: “Mr. [name], do you have anybody you could send us?”* (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, L 148-149; 167-168).

Further negotiations also take place between the *Werkshule*, the Employment Agency and the Ministries on other matters like staff salaries, curriculum and funding of further education programmes. The implementation is also related to the relationship with the chambers of commerce on topics like skills formation and employability. The complex relationships between the *Werkshule* and its environment show that the negotiations are multi-levelled and dynamic as the power relations and topics differ according to the type of actors involved.



The third analytical perspective is to identify the special features of the case study with regard to two dimensions: firstly, in terms of the integration of the specific measure into its context and secondly, in terms of its originality. The idea is to examine, as stated in the WP7 proposal, whether ‘new’ needs have been recognized within the policy or whether there are new solutions to ‘old’ needs. This also requires identifying to what extent old solutions are still employed to solve chronic problems of the policy.

Taking the two main features of the *Werkshule* into account (i.e. its effective institutionalization and its socio-pedagogical and psycho-social care functions), there are two evident **originalities**. The first one comes directly from the point of view of the young adults, when some of them stress the fact that the policy structure led them to a proactive attitude, which helped them to feel that it is like a new start: “*I actually didn't really feel like going to school any longer [...] [Werkshule means a] new school, a new experience I want to have, a new better experience, again* (Y\_GER\_B\_3\_WP5, L.573-581)”.

In the case of other young adults, it is about gaining interest in learning again, being included in a regulated daily schedule, having a goal and trusting life again. This means that the policy fulfils a psycho-social care function, which contributes to a positive attitude towards school performance and embeddedness in social structures. Thus, we can say that empowerment and stabilisation are also part of this policy and should be taken into consideration because of the activation regime.

The second originality concerns how the policy allows the addressees to take an active part in the development and implementation of the policy. According to the head teacher, the fact that there are no more than 16 students per class helps to consolidate and improve the basic skills of the students, and allows them to acquire both, mental stability and the ability to learn (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5). Even if this aspect is not the only one to provide this sort of balance within the policy, the idea of a project-oriented teaching lightens the distinction between theory and practice and allows students to simulate real business conditions. This constitutes an advantage in the sense that: “*[in the Werkshule] learning is easier*” (Y\_GER\_B\_3\_WP5, L. 90) and the focus of the activities is more on the practical exercises in the workshops. This originality is also an advantage for the students with dyslexia and dyscalculia as one of the students says: “*I could enjoy going to school again*” (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, L. 736).

Finally, an important part of the success is ascribed to the *Lehrmeister* (masters), who belonged “to the really nice old school” (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, L. 737) and who dismissed half of the students in the first cohort of the *Werkschule* and only kept the best students to complete the school degree. Quality assurance and skills acquisition are at the core of the practical exercises in the workshops. For example, one of the disciplines of the final exams is to create a piece of metal work like for instance a charcoal chimney. Here the students learn how to use milling and welding machines, but also to improve their interpersonal skills (cp. Bender, 2016). However, from a general perspective, this sort of practice could be seen as controversial because it seems to contribute not only to adapt and subject the “successful” young adults to alienating work, but also to force those who did not “succeed” to drop out.

The previous paragraph also shows that, even if the theoretical parts of the teaching in the *Werkschule* are probably easier than in the general educational system, there are some selection mechanisms to assure the quality and to motivate the young adults to finish their school degrees. One of these mechanisms could be the lack of proficiency in German, which can result in a downgrade in the school trajectories. Therefore it would be interesting to establish to what extent language is a key issue for success at the *Werkschule* (rather than technical skills and student motivation).

Following a logic that goes from the particular to the general, we have examined until now the story of *Werkschule* ‘from within’, taking into account its history and its development in terms of correspondences, implementation and originalities. For the study of these three aspects we considered in the previous sections the content of the most significant issues of the vertical (transnational, European, national, regional etc.,) and horizontal levels (associated with the three theoretical perspectives: CPE, LCR and GOV). The next and last section of this chapter is dedicated to analysing this policy taking into consideration the three theoretical perspectives.

### 3.3 Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives

The vertical reading of the policy through the three theoretical perspectives follows some of the key orientation questions presented in the WP7 proposal, which are relevant to explain the challenges and limitations of each perspective in relation to the content of the policy. Some of these questions are visible in the following paragraphs in order to better understand the fea-

tures of the *Werkshule* through the application of these theoretical approaches. This procedure is connected to some of the findings of the *Werkshule*'s story.

#### A local policy support for young adults struggling at school (CPE perspective)

From the CPE perspective, which highlights the relevance of the cultural dimension in understanding and analysing the complexity of social formations such as policies, the *Werkshule* can be characterized as a local LLL policy which aims at supporting young people who are facing problems at school. Thus it offers them the possibility “to develop their capability for vocational education and training and to receive a secondary modern school-leaving certificate” (Gessler et. al, 2013, p. 2). The underlying assumption is that young people with ‘*Lernbenachteiligungen*’ (‘disadvantages in terms of learning’), who are struggling at regular schools, need particular attention and individual support to enter the vocational sector effectively. In this case, to better understand the scope of the CPE perspective, the transnational, national, regional and interactive levels are fundamental.

At the European level, the main distinctive discourse concerning this measure is related both to the ESF pilot project Development and Implementation of a Concept for Promoting Disadvantaged Youths by practice-oriented Learning (developed between 2009 and 2012) and the Youth Guarantee Program (YGP), implemented in Germany in April 2014. The aim of the YPG is to tackle unemployment amongst young adults under 25 and to protect them from temporary work and work contracts. At the national level, *Werkshule* is the result of the attempt to institutionalise VET by offering a vocationally oriented leaving certificate.

At the regional level, it is important to consider the relatively small size of the federal State of Bremen in relation to the other federal states of Germany and the relatively small number of educational actors and stakeholders. This can be regarded as an advantage because the policy can be implemented relatively quickly and its effects in the region are more visible in a short span of time (Bittlingmayer et al., 2016). Finally, at the interactive level, it is important to notice, as stated by the expert interviewed in WP 5 that all these specificities of the regional level build confidence within the young adults and a relationship based on trust and openness with the teachers, school management and social workers:

*“So, we try to develop and build a relationship on trust and confidence, so that the people come back to us again, yes? And we should not lose sight of them, but to a certain extent provide a home for them” (E\_GER\_B\_1\_WP5, L 19932-1934)*

This relationship based on confidence and trust gives them, at a more individual level, a feeling of security, which again means a new opportunity in resuming their professional path. However, as stated in the previous sections of this chapter, it is important to keep in mind that this confidence, trust and openness probably do not always occur and respond to a pre-defined logic mostly determined by the activation regime.

#### *An institutional regulation of individual lives (LCR perspective)*

From the LCR perspective, which highlights the importance of how individual lives (the biography) are embedded in institutional macro-social framings (the life course) and ephemeral framings, the *Werkschule* shows a clear intention to integrate students at risk of leaving the general school system into the skilled craft sector of the VET system. The leaving certificate of this policy constitutes a good example of this intention and leads to a better integration into the vocational sector at the expense of a higher school-leaving certificate at a general school.

From a general point of view, the policy points out an institutional regulation of individual lives following a standardised life course and it is difficult to assess to what extent the individualization and de-standardization of young adults' life courses is considered. However, it is worth noticing how the *Werkschule* takes account of the young adults' living conditions and has been able to reduce the biographical uncertainty of some young adults by integrating the specifically social-pedagogical and psychosocial care function into its approach.

Thus, young people who are struggling in the regular school system are not only supported by extending their competences for a specific vocational field to improve their 'employability', but also by providing general life skills. One of the students interviewed maintains that this support encouraged him to "stay on the right track" (Y4\_GER\_B\_WP5, L. 933-934). This aspect could be seen as a confirmation of the partial success of the policy at the individual level demonstrated by Gessler (2013). Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that sometimes "staying on the right track" can simply mean imposing a standardised life course on young adults, which answers to a specific demand of the labour market.

### The interaction between the national and regional levels (GOV perspective)

From the GOV perspective, which highlights the coordination of action among the different agents and allows modelling (new) patterns and networks of policy-making, we could argue at a first glance that the national level does not play an important role in the establishment of the *Werkschule*. This is because the Federal State is constitutionally not allowed to intervene in education and can only do so indirectly via the youth, social and labour market policy sectors. Thus, the project provides a valuable example of a regional and local policy (comprising the city of Bremen) with a relatively large number of actors and a high level of institutionalisation. This can be seen through the fact that, as we discussed above, the policy has become a formally recognized type of school in Bremen and thus an integrated part of the regular school system.

However, a deeper analysis of the case study shows that the national level constitutes a very important frame for this policy to the extent that national discourses are reflected together with regional and local demands of the FR Bremen (e.g. high rates of youth unemployment) to shape and accentuate this LLL policy and how this specific shape influences the acceptance and participation rates of young adults in this particular LLL measure. At the regional level, the interest is mainly based on the assumption underlying policy making that the unemployment of young adults and the resulting social issues require specific policy and practice responses regarding lifelong learning.

The *Werkschule* constitutes an example of an adequate policy according to the opinion of some key actors. If we examine, for example, the governance perspective within the region, the *Werkschule* has the ongoing support of the different stakeholders already mentioned (such as the *Bremer Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur*, the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*, and the Chambers of Commerce and Crafts among others). This support does not only benefit the national and regional structures, but also the local level. At this level, the *Werkschule* shows a clear intention to integrate different policy sectors (educational, youth, social and labour market) in an attempt to prevent and/or reduce drop-outs. This confirms a national overlap between the policy sectors and the fact that most of the time it is difficult to establish a conceptual difference between them.

To sum up, if we consider not only the history of the policy approach of the *Werkschule*, but also the analyses from three different theoretical perspectives and across the different policy

levels, we could argue that the policy is so far mostly in line with YA's theoretical/hypothetical assumptions. The policy offers its beneficiaries a security that allows the majority to finish part of their studies and take on the challenge of entering the labour market with a specific knowledge base and skills. The interviews carried out within the framework of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT Project with active participants and stakeholders of the *Werksschule* (five young adults and one head teacher) allow us to identify, above all, the strengths of this policy (as Gessler's two studies (2011 and 2013) suggest) and to a lesser extent its weaknesses.

Unfortunately, this case study does not have all the relevant data (e.g. track of successful school graduates, interviews with drop-outs from the *Werksschule*) to deepen the analysis of the weaknesses as much as we would have liked. However, it provides insights into the strengths and weaknesses of this policy and raises the question about the potential 'failure' of those people who did not stay in the measure. Understanding what happens with these life trajectories in policies like the one under examination is a challenge that still needs to be studied.

#### 4. Comparative analysis of FR Rhein-Main and FR Bremen

If we compare the two cases it is necessary to distinguish context factors, objectives and implementation and how they can be theorised in terms of CPE, LCR and GOV.

As regards *context*, commonalities regard the institutional structures regulating transitions from school to work in the employment-centred transition regime (Walther, 2006) characterised by an occupational labour market regime, a differentiated and selective school system and a standardised system of dual apprenticeship training combining education in school and training in the company. This context has undergone changes with an increasing share of young people in higher education, a decrease of young people passing the dual system from two thirds to one third of a cohort while the so-called 'transition system' has evolved for those failing in entering regular vocational education and training directly. The structure of this transition system can be characterised by 'pyramid of tasks' (see figure 1.) consisting of a basic level of pre-vocational education and training, an intermediate level of assisted training and options for regular further education.

Contextual differences regard, first, the socio-economic situation in the two functional regions in terms of GDP, employment/unemployment, participation in education/NEET and poverty with Rhein-Main being one of the richest regions in Germany with a robust service and industrial sector and a dynamic demand for skilled and high skilled workforce. In contrast, Bremen is one of the poorest regions in Germany characterised by a trend of de-industrialisation. Second, there are important differences in terms of governance: Rhine-Main is not an administrative unit but a metropolitan area combining various cities with autonomous municipalities and spreading across three different federal states. Bremen is a federal state which is mainly constituted by the city of Bremen.

The ultimate goal of both case studies is to create employability, yet they are located on different levels of this pyramid. *Werkschule* in Bremen aims at preventing young people from dropping out from school and ensuring access and preparing them for access to apprenticeship training by providing special education and training as well as holistic socio-pedagogical support. In Bremen, this approach is referred to as success and consequently has become an integral part of the education and training system at local level. *VbFF* in Rhein-Main provides regular vocational training. It has its roots in feminist women's movement, consequently the target group are women, in particular young women with children. The particularity is that training is organised part-time and complemented with childcare facilities, assistance in meeting school-related demands and socio-pedagogical support. It focuses on the aims at engaging a specific target group for the labour market. In both cases, there is a tension between a holistic approach and orientation towards employability. However, in the *Werkschule*, the holistic approach is rather a means to the end of enhancing employability (due to the assumed deficits of the target group), in the case of *VbFF* a holistic approach is also motivated by the aim of emancipation in which labour market integration is a means to the end of autonomy and independence.

Due to the general context of the transition system, in both functional regions policies similar to the respective other case can be found. Nevertheless, in Rhein-Main the landscape of LLL policies seems more diverse across different levels of the transition system (and beyond) while the higher rate of NEET and unemployment in Bremen is reflected by a larger share of measures on the boom level addressing groups classified as 'disadvantaged' according to a somewhat residual rationale. In sum, in Bremen LLL policies seem more governed according to a social policy paradigm while in Rhein-Main an economic policy perspective.

To a certain extent this is reflected by the learning biographies and the life plans of young people involved in the measures. In the Werkschule, young people refer to the measure in terms of last rescue after a learning career characterised by failure and demotivation which brings them back on track of a standard biography. In VbFF, biographies of young women are characterised by aiming higher despite of; and aiming higher is encouraged by the feminist project workers for whom emancipatory policies imply overcoming or reversing disadvantage and not only securing inclusion while maintaining and reproducing social disadvantage.

From the perspective of the concrete policies analysed this is reflected on the CPE level by the prominent role of the discourse about the shortage of skilled worker is reflected by a respective policy programme. Interestingly this discourse seems not to trickle down the levels in a way that also street level experts refer to it. This reveals that new and apparently universal discourses interact and to a certain extent depend on existing institutional structures and social networks developed on different cultural grounds and principles. Nevertheless, the prominence of this discourse has real consequences inasmuch as there is a particularly strong emphasis of channelling as many young people from different backgrounds and with different school achievements into the dual system rather than supporting them continuing with school and university. The particularity of that studied case is that in order to achieve this aim even a project with a feminist history that is not automatically culturally in line with a market strategy and that implies modernising and modifying the standardised and culturally hegemonic model of the dual system as full-time arrangement focusing exclusively of the formation of professional identity and professional is funded. The Bremen case may be interpreted differently. Here, the focus seems to be on retaining young people at risk of dropping out as long as possible in the school system – and therefore adjusting school to some extent – in order to prevent them from becoming unemployed and keeping the option of a safe and smooth transition alive.

In terms of implementation and organisational routines this has consequences with regard to recruitment and selection. VbFF stands under pressure of securing the successful progression of the participants throughout the standardised training which takes place outside the project in professional school and private companies. Therefore entrance tests have been institutionalised. The fact that these tests are handled in a flexible way leads to the question to what extent these tests have the function of displaying selectivity and thus creating credibility towards the companies and funders on which the project depends or if they also have real internal conse-



quences. Once the women have entered the project, support prevails which is tailored flexibly to the needs of the individual participant. In the Bremen case, selectivity at the beginning is lower to legitimise as measure for the most disadvantaged. Nevertheless also this project depends on a certain success rate while homogeneity of the group of participants makes the education and training more manageable. Here, mechanisms of selectivity seem to be less formalised but ongoing reflected by voluntary and forced drop outs, especially among young people with a migration background.

In both cases, overall assessment on the side of young people is very positive although it needs being taken into account that interviews have been conducted with success cases both from the perspective of the organisations as from the subjective perspectives of young people involved who present participation in the measure in terms of increasing life chances. Second, it needs being taken into account that both before and during the measure, the young people have undergone a process of adaptation towards the regional labour market and the options available for them. This means that both entrance into as well as participation in the measures can be – and in some cases obviously is – connected to a process of cooling out during which young people adapt their aspirations to existing occupational options.

The specific situation in the German skills system and especially in the functional region of Rhein-Main is that the main discourses - shortage of skilled workers, lack of training maturity of school leavers, vocationalism as key concept of work, (women's) reconciliation of work and family - on the one hand seem to be in contradiction while on the other hand they are articulated and reproduced by the same actors. For example, shortage of skilled workers might lower the threshold and widen the access into apprenticeship also for young people with lower school grades while the discourse of training maturity postpones or even prevents access. The concept of vocationalism in which the dual system of apprenticeship training is rooted traditionally implied the separation of productive and reproductive roles and tasks while the discourse of reconciliation questions this separation. Given the fact these discourses coexist, the question arises if perhaps the contradictions do not exist and if so for what they are functional? One might ascribe the shortage of skilled workers to a weakness or decreasing adequacy of the dual system, especially in a situation in which also school leavers rather opt for further education than for direct entry into training to improve their options and possibilities. The coincidence of the discourses on shortage of skilled workers and of training maturity may be functional for maintaining the dual system rather than opening new routes into skilled work.

Making school leavers responsible for the emerging mismatch relieves the institutional stakeholders and allows addressing mismatch by means of individualisation and pedagogisation. The same applies for the coincidence of the discourses on vocationalism and reconciliation. By making part-time training an exception for particularly vulnerable groups the overall rationale of vocational training as a full-time activity and identity is not questioned. Thereby contradictory discourses may be functional for justifying path dependency in a situation where also fundamental reform and innovation might be appropriate.

In their life plans and strategies of coping with life the young people necessarily reproduce these discourses, yet from different social starting positions. First, despite of constant reformulation and questioning, the standard life course has still a considerable power, especially as alternatives are stigmatised and connected to deviations. Second, available routes into the labour market require positioning oneself in relation to and/or within the standard life course regime in terms of 'at present I am out of the normal life course but I want to be included and get back on track'.

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## **Work Package 7**

### **Regional/local case studies**

#### **National Report – Italy**

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## 1. Executive summary

The aim of this WP7 report is to present the case studies analysis on specific Life Long Learning (LLL) measures in the two Functional Regions selected in Italy within the YOUNG ADULLLT Project, by identifying policymaking networks and recognizing strengths and weaknesses of different patterns of LLL policymaking at regional level. By doing this, we focus on the intersection between the social and economic dimensions, trying to understand how they shape scenarios of opportunities and limits for young people. The report is built on the previous packages WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6 of the YOUNG ADULLLT project in order to tell the story of LLL policy making in the two chosen Functional Regions in Italy. Indeed, the main data used in this report consist of statistical document analysis on data, lifelong learning policies and skill systems, as well as skills ecology analysis; semi-structured interviews conducted with experts involved in the management or implementation of the policies; biographical interviews conducted with young adults participating in the selected LLL policies.

The choice of the case studies in Italy is based on the most relevant policy for NEET, Youth Guarantee (YG), in turn based on EU Youth Employment Initiative. Our analysis examined two specific local measures within this policy: the NEETwork project in Milan FR and Civic Service (CS) in the Genoa FR. The first one is targeted towards a particularly vulnerable group, focused on 18-24 years-old NEETs, with a level of education below or equal to the lower secondary level, unemployed for almost six months and not yet enrolled (or having already concluded their experience) in the Youth Guarantee plan. The goals of the NEETwork project are to engage or re-engage youngsters, motivating and helping them to return to education/training and transition into employment, thus increasing NEETs labour market engagement rates. Moreover, it aims to increase the understanding of the NEET phenomenon and to test new ways to engage young people. NEETwork project is considered of crucial importance for its expected social impacts, offering to the most vulnerable youth an opportunity to re-shape their motivation in life and to gain better employment chances, by helping them in acquiring competences adequately spendable in the labour market, as well as obtaining better personal and relational skills.

The Civic Service is an interesting policy because of its long and articulated story (with both national and regional interpretation). Since 1972, Italy offered CS as an alternative for conscientious objectors to the military draft. In preparation for the end of the draft, Italy created a voluntary National Youth Service program in 2001 called “Servizio Civile Nazionale (SCN)” targeted to Italians aged 18-28, and received funds for supporting 377.568 participants from 2001 to 2015. Volunteers in the program were subsidized by the Government to work for both public agencies (in particular municipalities) and NGOs in Welfare assistance, Civil Protection Environment, Artistic and Cultural Heritage, International Civic Service as a non military homeland defence. Liguria was one of the first Regions that integrated National Civic Service with a Regional one. In 2015 the Italian Government inserted CS as one measures of Youth Guarantee: among the countries where YG operates, Italy is the only one that integrated the CS within the range of its measures. In Liguria Regional CS (with a duration of six months instead 12 months like the National one), and not the National one, was managed as a measure of YG with a particular emphasis to the professional skills and its recognition, as an important tool to improve the competences and the employability of the young participants. At this point the Regional Government experimented a skill recognition

programme, which tries to involve young adults in defining a personal skills portfolio in order to explain which abilities and competences can be validated (in the perspective of the certification of competencies established with the national law 92/2012 and implemented by a “regional net” actually in the starting phase). The integration of the Civic Service as one of the measures within the Liguria Region Youth Guarantee frame entailed, at least partially, a redefinition of the ‘traditional’ CS objectives. Consistently with the general purposes of YG, CS has indeed acquired a more pronounced orientation toward professionalization, yet maintaining its original implementation scheme. Thus, the CS paths continue to be contextualised in the Third Sector, consequently keeping the soft/citizenship skills at their core.

The report follows the same structure for the both case studies. First of all, an introduction presenting the main features of the measure (objectives, target group, governance patterns) and some contextual information on the regional educational and labour market features, as well as on the living conditions of young adults. Then, we focus on the storytelling of the case studies. In the case of the NEETwork Project (paragraph 2.2), the life stories of two youth addresses through the measure are the entry point starting the story. In the case of Civic Service (paragraph 3.2) the entry point for the storytelling is the history of the policy. In order to tell the story of the cases, we focus on the identification of correspondences, implementation and originalities. Then, we analyse the two case studies from the theoretical perspectives of Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Governance (GOV) and Life Course Research (LCR) (paragraphs 2.3 and 3.3.). Finally, a cross-case analysis in a comparative perspective is presented (paragraph 4), in order to discuss similarities and differences among the two case studies, focusing on: the specific policies’ governance and implementation networks at the regional and local level, including the involved actors and institutions and their degree of commitment; the features of the target groups; the intersections between the social and the economic dimensions (very different between the two Functional Regions); the measures’ impacts on the young adults’ life courses.

The case studies analysis reflects and acknowledges the significantly different socio-economic and demographic contexts and opportunity structures of the two selected Functional Regions. Indeed, the NEETwork project represents a peculiarity of the Milan Functional Region, where the labour market is much more dynamic and competitive, while Civic Service is here analysed in the context of a rather static labour market as the one of the Genoa Functional Region. Thus, the very different frames of the Milan and Genoa Metropolitan Areas obviously affect both the “structures of opportunities” and the choices of the young adults in the contexts.

## **2. Case study 1: NEETwork project**



## ***2.1. Introduction of NEETwork project***

Aiming to compensate for the Youth Guarantee lacks in terms of the actual engagement of the most vulnerable targets and the weak connection with the Third Sector area, the project NEETwork, integrated within its scheme, represents a peculiarity of the Lombardia Region Youth Guarantee realization. Specifically, NEETwork is targeted towards a particularly vulnerable group, focused on 18-24 years-old NEETs, with a level of education below or equal to the lower secondary level, unemployed for almost six months and not yet enrolled (or having already concluded their experience) in the Youth Guarantee plan.

The project started in July 2015 through the collaboration among its partners: a private foundation (a philanthropic organization that promoted the project and that was its main funder with €1.6 million allocated to it); a corporate foundation whose main purpose is education and training of disadvantaged people); a non-profit Private Employment Service, authorized by Italy's Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and accredited with the Regional Administration of Lombardy under the Youth Guarantee); a private research institute, aimed to promote and develop social research, with special focus on young people). Moreover, NEETwork is supported by the Lombardy Regional Administration, who signed an ad hoc agreement for the delivery of actions under the Youth Guarantee regional implementation plan and allocated about €1.6 million to the project.

The goals of the NEETwork project are to engage or re-engage youngsters, motivating and helping them to return to education/training and transition into employment, thus increasing NEETs labour market engagement rates. Moreover, it aims to increase the understanding of the NEET phenomenon and to test new ways to engage young people. On this latter point, the aforesaid specific addresses' target was reached through complementary channels in respect of those provided by Youth Guarantee: the lists of unemployed people registered with Public Employment Agencies, as well as the lists of candidates registered with a Private Employment Agency (which is a project partner) and through the interaction on the Facebook page of the project. This latter aspect is worth to be underlined, since it represents an innovative strategy of addresses engagement in the Italian context. Specifically, the online engagement campaigns entailed: i) the publication of a form on the project website to gather spontaneous applications; ii) the launch of two paid Facebook campaigns, the first targeted to youngsters having characteristics similar to those of the NEETs in the databases sourced for the project (similar population, identified through an algorithm) and the second targeted to mothers over 35, resident in Lombardy with children in the 18-24 age bracket, assuming their crucial role in triggering the (re)activation process of their sons and daughters. These Facebook campaigns in little more than a month led to the submission of 545 applications (average of 11 per day with peaks up to 43 applications/day), showing how social media could be an effective channel for engaging young people to take part in a social project.

Once they have been taken over by the NEETwork project, the recipients formally adhered to Youth Guarantee, enjoying additional services aimed at supporting them not only in terms of skills acquisition, but also regarding their psychosocial development (thanks to periodic individual meetings with occupational psychologists to identify and work on any personal and/or family issues

that may require special attention). Furthermore, the initial interviews were also useful for optimizing the match between the individual features and the available paid traineeships (€400 per month, 4-6 months lasting) at one of the Third Sector organizations involved in the project network. The traineeships offered were across Lombardy - mainly in Milan and Bergamo - and for a variety of positions (in offices, production and services), reflecting the diversity of Third Sector organizations involved (mostly social cooperatives and consortia, but including also foundations, various associations and religious organizations). For these latter, NEETwork provided integrative economic incentives and bureaucratic management support for each hosted internships, in addition to those already provided by Youth Guarantee. Once they have completed their traineeships, the recipients received a "Skill License" (an official document reporting the skills and abilities acquired through the work experience) and had the opportunity to apply for the skill certification process under Youth Guarantee. Thus, the NEETwork project represents a significant experience of private subsidiarity to some weaknesses of a public policy such as Youth Guarantee.

On this point, the project presents some interesting features, considering the diffused perception of general distance from the policy-making process in Italy (Palumbo et al., 2016; Palumbo et al., 2017c), which also reflects on a general scepticism about the effectiveness of the policies (especially when it comes to labour market policies). In the case of the NEETwork project, the young adults' engagement was totally driven by the experts who directly contacted the potential addressees proposing the traineeships. This leads to underline the significant effort on guidance, which characterizes the recent policy approach in Lombardia Region and in Milan Functional Region, aiming to make young adults more aware of the opportunities that they can enjoy (Palumbo et al., 2017c).

Other features of the Milanese area help to better contextualize the NEETwork project, addressed to the aforesaid particular vulnerable group in a city characterized by a very dynamic local labour market. Indeed, Milan is generally depicted as the main 'working city' and the 'place for opportunities' in Italy; in comparison with the majority of the other Italian cities and regions, it offers more job opportunities of high qualification; has more medium and large enterprises; is more innovative in social policies. It is the metropolitan area richest in Italy with a GDP at current market prices at 186,045€ million in 2013 (Eurostat), about 10% of the national GDP, the third in EU after Paris and London. The GDP per capita, 44,700€ is about 36% higher than the national average. The value added per capita (2015) is 44,839€ in MFR while in Lombardy is 32,001 and only 24,288€ at national level. Moreover, Milan is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in Europe in 2015 for economic prospects (according to E-REGI the European Regional Economic Growth Index).

Concerning labour market, data (Eurostat<sup>1</sup>) confirm a better performance than the Italian average: in 2016 the unemployment rate in Italy was 11.7% while in UE was 10.0% and in MFR was 7.5%. The unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2016 was 6.9% compared to 7.8% in the previous quarter. Overall, there were 322.000 unemployed people. The unemployment rate of young adult is 28.2% in Italy, while in MFR is 10 points lower (18.2%). About the employment rate in 2016 in Italy

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/metropolitan-regions>.

was 57.2%, while in UE was 65.4% and in MFR was 68.4%. The employment rate of young adult was 36.0 % in Italy, 48.3% in MFR, the activity rate was 59.0% (Italian rate was 50.4%) (Eurostat). According to ISTAT (2017<sup>2</sup>), young adults from 18 to 29 yo are 364,144, with a higher quota of male (188.214) than female (175930). The NEET (18-29) rate in Lombardy shows a development from 12.9% in 2004 to 22.1% in 2015, with a decrease of 2 percentage points in 2016 (20.1%): this rate varies according to the gender: in Lombardy in 2016 female rate of NEET is at 24.6% while male rate is 15.8%. In absolute terms NEETs are increased from 160thousand in 2004 to 229thousand in 2016: the discourage effect of young adults in a dynamic region seems to be relevant (Palumbo et al., 2017c). In 2016, however, the aggregate shows a slight decrease for the second consecutive year (Palumbo et al., 2017a).

As a confirm of the NEETwork project target, all the Milanese interviewed young adults might be labelled as vulnerable (Palumbo et al., 2017b): in terms of socio-economic backgrounds, most of them came from working-class families (just one interviewed came from middle class) and all of them dropped-out school before finishing the upper secondary. Thus, their profile is mainly disadvantaged, as they largely have poor skills, lack support from family and society and are disheartened about their future prospects. Also for these reasons, the NEETwork project is considered of crucial importance for its expected social impacts, offering to the most vulnerable youth an opportunity to re-shape their motivation in life and to gain better employment chances, by helping them in acquiring competences adequately spendable in the labour market, as well as obtaining better personal and relational skills.

## ***2.2. Telling the story of NEETwork project***

Y\_IT\_M\_2, an addressee of the NEETwork project in Milan FR, is a young single mother. Her interest in participating in the project is determined by the awareness of her most significant employability skills gaps: the lack of a high school diploma and the absence of regular work experiences.

*About my expectations [...] the situation is that I was always an irregular worker and I have nothing to attest my skills; but the positive aspect is that at least this apprenticeship can give me something more (Y\_IT\_M\_2)*

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<sup>2</sup> [http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV\\_NEET1&Lang=](http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_NEET1&Lang=)

Y\_IT\_M\_2 arrived in MFR from South America when she was 5 years old. Her secondary school path is particularly satisfying at the beginning, considering both the high marks obtained and the adequate correspondence between the studied subjects and her interests and desires. Indeed, Y\_IT\_M\_2 has a great interest in Math and, more specifically, in the administrative issues, which are the central topics within the educational curriculum of the professional institute she enrolled in. Therefore, the choice of the professional secondary school seems to be appropriate, also considering her high awareness of her own abilities and interests. Moreover, the professional administrative profile is quite competitive in the local labour market, where, particularly the advanced tertiary sector (finance, banks, information, telematics, new media, fashion and design) employs a significant share of workers (Palumbo et al., 2016; Palumbo et al., 2017a). Furthermore, her school choice seems to reflect a feature of the Italian educational system, which is characterized by a high school segregation: this results in an unequal distribution of foreign pupils in schools, being foreigner students concentrated in the professional institutes (their share in such type of schools is equal to or more than the 50%), both at national and also at regional and local level (Santagati e Ongini, 2016).

*I can do many things... because when I went to school I was always the top of my class, I had chosen the economic course because I liked math and administrative subjects. Indeed, I continue to do it, I mean... really not here [the association in which she takes the internship within the NEETwork project] since here I work as a secretary, but if there would be an opportunity I would already be able to do it, although I did not have the secondary school degree [...] . The only problem is that I cannot attend the school... nowadays, without a degree no one considers you. (Y\_IT\_M\_2)*

However, while she was attending the school, the National educational system was interested in a structural reform (the “Gelmini reform”, cf. Palumbo et al., 2016) that changed the scenario; Y\_IT\_M\_2 was suddenly caught up by this change. At the time of her enrolment in the high school, a school-leaving document certifying the obtained qualification was expected at the end of the first three years of school programs, with an option for a further two years of specialization (and consequently allowing to enrol in a university course). Before the end of her first three-years of the school, the National educational system reform modified the structure of the educational path: now the school-leaving document certifying the obtained qualification can be attained only after the end of the whole 5-years course. The reform aimed at revising the professional and technical higher education, seeking a stronger coherence between the educational and the work systems, in the view of the improvement of the employability of the students (cf. Palumbo et al., 2016). Nevertheless, these changes of the professional high school’s curricula toward the lyceums model (5 years with no mid-term specialisations) raise a few questions. Indeed, this extension might also be interpreted as one of the effects of a mainstream discourse which, at a national level, fosters the prolonged permanence of youngster within the educational system, consistently with a normative purpose and regardless of the actual impacts on the students’ future careers. In this view, this reform merely entails a postponement of the issue of labour market integration, since it draws on

weak evidence concerning a positive correlation between more extended formal education and (both quantitatively and qualitatively) more considerable job opportunities, especially regarding the low-skills professions. Furthermore, the shift toward the lyceum model of the professional schools has contributed to enhance the spread devaluation for the “traditional” technical and professional schools, entailing lower rates of enrolment.

Furthermore, during her third year of high school, Y\_IT\_M\_2 gets pregnant, and her child’s birth does not allow her to enrol in the fourth year. Then, Y\_IT\_M\_2’s life drastically changes, both regarding housing (she starts living together with her partner, leaving her mother’s house) and planning of her own educational and professional path. Consequently, Y\_IT\_M\_2 gives up her high school graduation task, and her limited economic resources push her to find a balance between the need to work and the care of her new-born child. Indeed, the child has not been included in the public day nursery system, since the formal NEET condition of Y\_IT\_M\_2 and the part-time job of her partner make them (in theory) available for a full-time care of their son. Their situation is very spread among parents in Italy, who have limited opportunities for public services devoted to the children care (especially considering day nursery), and this might be read as a “typical” effect of the lack of coordination between social and training policies. The provision of the Early Childcare Services addressed to children under three years is indeed very low. In 2013/2014, the availability of these services in Italy covered just 22,4% of their potential target. It is a very low percentage if compared to the rate of 33% set by EU as a strategic goal in the view of fostering women participation in labour market, while enhancing the balance and integration between family and work life. Although MFR offers a higher availability of these services if compared to other Italian areas, reaching percentages of target covering which are in line with EU ones (Istat, 2016), the story of Y\_IT\_M\_2 shows how the actual work-life balance might get more complicated when bureaucratic issues prevent the access to public services, and this especially applies to the mothers, who often quit their job or their studies after their first childbirth (Istat, 2014).

When it comes to job-seeking, Y\_IT\_M\_2 applies a very pragmatic and effective strategy, mainly focusing on the network of her compatriots in the MFR. Y\_IT\_M\_2 depicts this community as cohesive, dynamic and supportive, then particularly adequate for sharing potential job opportunities, as well as for building a mutual-help network among mothers (for instance, Y\_IT\_M\_2 exchanges babysitting services with her cousin and each other’s kids). Such situation reflects the Italian welfare state model, characterised by the subsidiary role of the state and a ‘family oriented’ conception of work-life reconciliation policy (Esping-Andersen, 1990), based on solidarity involving the ‘extended family’ in care and economic support. By means of this network, Y\_IT\_M\_2 seeks almost exclusively opportunities for irregular work. This choice also stems from the direct experience of exclusion from regular job interviews due to her lack of formal qualification. Indeed, the educational qualification is still a needed requirement to access to a lot of jobs in the national context and, as in most other countries, the fact of having a higher level of qualification facilitates employment, compared to young adults that have a lower level of certified skills (cf. Palumbo et al., 2017a)

Within the frame of the local market for irregular jobs, and consistently with its typical features, Y\_IT\_M\_2 moves between decidedly different work experiences that include occupations

considered "low skilled" (substantially in the context of care, therefore caregiver and baby sitter), but also medium-high specialised positions such as guidance to fill in tax return forms or advice services on completing family reunification practices. While the first category of occupations is provided by Y\_IT\_M\_2 mainly to Italian families, the second one exploits an inter-ethnic market niche essentially created by Y\_IT\_M\_2 itself. This reflects significant differences in the Italian labour market between self-employed persons and immigrants, which often lead to situations of strong ethnicization and segregation of the labour market and occupational specialisation on an ethnic-national basis, which are very evident also in the context of Lombardia Region (Colasanto and Marcaletti, 2008; Palumbo et al., 2017a). In particular, at both national and regional level, the foreign component is relevant in domestic and care services (as is the case in other Mediterranean countries, such as Greece and Spain). Y\_IT\_M\_2 considers her irregular worker condition as not modifiable in the absence of a formal title or, at least, certifiable work experiences. Furthermore, she acknowledges this gap as the main reason for the exploitation she experiences every day at work.

*Because in any case, as I said to you, there is work... then you can decide "to accept to be exploited", let's say, or not to work, but you can't say that there is not work here [in Milan FR], because I've always worked, even if I had minimal wages. I've always passed from one job to another, there have also been periods in which, like now, I don't even have a free day (Y\_IT\_M\_2)*

The words of Y\_IT\_M\_2 testify a very dynamic local labour market, which, at least in theory, should allow the transition from irregular to regular employment with greater probability than what happens in other Italian realities (for example in GFR), where the market is much less dynamic and therefore even more segmented. Although unwanted and potentially risky regarding the permanence in the under-employment condition, the irregular worker status allows Y\_IT\_M\_2 a certain margin of flexibility, especially in terms of day-to-day management of her child. This latter point acquires further relevance after the separation from the father of the child and the consequent return to the mother's home. This complex balance between irregular work, care obligations and job-seeking is, therefore, a tactic of management of immediate tasks, but Y\_IT\_M\_2 does not lose sight of the future and in this sense, she keeps herself informed about potential opportunities, including Youth Guarantee. Starting from the advertising billboards that Y\_IT\_M\_2 reads in her neighbourhood and from the information material she collects, Y\_IT\_M\_2 perceives Youth Guarantee as particularly effective in terms of employability. For this reason, Y\_IT\_M\_2 enrolls by collecting the documents at the public Employment Services, and by choosing online the private Employment Agency devoted to her taking-over. In this sense, the approach of Y\_IT\_M\_2 looks coherent with the pattern of taking over and guidance focused on the self-management by users fostered in Lombardia Region. Her initial expectations are, however, not satisfied starting from the very first contacts:

*I joined [...] but they did not even recall [the private Agency she chose]. When [another Agency] called me back and when I went for the interview [...] they told me [...] "Look, we have no jobs now, we only make training [...] and then... they have' sold' me a course and I said:" But afterwards, will you look for a job for me?" and they answered me "Yes. Look, we are a recruitment Agency, but we also organise training ... and employers usually ask us someone who has already done one of our courses. (Y\_IT\_M\_2)*

The Private Agency that manages the taking-over of Y\_IT\_M\_2, in fact, tends to promote adherence to the training courses of its catalogue, and in the case of Y\_IT\_M\_2 the point of not having a diploma contributes to further to push her towards the selection of a course. The course is achieved thanks to regional funding within the framework of the "Dote Unica Lavoro" policy (cf. Palumbo et al, 2017c). One of the aims of "Dote Unica" is to provide recipients with access to personalised "service packages" (such as training course, demand and supply matching, career counselling or coaching services) provided by accredited public and private sector organisations (ibidem). In MFR the leading role of the regional government is so strong that can afford the direct involvement of young adult and citizens through Dote Unica, also strengthening the participative construction of policies with the main stakeholders. In this frame, Lombardy Region tries to match a market model with the institutional coordination model. A relevant aspect for the MFR is that the involvement of young people seeks to make them an active part of a path where employment services appear to be able to provide adequate guidance and accompanying support for direct insertion working or through vocational training (ibidem). Yet, since the implementers have an interest in promoting the kind of training which they supply, they might (as it happened with Y\_IT\_M\_2) exploit their position in order to "sell" services which do not actually correspond to the addressees' needs.

Among those available, Y\_IT\_M\_2 chooses a course that is consistent with her competences as an administrative technician, but its actual impact in terms of learning reveals insufficient compared to the level of Y\_IT\_M\_2 and, once completed, the Agency does not propose any employment opportunity. Also, another bureaucratic issue related to the formal attribution of her taking over "freezes" Y\_IT\_M\_2's position for months in the Youth Guarantee framework, temporarily preventing her from accessing other measures. Specifically, she would like to enter the self-entrepreneurship measure within the Youth Guarantee scheme. In fact, the business idea of Y\_IT\_M\_2 would be to create a micro-credit agency and administrative consultancy, targeting above all the network of her national community. However, Y\_IT\_M\_2 must abandon this project, due to the pending of the formal closure of her taking over and, in any case, in favour of the time spent between its various undeclared occupations. This dynamic seems to exemplify the contradiction between the mainstream rhetoric of the Youth Guarantee related to the concepts of activation, employability and self-entrepreneurship and the actual constraints of opportunities of the same Youth Guarantee target.

A few months after the formal conclusion of her first experience with Youth Guarantee, Y\_IT\_M\_2 finds an advertisement of the NEETwork project on a social network. As we said, the NEETwork

project has in fact invested particularly on the dissemination through the social networks, starting from the awareness of the distance that NEETs are supposed to have from the institutions and their traditional informative channels.

*[NEETwork proposes to bring] knowledge on this type of target and to identify new models of interception, of engagement of this target, since it is clear that the Youth Guarantee targets this group of young people who are not able to move autonomously on the market. (E\_IT\_M\_1)*

Joining the NEETwork project and starting an internship in one of the non-profit organization of the project network, are interpreted by Y\_IT\_M\_2 as an opportunity to obtain a work experience that can be certified and therefore spent in terms of future job applications. Her expectations in terms of training are thus very low and, once she discovers that her internship consists in performing a secretarial role instead of an administrative one (which would correspond to the expectations she declared in the preliminary NEETwork interview), she focuses only on the instrumental meanings of the experience.

*Thus, regarding expectations [...] the positive aspect is that at least this traineeship can give me something more. (Y\_IT\_M\_2)*

The Y\_IT\_M\_2's approach to NEETwork is very different to the one of Y\_IT\_M\_1, whose profile seems to be more adherent to the widespread depiction of NEET people. Indeed, when Y\_IT\_M\_1 receives the phone call proposing the NEETwork traineeship, he is nearly inactive (excluding some random job-seeking activities mostly based on his CV spamming). His previous negative experiences at school (he dropped out the professional high school after a few years), as well as his short employments as unqualified worker discouraged him, contributing to reinforce his negative self-perception. In fact, Y\_IT\_M\_1 narrates himself as particularly untalented and unfocused when it comes to his own aspirations:

*Very honestly, I don't really know what I would like to do. Since being a school drop-out, not completing my education... the fact is that at the moment I can't say "Ok, I've completed this school consequently I know how to do this or that". (Y\_IT\_M\_1)*

This short quote illustrates a common threat among the narratives of the interviewed NEETwork addresses: the school drop-out experience is depicted as the main reason for their current distance



from the labour market and, for the most of them, it also represents their “original sin”, namely their biggest personal failure, which affects their transition to a “proper” adulthood. Then, from the one hand the interviewed young adults express a common opinion about the ineffectiveness of the educational institutions, which are indicted to provide, by a top-down approach, a theoretical knowledge which is very far from the “real” work life. Moreover, this judgement has been often reproduced also by the interviewed experts (see Palumbo et al., 2017b ; Palumbo et al., 2017c). On the other hand, almost all the young interviewees blame themselves for quitting education. This is an important aspect, because it resonates with broader and pervasive discourses, which at the Italian national level affect the increasing distrust in the institutions devoted to support (and standardize) the educational and working paths (then schools, public employment agencies and so on). Furthermore, as we have already seen, it also connects with the main directions of the more recent reforms of the educational system, which are meant to fill the gap of the educational system in terms of orientation toward a more pragmatic and skill-based knowledge (cfr. Palumbo et al., 2016, see, for example, the new design of the vocational education and training and the reform of the technical and professional institutes, as well as the compulsory work-linked training experiences and traineeships for students in the last three years of upper secondary education). As a matter of fact, since the educational reforms are still on-going and an established system for skill certification is still not set up at national level, a strong contradiction is produced: the very well recognised relevance of formal qualification couples with the distrust in the only institutions which can provide it, and the lack of alternative solutions for improving the market integration harms above all the more vulnerable profiles. Yet, in spite of the general scepticism expressed on the Italian educational system as a whole, the interviewed young adults attributed to their own choices and “deficits” the reason for their early school leaving. Thus, they interiorize the neo-liberal ideology of the individual responsibility in the self-management of biographies, often “accounting” the problem of inadequacy of the institutions in engaging them by reducing it as matter of individual failure. It is worth stressing how this perspective is not only an ex-post reaction of a group of excluded people who feel the need for an understandable reason for their failure, as it is somehow consistent also with the opinions of the interviewed experts. Indeed, a common thread in their interviews consists in the blaming of the families of the origin of the NEETwork target. Alternatively, due to their absence or their “laxity”, the families are then accused for the NEET condition of their children, as if they were accessory in their surrender to the difficult relation with schools and, more generally, they were not able to motivate their offspring. The shift from the individual to the familial dimension is very short in the Italian cultural context, as families still represent the main actors of social regulation, or in other words the main institution responsible for individual trajectories. Consequently, we can observe a strong convergence toward individual/familial blaming, whether in reflexive or active perspective, in the face of an utter scepticism about the same possibility (and usefulness) to claim for changes in the other institutions.

*[my parents'] expectation was that I would get a diploma and find a work which I liked... you know.. kind of... you wake up every morning and make something you really like, instead of „I got this [chance for work] consequently I make this [work]“... but that's not what actually happened (Y\_IT\_M\_1)*

*Everyone knows... when you look in that direction [towards families], you always find something wrong: an absent family or a family which allows them to do everything or to have whatever they want... but all of them [the NEETwork addressees] absolutely regret they were unable to find a way to stay at school... regardless of their learning skills, some of them were absolutely normal people who have faced problems at school and at some point have left... and there's never been a parent who has said: "No, keep trying [to stay at school]!"... then they are left to look after themselves (E\_IT\_M\_6)*

Going back to the engagement in the NEETwork project, Y\_IT\_M\_1 accepted the traineeships proposal from the Private Employment Agency, even if he was initially doubtful about the hosting organization, since its users are people in condition of strong need, and he was afraid that being in relation with such an audience might be too stressful to him. Anyway, once he discovered that his main duty consisted in supporting the technical supervisor of the facility, basically operating as a handyman with limited contacts with the users, he joined the project, also wishing that the traineeships could shift in a more stable contract. His traineeship experience is narrated very positively, whether by Y\_IT\_M\_1 or his tutor within the hosting organization, because of his reliability concerning duties and schedules (a soft skill which he reflexively acknowledges, regardless of his general self-depiction of "unable" worker) and the proper attitude he demonstrates, especially considering the collaboration with his tutor and the other members of the facility staff. As a consequence, the "impact" of the project on Y\_IT\_M\_1's biography appears particularly favourable, as the traineeship allowed him to (at least partially) revise some negative self-evaluations, reconsidering his potential capabilities. All these factors led Y\_IT\_M\_1 to consider the possibility to fill his main gap (the lack of formal qualification) by enrolling in an adult evening school and, furthermore, created the conditions for a prolonged relation with the hosting organization. Indeed, although the one of Y\_IT\_M\_1 was the very first traineeship managed by the technical staff of the organization, his professional growth during his path has progressively convinced his tutor and colleagues of the relevance of his role in the daily routines of the organization.

*At the beginning he faced some difficulties in integrating among us... also because of his shyness... you know sometimes we thought like "Are you simply stupid or what?" [...] But then, step-by-step and thanks to his dedication and effort, we have seen that he is handling rather simple tasks which, however, solve a number of potential daily problems in our facility, then when he's absent we are in trouble now! (E\_IT\_M\_2)*

Hence, the organization staff agreed upon the possibility to hire Y\_IT\_M\_1, but the positive achievements he has gained seem not to be enough in order to account for a long-term

investment of the organization on him. In fact, instead of proposing a standard contract, the organization offered a second traineeship, which was rather disappointing by the Y\_IT\_M\_1's standpoint. Anyway, he accepted, wishing for a future permanent hiring (which would be however compatible with the adult evening school enrolment). Regardless of the obvious economic reasons of this choice of the organization, it is interesting to examine how it is narrated by Y\_IT\_M\_1's tutor, as in his words resonate a number of rhetoric concerning the unreliability of youths and their necessity to learn how to overcome obstacles, which is often depicted as one of their main "generational lack", due to the alleged excessive protection of their families, which pamper them too much and prevent them from becoming "real" adults, even when economic conditions are not adequate to support inactive children for prolonged periods.

*We have decided to give Y\_IT\_M\_1 the chance for not only a professional growth, we also wanted him to learn to conquer piece by piece what we are offering... we are also considering to extend his experience here... but we have made him understand that he must conquer it, since there's nothing taken for granted in the labour market, because otherwise youths approach is, you know like... [he makes a lazy voice and imitates a sloppy attitude] "Ok at the end I'll find something, somehow, I don't know..." Then we want him to make his path with us, and I think that he still barely understands how necessary his role is to us (E\_IT\_M\_2)*

Concluding, in spite of the proofs he has given "on field", Y\_IT\_M\_1 still seems to be requested to give evidences of his "adequacy" to an adult professional role, since his profile intercepts an "intersection" of structural and cultural weaknesses - above all being youth, unexperienced and unqualified – which contribute to "freeze" him in a vulnerable condition as worker, also paving the way for a moralistic/normative approach of his tutor toward him, which aligns with the patronizing attitude toward young people very often reproduced within the Italian culture. Moreover, the story of Y\_IT\_M\_1 might be considered representative of an aspect of (at least partial) shortcoming of the NEETwork project. Indeed, although on the one hand the traineeship "tool" and the specific context of the third sector organizations demonstrated a good fit with the needs for "protected" and gradual access to work of a vulnerable target

*the third sector has definitively proved to be the best environment for hosting the project target. A firm would not have time and neither "heart" to welcome guys like those. The third sector organizations mission is really to "go the extra mile", which fits with the traineeships management, because any traineeship entails an investment of time and energies, you however have to teach an apprentice a*

*job... or I mean... not properly a “job” since it is a traineeship [she laughs]... let’s better say a “job experience”. (E\_IT\_M\_5)*

on the other hand, the employability task – which is not primary, but still relevant - looks rather far from being reached, due to the low percentage of traineeships shifting to stable contracts, and the same contextualization in a sector which is less dynamic in terms of hirings

*nowadays, the market is a bit static... we generally don’t see many hirings, anyway, in my opinion there’s a general tendency toward the reckless use of traineeships, which are not necessarily good for every profile [...] then in NEETwork we focus on social sector, which mainly depends on public funding then, you know... cut, cut, cut [in social spending]! Consequently, even if a lot of addressees have discovered the “human side” of work through the project, the limited duration of the traineeships as well as the rare chances for subsequent hiring threat to make it not much more than just an “experience”.(E\_IT\_M\_3)*

This latter aspect clearly relates to the very widespread discourse which circulates on the value of the experience itself in the world of work, in a cultural framework where the problem of market integrations is – again - put on the workers’ shoulders who, as individuals, are asked to be active in accumulating experiences in view of unclear – and above all unguaranteed – chances for stabilization. Furthermore, as an expert said, this might even get riskier when it comes to vulnerable profiles. Indeed, for those who have actually improved their self-esteem by their paths in the project, also acquiring a new consciousness about their capabilities, the lack of subsequent chances to remain inside the market might entail a “side-effect” of further frustration and potential exclusion. In addition, the absence of an actual system for skill certification at national level prevent from making these experience concretely spendable.

*As long as they just stayed at home, they felt like misfit, while by going there [at the traineeship] they realized that maybe something in them works! They still have a limited consciousness about it, but as far as they tell this, they feel needed and valuable, unlike they felt at home [...] that’s why it would be important to have a follow-up after the traineeship conclusion, in order to keep on pushing them to activate, otherwise they might return to the initial condition (E\_IT\_M\_6).*

### ***2.3 Analysis of NEETwork project according to the different perspectives***

From a CPE perspective, our analysis focuses on the main discourses reproduced around the NEETwork case, namely the individual activation discourse, the depiction of NEET people as totally lacking of soft skill and consequently in need for “protected” approaches to work, the representations of the area of Milan in terms of dynamism, chances and challenges.

Concerning the individual activation, it is worth stressing that the strong emphasis on active labour policies is rather recent at Italian national level. Indeed, until Nineties “the welfare system invested more in pensions and in passive labour policies than in active policy programmes or in unemployment protection interventions (Ferrera, 2012). Political and economic force in substantial agreement with labour unions made it possible” (Palumbo et al., 2016, p. 5). Thereafter, a number of reforms fostered a gradual change of perspective, reducing the social protection for the workers belonging to the so-called “primary” labour market – mainly adult male workers employed with stable contracts – and aiming at tackling unemployment also by a wider integration for the profiles which were more disadvantaged in the “traditional” Italian market, namely women and youths. Specifically, “the unsustainability of [the former] national system has led to invest in active labour market policies. The innovations have regarded in particular: a) loosening of the ties for hiring and firing workers and the introduction of the mobility benefit (National Law 223/1991); b) monetary increase of the unemployment benefits (National Law 236/93), and restriction of the ‘unemployed’ status; c) the introduction of new active policy measures such as the “*lavoratori socialmente utili*” or socially useful jobs scheme; d) the introduction and re-launch of new flexible contracts (National Law 196/97; National Law 30/2003) “ (ibidem, p. 6). Thus, the gradual change of the labour market reduced on the one hand the set of guarantees protecting the employed people, “smoothing” on the other hand the access, especially for the youths, albeit they are increasingly hired with flexible contracts. As a consequence, youths are the main references of the activation discourse, since they are the category of workers who, above all, is in need for active strategies to handle the complexity and the uncertainty of the flexible market. Moreover, by an intergenerational perspective, this shift of paradigm has produced a strong discontinuity in terms of experiences and meanings attached to the work life – and, more broadly, in terms of biographical patterns (Benasso, 2013) – which often contributes to affect the visions of the adult generations. This entails a trend toward the stigmatization of the biographical choices of the younger generations, as well as concrete consequences in terms of policy-making and, more generally, strategical decisions by the leading older generations, which still occupy most of the head positions in the Italian society (from the policy area to business, from the educational scope to private firms, and so on). Hence the stronger push toward individual activation is targeted to youths (and/or their families), and the Youth Guarantee scheme furtherly enhance it, since it fosters the active participation of youths in defining they own tailor-made approach to the market. In other words, youths are more and more requested to find individual solutions for the structural issue of youth unemployment by selecting and managing a set of measures which are meant to support them. Yet, the availability and the features of these latter measures are obviously affected by structural, cultural and economic factors

like the funding, skill ecology, governance models and local features of the labour market, and this considerably shrinks the actual possibility of custom-tailoring for the individual paths.

These general tendencies get even more evidence if we take into consideration specific contexts and particularly vulnerable target groups. In this respect, the NEETwork project confirmed to be very significant, as it is run in a very competitive, exclusive and dynamic market and it is targeted toward NEET young people who were not engaged by the “standard” Youth Guarantee scheme. Thus, the project addresses those NEETs who, at least by the institutional standpoint, have the lowest level of activation, which is somehow proven by the same fact of have not being interested in enrolling Youth Guarantee. The already mentioned strategies of engagement of these youths (see the social media campaigns and the direct phone calls managed by the Private Employment Agencies) have been often depicted by the interviewed experts as necessary in order to reach this particular target but, at the same time, the same passivity of the youths in this process has been often told as one of their main faults or, in other words, as a further proof of their lack of motivation of improving their professional (and personal) condition.

*I'm going to say something very nasty... [the youths who have joined the project did it] because they have been spoon-fed! It was NEETwork which found them! And even among the ones who have been reached, some did not activate after the call. Otherwise they are not able to activate a change, unless somebody does it for them [...]*  
*I mean, they are people who have never approached school or work with a productive attitude, they are definitively not able to activate autonomously, otherwise they would have done it already, then it is necessary to chase them (E\_IT\_M\_6)*

Nevertheless, the biographical interviews with these young adults showed, for the most of them, a greater dynamism compared to the experts' depiction of utter apathy. Especially when it comes to the work issue, they have told of heterogeneous experiences, as far as almost all have been run as undeclared work. Again, these youths face a contradiction: even if they have activated in order to overcome the problem of their unemployment by rationally managing the few chances they had as vulnerable workers, the same feature of these opportunities (namely their lack of formalisation) prevents them from the possibility to give value to the achieved experiences, threatening in the end to stick to a permanent condition of underemployment.

The problem of the lack of formalisation gets even bigger when referred to the educational dimension. Consistently with the NEETwork target definition, indeed, these youths have not achieved a high school diploma, and the stigma attached to this condition represents a point of convergence of both their representations and the experts' ones. In fact, nearly all the interviewed people tended to overlap the early school leaving with a general inadequacy in acting “proper” adult roles, which are “operationalised” through the dimension of the soft-skills. In other words, the fact of have not being able to conclude education has been often quoted as the evidence of a general

inability in handling “normal” and professional relations with peers, adults, colleagues and so on<sup>3</sup>. Consequently the soft-skills learning is the core activity of the training projects which underlies the traineeships, setting a very low standard in terms of expected skill improving.

*If you'd compare the NEETwork training projects to the ones we [as Private Employment Agency] manage for the traineeships of “our” youths who, for instance, get in touch with big firms... they are half like pages and, above all, the activities are defined in a much more general way, focusing on personal motivation and activation skills like, for instance, the time-schedule managing, because we want to ensure that these persons arrives on time every morning... which can't be taken for granted, at least, not for all of them. (E\_IT\_M\_5)*

However, as the contrasting cases of Y\_IT\_M\_1 and Y\_IT\_M\_2 presented in the storytelling paragraph and the WP5 analysis have shown, the lack of soft skills is not necessarily recognised by the interviewed NEETwork addressees. Indeed, at least some of them “proved to be able to resist to the potential self-stigmatization, declaring a certain confidence in their own actual skills” (Palumbo et al., 2017b, p. 4), thus suffering the consequences of this gap more at social than reflexive level.

In terms of project design, the strong emphasis on the soft skills dimension also contributed to shape the choice of locating the NEETwork traineeships in the context of third sector organizations, which are deemed by the experts the ideal environment for protected and gradual approaches to work. As already mentioned, this choice has been taken in spite of the low potential of these organizations in terms of future employments, given the low short-term employability attributed to this target.

*In our opinion, the third sector might have those characteristics of sensitivity and carefulness which fit with the support of this kind of youths, in order to better welcome them, also because... I mean, these youths might barely be considered a resource in the first instance, rather we needed to find very specific figures within the organizations staff, namely tutors able to accompany these youths in a process of... not just learning, but also relational learning (E\_IT\_M\_1)*

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<sup>3</sup> In this respect, an e-mail received by the UNIGE team from an expert during the fieldwork sounds very evocative. Indeed, commenting some troubles that we have faced in planning the interviews with the NEETwork addressees – someone never answered our phone call, someone rejected the interview, some others accepted but did not show up at the planned meeting for the interview – the expert wrote us: “Welcome to the NEET world!”. It is interesting to point out how this short sentence merges stereotypes and objective readings concerning the project targets, who are supposed to be unreliable mostly because of the same condition – being NEET – which the project aims to tackle.

The issue of the employability of such a vulnerable group also connects with the representation of the context of Milan as particularly rich in job opportunities. Actually, the already shown data (see Palumbo et al, 2017a) confirm this vision of the local market as a whole (especially when compared to other local markets lie, for instance, the one of Genoa), but such a dynamism also entails higher competitiveness and potential further exclusion for the weakest profiles (see Palumbo et al., 2017c). Thus, the problems of integration of these youths are often connected by the experts to their inadequacy to a market which is more and more able to “reward” well-fitting profiles, while it rejects the unqualified ones. This seems to reinforce the individual stigmatization, since these youths are not able to integrate despite the (supposed) large amount of opportunities around them. In addition, it legitimises a “mobile” approach to the same construction of the concept of opportunity, which goes from the actual employment chance to the enhancement of the experience in itself. As an expert pointed out, the possibility to attach recognizable (both subjectively and on the market) meanings to this “fuzzy” opportunities strongly depends on the cultural capital owned by their addressees, and the structural features of the NEETwork project target make it barely possible.

*The project has worked better in other contexts in Lombardia Region, which are less hectic than the Milanese one. Thus, even if their markets are less dynamic... I mean these youths don't need dynamism at the moment, rather they need calm, a period to grow-up, to develop a self-esteem they still don't have. Potentially they will reach a more dynamic market in the future, but if you'd put them there immediately, they crush or anyway freeze and stop moving... (E\_IT\_M\_5)*

*In our context I see an increasingly larger spread between the youths who belong to wealthy families and consequently are meant to go even higher, and other youths [like the NEETwork addressees] who are in trouble and is meant to reach the bottom. For instance, I see the stronger profile who make traineeships [out the NEETwork project] because, to them, it is an actual opportunity, they already know that they won't face problems in integrating in the market. While the others... the say to me: “However, where in the hell could I go?”, then they make their paths, but in the end, what remains on their CV? (E\_IT\_M\_3)*

From a Governance perspective, diverse aspects concerning above all the project design of NEETwork are worth exploring. First of all, as the project has been triggered from the “push” of a private foundation, it might be considered an example of subsidiarity of the private sector in the context of Milan. Specifically, the NEETwork project might be considered a virtuous case of integration of private and public sector, since the first has intervened to compensate a lack of the second, namely the low rates of Youth Guarantee engagement of the more vulnerable NEETs. This also created the room for a synergy with the Private Employment Agencies which have managed



the match between the addressees and the hosting third sector organizations, setting up an effective and flexible taking-over network which is sustained also by public funds.

Moreover, as a long-term result related to the governance dimension, this network has been established also in order to acquire and share a deeper knowledge on a target which is traditionally disengaged from institutions. Thus, consistently with the declared aim of the private foundation, the effects of the project will overcome its same conclusion, providing both public and private actors a set of useful skills and insights which contribute to fill a gap shared by the most of the institutions collaborating in the field of labour and training policies.

Finally, the contextualization of the NEETwork traineeships in the third sector organizations has constituted a chance for testing patterns of collaboration among the Public and Private Employment Agencies and the Non-profit organizations, paving the way for potential future synergies.

Concerning the LCR perspective, we observe the predominance of a linear conception of the life course. On this topic, the experts' and youths' visions converge, but it especially affects the latter who, at least at the beginning of their traineeships, perceived their biographies as "interrupted" by the early school leaving, then assuming that the discontinuity in the "normal" pathway toward qualification (and consequently toward adulthood) would necessarily compromise their trajectories. By the experts' standpoint, given a general acceptance of the standardized biographical model – both in terms of expected articulation and mainstream cultural meanings - it is important to stress that the same aim of (re)activation implies a more flexible perspective on the life course, as it seeks to foster different chances for managing "alternative" biographical trajectories. Actually, the already quoted desire (and the actual choice in the case of Y\_IT\_M\_5) of the interviewed young adults to re-enter education might be read as a first step toward a revised (and less linear) conception of the possibility to manage and self-determine their biographies.

In terms of timescape, the interviewed youths "appear focused on the present, which in most of the cases means looking for a tactic to overcome the more evident lack in their educational and training curricula. Obviously, these different tactics are in turn shaped by the socio-economic background of the interviewees, and the related pushes toward economic independence from their families of origin. Indeed, even if all the young adults comes from middle-lower class families, and they still live in their same household, some differences in terms of urgency of earnings are notable. Y\_IT\_M\_2 has in fact to equally contribute to the family incomes with her mother, since she also has to support her own son. Y\_IT\_M\_4 started working very early and his economic contribution is somehow given for granted by his parents. Y\_IT\_M\_6 is in-between, since his parents are asking him to get his autonomy, but the general condition of the family allows him to postpone this task in order to complete his education by an evening adult school. Y\_IT\_M\_1 and Y\_IT\_M\_3 feel instead a low (or null) pressure toward independency, both deriving from the moderately good economic situation of their families and the explicit request by their parents, then they have a potential wider degree of customisation of their own plans (Palumbo et al., 2017b , p. 52). The issue of the mid-term future is anyway particularly critical, indeed "almost all the young adults explicitly rejected the same question of *"how do you see yourself in 10 years?"*, replying with a very widespread standardized answer: *"I don't even know what I'm going to do tomorrow, how can I figure out myself in 10 years?"*, which might be considered as generational catchphrase for the so-called Millennials who became adults within the frame of the global crisis. [...] Anyway, some of them told a more

clear project and, it is worth notice, that the interviewees who were more able to define and narrate their own projects are the ones who had more concrete and continuative work experiences [...]. Significantly, this general blurring of the future representations does not pair with alternative or at least unusual aspirations in terms of private life structuring. Indeed, excluding Y\_IT\_M\_2 who has already experienced a complicated separation from her son's father, all the interviewed young depict themselves in ten years referring to a rather traditional model (e.g. being married with kids), often stressing how these are the goals which everyone should aim for. Once again, are especially the more vulnerable ones in terms of their professional profile the ones who aspire to these normalised conditions, and this might relate with the experiences of exclusion (starting from school until their contact with the labour market) which characterise their life trajectories" (ibidem).

### 3. Case Study 2: Civic Service

#### 3.1 Introduction of Civic Service

The Civic Service (CS) is an interesting policy because of its long and articulated story (with both national and regional interpretation). Since 1972, Italy offered Civil Service as an alternative for conscientious objectors to the military draft, and about 600.000<sup>4</sup> Italian young men took this option until the draft was phased out in 2005. In preparation for the end of the draft, Italy created a voluntary National Youth Service program in 2001 called “Servizio Civile Nazionale (SCN)” targeted to Italians aged 18-28, and received funds for supporting 377.568 participants from 2001 to 2015. Volunteers in the program were subsidized by the Government to work for both public agencies (in particular municipalities) and NGOs in order to a) contribute, as an alternative to compulsory military service, to the defence of the homeland through non-military tools and activities; b) to favour the realization of the constitutional principles of social solidarity; c) promote solidarity and cooperation, at national and international level, with particular regard to the protection of social rights, welfare services and peace education among people; d) participate in the protection of the heritage of the Nation, with particular regard to the environmental sectors, including the aspect of agriculture in the mountains, forest, historical-artistic, cultural and civil protection areas; e) to contribute to the civic, social, cultural and professional training of young people through activities carried out also in entities and administrations operating abroad. The strong ethos of this policy was declined at a local level since 2006: Liguria was one of the first Regions that explored and experimented these new pathways of local active citizenship for young people, activating a Regional Civic Service, complementary to the National one (Cossetta, 2010).

In 2015 the Italian Government inserted CS as one measures of Youth Guarantee: this change has strong implication on the ethos of the policy: now increasingly farther from conscientious objection and closer to a policy of employment even if CS projects remain a single experience oriented to improve training, knowledge and commitment on care giving, civil protection, environment, cultural heritage, education and cultural promotion.

Among the countries where YG operates, Italy is the only one that integrated the CS within the range of its measures. Considering the transversal nature of CS (not only a labour, social, volunteering or youth policy), the latent conflict between work and volunteering, that's so CS, in YG could have a new orientation toward work or toward the problem of lack of competencies of YA, providing a context (CS) in which they can be acquired in non-formal and informal way and also recognized and certified. In Liguria CS was managed as a measure of YG with a strong activity by the Region (in fact it is not National Civic Service, but Regional Civic Service with a duration of six

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<sup>4</sup> The precise number is not clear. Ex post analyses range from 500.000 to over 700.000.

months instead of 12 months of National CS), giving particular emphasis to the professional skills and its recognition, as an important tool to improve the competences and the employability of the young participants. At this point the Regional Government experimented a skill recognition programme, which tries to involve young adults in defining a personal skills portfolio in order to explain which abilities and competences can be validate (in the perspective of the certification of competencies established with the national law 92/2012 and implemented by a “regional net” actually in the starting phase.

In Liguria funds related to Civic Service were increasing: € 501.500,00 in 2014; € 531.000,00 in 2015; € 796.500,00 in 2016 € 973.500,00 in the second programme of 2016 and € 973.500,00 in 2017.

Until September 2017 young adult effectively involved in RCS in Liguria were 333: half of them has a high and very high distance from labour market and only few were in a very low and low distance. This “distance” is the result of an individual screening and profiling made by the Public Employment Agency, consisting in a first personal interview, personality tests, and a skills analysis.

The integration of the Civic Service as one of the measures within the Liguria Region Youth Guarantee frame entailed, at least partially, a redefinition of the ‘traditional’ CS objectives. Consistently with the general purposes of YG, CS has indeed acquired a more pronounced orientation toward professionalization, yet maintaining its original implementation scheme. Thus, the CS paths continue to be contextualised in the Third Sector, consequently keeping the soft/citizenship skills at their core.

Concerning the match between the CS paths and the local labour market, the focus on the non-profit sector is deemed by the interviewed managers as particularly suitable for young adults, who can experience a ‘soft’ approach to work, thanks to the alleged greater potential of the Third Sector organizations (compared to firms) in hosting and supporting apprentices. Moreover, in the interviewed experts’ opinion, the CS target population often lacks of transversal and basic skills, and the non-profit organizations are adequate ‘secure environments’ where the young adults’ training gaps might be closed, thanks to their weaker orientation toward business and their higher value orientation, which produce a less competitive approach to work. In addition to the short duration of the CS paths (6 months), this cultural distance from the business-based work environments seems to have affected managers’ choices regarding the experimentation of skills recognition at the end of the CS paths. Indeed, the initial purpose of validation of at least one of the formally recognised skills connected to the Liguria Region Repertory of Qualification has been shifted to optional processes of soft/citizenship skills validation. This has entailed a rather modest impact in terms of formal recognition of the CS experiences, reducing their professionalization potential.

According to a few CS addresses’ interviews, their work prospect has not been significantly enhanced in terms of mere professionalization. Furthermore, in the local context the limited amount of the monthly reimbursement provided by CS (433,8 euros) may not be considered a sufficient income for supporting young adults’ independence. As a whole, these factors threaten to reproduce inequalities among the actual addresses: the youths who has relied on a good amount of economic,

cultural and social capitals, have been able to use the CS experience as a chance for gaining 'on flied' awareness of their potential, starting to reduce their distance from the labour and training market, which was mostly due to their lack of guidance. On the other hand, weaker youths in terms of structural conditions seem to have been affected by the in-between condition of the 'new' CS (not completely a professionalising measure and not completely a volunteering experience), facing some difficulties in constructing their own sense for the experience, which has been often applied as a strategy of postponement of the problem of stable integration in the labour market.

### **3.2 Telling the story of Civic Service**

*Youth in civic service is changing, you know. We were used to having high-level students, but now many of them are disadvantaged. Just to give you an example: we had a boy, last year, he was struggling to get out of bed in the morning, but just not once, very often, you know. And he was habitually late and he always forgot to warn us. I said to myself: ok, he is at the first job experience, he needs a support, he is a very Neet, but my colleagues were completely crazy. They said: "Dear [interviewee's name], please, don't recruit such fragile boys or girls anymore. We have a work to do!"*  
(E\_IT\_G\_5)

The speaker was a street level manager of a project of the Regional Civic Service (RCS) in Liguria and she describes well the interesting change that occurred on a very specific policy as Regional Civic Service and its impact on organizations and people involved. Now it is one of the six measures of Youth Guarantee in that Italian region: a very significant example case of a local government adaptation of a transnational policy.

From 2015 to now 333<sup>5</sup> youngsters attend to RCS in Liguria: it is only 2,3% of the NEETs that were involved in the measure of YG, but it has many peculiarities: it is the only measure where the average of female is higher (64%) and it has very good results in terms of satisfaction of young people who attended (more than 90% of respondents of many research said that they would do it again). And, in addition, CS has precise governance that appears effective, collaborative and concerted. All Regional Governments were aware of these good characteristics and functions of CS, but only Liguria has chosen it as a measure of YG: other Regions in some case followed the National Government that included the National Civil Service (NCS) as a measure of YG, but in other case they decided to maintain it as a separated initiative of active citizenship.

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<sup>5</sup> The number is referred only to RCS involved as a measure of YG

Regional Civic Service is an initiative that only few regions have in Italy. Liguria was one of the first that enacted a law (Regional Law No.11 May 11th, 2006) that establishes and governs the regional civil service, complementary to the national one. Differences seem to be minute (time duration is from six month to one year, instead of one year in NCS, bodies of RCS can have a registration for regional entities, the age can be 16-29 instead of 18-29, etc.) but they are indicative of a precise orientation of the regional application to test new form of CS for specific target groups.

Since 2006, indeed, the Regional Government tries to do some experimentation: with young people on probation, with students of High Schools 16-18, with young migrants or disadvantage people. The aim was to open the SC to segments of young society traditionally excluded from NCS. RCS embodies were only few dozen and they share good relationships among each other, trying to cooperate in order to improve organizational flexibility and they recognized the leading role of the Regional Government. About High School projects for 16-18 they already start with some collaborative proposals.

Thus, it is not surprising that Liguria Region forced to have CS as a regional application of YG. Yet a central point that has to be explained: YG and CS are not based on the same value (volunteering alternative to compulsory military service vs. chance to acquire or refine professional competencies by social work) and the conflict, quite dormant, seems to be the symbol of a policy that was adjusted to an opportunity of new resources as well as a new solution for an old problem.

According to decision makers perspectives, it seems to be a win-win approach (or a “cunning deal” as an important national expert said) because, by a hand YG can be a new source of funds for CS embodies and for the entire CS system, and a new challenge to wide target groups to more disadvantaged people, and to experiment something new. However, on the other side, YG needed something that would work and CS is a certainty: in all its declaration has always been a good policy (Canino, Cima, 2006, Isfol 2016, Leone, De Bernardo, 2017). Furthermore CS cannot be considered a rival for the other measure of YG such as apprenticeship traineeship, job placement, education and training, but on the contrary it can involves third sector organizations that in Liguria and in particular in Genoa, are very important. So, Civil Service, once again, seems to be a multifunctional initiative that can be fit also for the big umbrella of YG (as we try to explain about skills mismatch in WP6).

Ambrosini, more than ten years ago, talked about CS in Italy as an “overloading of functions” (2006) because this initiative already was considered in a mid-way among volunteering, a real job opportunity and a public service. A multifaceted policy that can be useful, at local level, to cover some youngster needs: in this regards a manager expert said to us: *“the effort we have made for the Young Guarantee is to adjust the motivations of the Civil Service, so a more social, more dedicated and more ethical and supportive aspect of ... how can I say... volunteering to different situations, adapting it to a more effective and employable goal”* ([E\_IT\_G\_1]). The focus on the non-profit sector is deemed by the interviewed managers as particularly suitable for young adults, who can experience a ‘soft’ approach to work, thanks to the alleged greater potential of the Third Sector organizations (compared to firms) in hosting and supporting apprentices. Indeed, in the interviewed experts’ opinion, the CS target population often lacks of transversal and basic skills, and the non-profit organizations are adequate ‘secure environments’ where the young adults’ training gaps

might be filled, thanks to their weaker orientation toward business and their higher value orientation, which produce a less competitive approach to work.

Youngsters in Liguria, the most aged region of Italy, are described by expert (as we said in Palumbo et al., 2017b) as too tied to their family, who are struggling to become autonomous or oriented to mobility, with no qualification appealing for businesses and so they need only “soft or protected” initiatives as well as RCS. In fact, RCS try to be useful to such uncompetitive NEETs but, in the same time, it is on line with that rhetoric: RCS provide a monthly fee of 433€: this is an amount that allows young people to improve their everyday life but for sure it does not allow becoming autonomous. In this way it seems that policies for young people not only start with the premise that they live with parents, but support a time translation of self-sufficiency (as we saw in Palumbo et al., 2017b). In the same time RCS, with the project approach, can support a personalized activity, friendly to respond to users’ needs.

*“The goal is to have tailor-made projects: this means that the youngster cannot do everything he/she wants, but he/she can do something that can help her/him to grow up, to strengthen, to consolidate him/herself as a person, giving them a light and warm welcome, but slowly proposing some precise goals. And maybe it is why we have no dropout. In this way if he/she wants to try something more, it is ok. Just an example: there are some boys and girls that are doing an experience in a public assistance organization, but then they’ll go to another one in Civil Protection”. (E\_IT\_G\_2)*

The crucial issue is that: the RCS can be or not an employability oriented policy for young adults? Manager and experts, as we saw, seems to be sure and confident on affirmative answer. Youngsters seem positive to:

*“The CS offers a possibility that normally you cannot have with a work contract, you can practice with no anxiety and you can have a professionalization. That’s it, one can improve a specialization, a professionalization in a specific sector, but without having, you know, to be in hurry, to be competitive and to have... How can I say... a real deadline, so, clauses are clear from the beginning, and this is something good for me. Well, one leads to the other and I’ve been asked to stay still here and Why not? You know, there were no other possibilities to have a job...”. (Y\_IT\_G\_1)*

But it’s not enough: to be effective this experience needs to be recognized as something good not only by the key stakeholders, but by the entire work system, as EU recommended also to informal and non-formal skills. In this regard, the Liguria Region strategy of choosing YG-CS as a place for testing the new regional system of skill certification managed by ALFA appears consistent with the

aim of expanding the local skill ecology, pursuing a particularly relevant goal for the scarcely dynamic and tertiary-based labour market of the GFR and the entire Liguria Region.

But it's not that easy: concerning the skill certification experimentation, actually it was not possible to develop its whole process, as it stopped at the phase of assessment, so that at the moment youngster in RCS can only validate citizenships skills: a real certification is still far away from being concrete. This is due to diverse factors. Considering street level experts' point of view the procedure to obtain the Skill Licence is bureaucratic and distant from their regular job *"none recognize us this effort and we have something else to do. Then, I do not know, but are we sure that this is useful?"* (Y\_IT\_G\_2) ALFA proposed a compulsory path with youngsters involved in RCS in 2015: they have to construct their own personal dossier, composed by all "evidences" that can describe activities and competencies acquired during RCS. Now this possibility is voluntary and the soft model requested seems to be not so burdensome: *"you have to produce an opening document, two pages with biographical data, the story of the youngster and the description of the project (other two pages), then video, photos and so on that can describe what he/she is doing"* (Y\_IT\_G\_2). Results of this validation path were very different: validation was not predicted and only few obtained it. The difficulty of this part of the experimentation was not only referred to tutors, but there were other reasons:

*"RCS is an only six months activity. My deadline is in September, so I have to spent my August writing my dossier, but I believe in it, every day I write something but in the meantime I have to work, but I hope I can get in" said a youngster. Another said: "Ok, I did a very interesting activity as a children' entertainer, but do you think it is good to self me with kids while I was singing or laughing? No, I though this validation is not good for me".* (Y\_IT\_G\_5)

The crucial question is still open: can or cannot the RCS be or not an employability oriented policy for young adults? Some issues are already on the table. The first one is related to how Neets can choose RCS as a measure of YG. This recruitment phase is different from the past and really significant from a symbolic point of view:

*"Most of the guys involved in RCS are not driven by social or ethical motivation, as before, the need only to experience, to improve their cv, but they have to start with a first acceptance and profiling in a public agency, because the tortuous mechanism of YG is this one: we have a very difficult interaction with the public agency staffs. Perhaps they don't know anything about RCS".* (E\_IT\_G\_5)



Public Agency staff, as we said in WP6, is living a strong transition: most of the youngest are in a precarious contractual situation or the oldest ones they already have a bureaucratic perspective faraway from hybrid form of employment initiatives as RCS. YG, in this sense, can support a changing of public agency system at regional level, improving LLL and a new form of accreditation for these professionals as well as a new method of work. It is a challenge for street level of third sector workers too, but in this case the change is deeper: not referred only to methods and governance, but to values that, in many cases, were the ethical bases of their organizations.

Until 2015 the recruitment mechanism was based on co-optation or it depended only upon the specific experimentation (youngsters in probation, students of High Schools joined the project) and numbers of youngster were very few. The National Civil Service, that still involved many of RCS embodies, guaranteed the presence of very motivated young people, with a high stock of social capital, a high level of education and a (in some case) a deep idealistic engagement (Cossetta, 2010).

*“Boys and girls selected for NCS has a score based on degree, previous experience and so on. I think it is not so ethic but, you know we used to have only very skilled and motivated people”.*(E\_IT\_G\_4)

said us a manager of a third sector big organization and this describes the never solved dilemma between inclusion and selectivity (where selectivity won in NCS).

Before YG, but we can say beyond the little and specific experience of the RCS, the NCS was an opportunity of improvement preferred by young women with a strong family rooting and a high stock of social capital (Canino, Cima, 2006; Cossetta 2009; Ambrosini 2010) with a fluctuating share of funds . We can say that this policy was forced to adapt to a brand new situation represented by YG, with inevitable as well as complex consequences: some big and old CS institutions didn't agree with the regional perspective and remain only as NCS embodies. A tear that hurts, but it is not surprising. The history of a policy like CS is a history of strong and revolutionary adaptation. In 2001 CS was born from the dense and long history of Italian conscientious objection: more than 600.000 young Italian men from 1972 to 2001 choose an alternative to compulsory military service although until 1998 the ration was clearly punitive: a judging commission, the exclusion of political motivations (only ethics-religious ones were accepted) the time of “civil service ” was eight months longer than military service and it was not a right but a concession. Youngster in old conscientious objection came from medium and high income level of Northern Italy, with high level of fathers' education, attending cultural activities with postmaterialistic values (Battistelli, 2004) and probably some of them are now managers of third sector organizations, or National or Regional Social Policy Offices. Genoa, in particular, was a town at the forefront of conscientious objection, both for a strong presence of a “Progressive” Catholic Church, and for a significant presence of nonviolent movements.

Before 1972 conscientious objection was something heroic: only some Jehovah Witnesses, anarchist, exponent of nonviolent movement, and very few Catholics willing up to end in jail (two important catholic priests Ernesto Balducci and Lorenzo Milani were prosecuted for apology of offence in 1962).

These utopian bases of conscientious objection seem to be so far from the current situation. For sure youngsters of the new Millennium live in a completely different context, and they are driven by completely different motivation, but can the spirit of adaption of the CS be useful to fight silently against the new pragmatic dystopia of youth unemployment and marginalization from adults' world?

### ***3.3 Analysis of Civic Service according to the different perspectives***

In this section we analyse the Civil Service narrative according to the three background perspectives of our research.

Starting with the Cultural Political Economy (CPE), we can consider that the dominant discourse emerging in the analysis is the "goodness" of Civic Service policy. This initiative it has always been considered "good" in all of its application: both at national and at local level.

At national level there is no political parties openly opposed to this policy, indeed, the National Governments tried to modify it or to manipulate it, in order to solve different problem or different contingencies. During last years the National Civic Service it has been adapted to the most diverse situations: emergencies such as the 2009 L'Aquila earthquake, or the social emergency in Napoli town, the Civil Protection, the Social Agriculture, the 2016 Amatrice and Central Italy earthquake etc. with some parallel niche initiative (International Civic Service, Peace Corps, young refugees). The civil service, in fact, can be applied to the most diverse spheres and its vagueness makes it suitable, from time to time, to respond to the most diverse needs: from the peace in the world, to very local initiatives. In a recent sentence of the Ethics Charter requires that organization of NCS has to commit themselves *"to foster the personal growth of young people, including through the participation of the volunteer workers' representatives, and to enrich their cultural and professional knowledge through the development of their technical and transversal skills, in awareness that the universal civil service must also be an opportunity for training and a reunion with the labour market and the certified skills must be effectively recognized"*. In this sentence it is clear that the NCS is anything and everything: it is training, it is volunteerism, it is a way to acquire soft and technical skills, it is an initiative to improve social capital and participation. The only issue on which the political forces seem to have distinct opinions is whether to make the civil service compulsory or to keep it voluntary. That's far to be solved: the only thing that seems to be clear, now, is to take back the Civic Service as a matter of state or even European and no longer regional. Regional governments, or those that have applied the Civil Service locally, are watching at this issue with a bated breath, trying to keep on going with local calls, but with the knowledge that it will not last long.

The Regional Government of the Liguria was one of the strongest opponents of a "state" vision of the CS, but it had to give up: the law on the universality of the CS has now been approved (il Legislative Decree n. 40 06/03/2017 on Universal Civic Service) even if it is not yet known how it will be implemented.

The compulsory civil service is pleasing to many, both on the right and on the left. Even a "*localist*" political movement like Lega, seems to be in favour of compulsory civil service, alongside it with a possible European civil service. Only few third sector associations and, partly, the Catholic Church try to insist on a voluntary motivation. At this time it is not clear what future NCS will have in order to the compulsory of the matter: if the NCS will be really obliged for young people, it is difficult that it will be a measure of Youth Guarantee, but in the same time now the narrative shows that NCS is the most effective and "good" initiative in YG. So, in this battle between YG and NCS yes or not, as usual, CS has to still change nature, adapting itself to new needs, bending to the dynamics of time and an increasingly fading away "homeland defence". The issue of the approach of the NCS to the labour market, in any case, is taken almost for granted. When he presented the new law, the Head of the NCS Department said: *"CS certainly has its roots in the history and tradition of conscientious objection and unarmed homeland defence, but now this must be translated into today's activities to enable young people experimenting with the current slogans as communities, solidarity, but also social and economic growth. The growth for sure is based on experiences applied to the labour market"*.

But, until now, CS as a measure of YG in Liguria is still in the hands of the Regional Government. As we saw before, Civic Service in Liguria Region has always had a solid reputation: we can say that CS is really something good. If we look at its history, in this last eleven years (the regional law was approved in 2016) this policy has been lead strongly by the Regional Government (and in particular by the RCS office), but with a participatory approach. The organizations involved were only few dozen and they were strictly in touch with the RCS Office, not only about administrative procedures (accreditation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and so on) but also in a continuous dialogue, which provided for mutual recognition. The ethos and the effectiveness of this policy were the basis for a shared consideration that all the stakeholders were involved in a very good initiative.

The "goodness" of RCS seems to be one of the main discourses, at national level, as we saw before, but at local level too. Indeed, at the regional level, this strong positive identity seems to be reaffirmed and strengthened precisely through this mutual recognition.

RCS, as a matter of fact, is good for organizations, especially NGOs, voluntary organizations and third sector embodies, because they have the possibility to improve their own projects and activities with financial and human resources and new forms and possibility to disseminate their own values. At the same time they can strengthen their relationship with the Regional Government, that represents one of the principal donors, the leading public administration managing European Social Funds and it is the authority that can legislate in many areas of social policies. RCS is good for municipalities (or at least the municipalities that choose to be accredited), because they can improve their image towards discouraged young citizens and they can offer concrete possibilities for their inhabitants, such as projects related to cultural and artistic heritage that generally has no funds. And for sure RCS seems to be good for young people attended it: they can approach the

labour market in a protected, welcoming, inclusive environment (with a monthly fee over 400€), where they can improve their social capital and their awareness, and last, now, after the inclusion of the RCS as a measure of Youth Guarantee, it is good for Public Employment Agencies, because they can propose a successful path for NEETs, extending their activity to the third sector.

The Regional Civic Service (RCS) in Liguria has always been characterized by a strong orientation towards experimentations: over the years there were calls for foreigner and excluded youngster (until 2015 when foreign people could not attend National Civic Service) and for young people with criminal convictions in agreement with the Minister of Justice and other public stakeholder in charge with Juvenile Justice. On the other hand RCS in Liguria had supported NGOs (in many cases the same organizations involved in the other experimentations) in order to improve reflections and activities on peace, fair trade, active citizenship, etc. with High School students. Beginning 2016, when the Regional Government decided to include RCS as measure of YG (and not the NCS), the leading role of the Regional Office has been strengthened, and almost all the actors welcomed the new challenge.

The emerging narrative, shared by the stakeholders and reaffirmed by the Regional Office, is that is that RCS is an ecosystem marked by the diffusion of values of solidarity and sharing, tending towards the others, in a soft and welcoming context. The decision makers thought that if this initiative was good for young people with precise characteristics (as in latest regional calls) it would be even better for young people who are weak, confused, inactive as NEETs. And this is especially true in a socio-economic context such as GFR where labour market is scarce and firms are not very dynamic. For decision makers today's NEETs would not be able to go straight to a firm: they are too fragile. It is better to insert them in a context such as the third sector or of the public administration, where they can be welcomed and where tutors can turn a blind eye to their faults. In this perspective RCS is the better policy and the goodness of RCS is confirmed by the fact that the organizations involved are generally used to dealing with weak people and therefore their action will be supported by a natural attitude. Not only: the relationship of trust established between the Region and the organizations, would have allowed a strong control on the initiative and the almost certainty of its success.

However the reality emerged from the interviews, especially in those concerning the tutors and street level managers, is not always in line with the wishes of the experts and the decision makers. In fact, many third sector organizations, even those that usually deal with disadvantaged people, have not always appreciated NEETs: in some cases they had to spend too much time for helping them, or trying to make them more punctual at work. They need to offer to the youngster other possibilities: one month in an organization, two months in another, trying to find the best experience, but with a huge organizational effort. The discourses present by the decision makers and the street level managers, in some cases, seem to be in contrast: the first ones try to underline the goodness of RCS experience as something that can save NEETs, the second ones emphasise the effort of managing fragile youngsters in a fragile context: translate into practice so big value it is not so easy.

At this point it will be very stimulating consider the Governance perspective, because one of the most interesting peculiarities of RCS is its own organization. As we said before RCS has an

interesting ecosystem based on a participatory approach among RCS bodies with a strong control of the Regional Government (and in particular of the Regional Office) that lead all the process through an intensive relationship.

The decision to insert RCS in YG has lead an important organizational change: before 2016 the organization accredited had to compete in order to get the resources to finance their projects: it already exist a sort of consortium joined some important bodies (CLESC), but in any case the administrative model envisaged a call for proposal and they had to answered with projects that had to be valuated and financed if they were positively judged. With YG, instead, the Regional Government promoted the realization of five Temporary Joint Ventures (one for any province, La Spezia, Savona and Imperia, one for the Metropolitan area of Genoa and another for an other area of Genoa province). This new organizational scheme foresees on the one hand the Regional Government, which establishes resources and promote the calls; on the other hand there are many organizations (NGO, voluntary associations, third sector organizations, municipalities etc.) that together (at local level) present project proposals, shared training and information, the second selection of candidates, as well as the possibility that a youngster can experience in more than one organization.

The information activity, the YG registration and the first selection of candidates have to be carried out not more by NGOs, voluntary associations, third sector organizations, municipalities, but by the Public Employment Agency.

This new organizational structure seems to bring significant consequences:

- 1) Bodies usually in competition now are sharing the design of projects, the second selection of candidates, the training and the monitoring procedure and all the citizenship skills validation process.
- 2) Some big traditional organizations leave the RCS and some other small new were included in the Temporary Joint Ventures, bringing about a significant change in the balance of roles among CS organizations. In particular the role of big third sector organization seems to be strengthened, more effective and capable to stay in touch with the Regional Government and capable to answer to the new challenges than voluntary association or small municipalities.
- 3) RCS start with an experimentation of skills validation in order to give a recognition of the experience. NGOs, third sector organizations and voluntary associations for the first time shared with the Regional Government and ALFA, a Regional bodies in charge with the Skill and Qualification Repertory, a skill certification process. Currently, the whole path has not been completed, and in fact they participated only to a skill recognition and validation process, without the final certification, but for sure it was something new, facilitating to strengthen the relationship with the Region.
- 4) Public Employment Agency are narrate as the weak ring of the chain: RCS organizations think that Public Employment Agency operators do not know enough about RCS initiative, because they used to work with enterprises and companies and not in a solidarity context, while regional officials would like to take advantage of the Youth Guarantee Fund in order to have the opportunity to have more resources, improving the Employment Services.

- 5) RCS and Public Employment Services are responsible of two different Regional Departments. Traditionally, in fact, RCS is linked with Social Policies or Youth Policies while Employment Services are linked with Labour Services. In Italy and in Liguria Region Social Policies and Labour Policies are usually separated and, as we said before, YG seems to be a very important opportunity to a new dialog, and, more in general, with a new holistic approach, lead by the Regional Government.

Finally, with the Life Course approach, it emerges clearly that young people attended RCS lived a satisfied experience in a context that they usually don't know before. This short practice, only six months, it is not always sufficient to acquire validable skills, but in many cases it makes possible to consider the third sector as a potential, alternative, temporary occasion of employment.

Some of the interviewees, despite having had a different educational qualification, keep on the RCS experience remaining in the same NGO or acquiring social capital useful to find a job. On the other hand some youngsters seem to consider CS has a good initiative while they are waiting for future choices or future possibilities. And it is something good to do while they are waiting for something else. So good, for sure because of the monthly fee, 430€, a fairly large amount for those who live in the family, which then can be allocated for entertainment or other training activities, but not enough for those who are looking for autonomy. As we said before, the RCS experience was judged positively for all the interviewees, even if they were very different in order of social and cultural capital, family income and real opportunities.

The question that most seems to be central concerns the fact that the RCS never seems to disappoint expectations: substantially RCS does not promise anything, but gives a sort of hospitality, doing good things, and a possibility of learning by doing and reflecting by doing and, for sure, it gives 430€ per month. RCS, but more in general, the CS proposal seems to be an important policy of social inclusion that provides some employability element more than a job oriented measure, as the other initiatives of YG. And social inclusion is effective because all the CS system is impregnate of a participatory and inclusive culture, attentive to needs of the most fragile and disadvantage people, or in other words, a culture of goodness.

In that sense seems to be very important the role of tutors: people who are alongside the youngsters, people who are working on that initiative mainly for ethical reason. The taking charge and tutorship mechanism is oiled by proper or honourable reason, with a horizontal perspective, and were any administrative problems are considered as exogenous.

The value representation is considered prevailing in comparison to the efficiency: CS is not a labour policy and people don't have job hopes and in many cases they accepted, after the RCS experience, the NCS year. The overall experience then becomes a year and a half, which is followed, sometimes, by a further possibility of remaining in the organization with other form of work contract. In the interviews does not emerges that CS is perceived as an initiative that takes time, waiting for future choices when there is no possibility of doing anything else.

Almost surprisingly, it is noted that, despite the RCS experience is considered positive by young adult attending it, they are still struggling to imagine a future: they seem to have little trust and avoid

making plans or having dreams. Even the interviewees who seemed more solid, both for family backgrounds and personal skills, hope to have a family, but their narration appears very weak, disheartened. In many cases, the fear, or the necessity to move away seems to be suspended, hovered.

Family home relationships seem almost always peaceful: parents do not seem almost invasive or worried about the condition of their children, they try to support them, and they keep them economically, as it is possible. The atmosphere is pervaded by a passive acceptance, but all in all serene, resigned.

The world of CS is a good world and the young Neets and the CS organizations seem to speak the same language, perhaps because they live together the same precariousness, the same dependence on external funds, they are in a unstable balance, but also filled by values and horizons of participation, of a desire of community, or a minimum to be in search for a different path not too competitive or aggressive.

#### 4. Emerging issues and cross-case issues

In order to better understand our cases, it is important to briefly resume some contextual information which derive from the analysis carried out in the previous WPs. Firstly, as reported in the Italian WP6 national document we can point out some differences concerning the educational governance and the labour market system in the Milan and Genoa Functional Regions. “In general, educational, social, labour policies in Milan invest more in the activation of young people and emphasize the choice of individuals, trying to build a quasi-market environment, turning to the addressees of policies the responsibility to choose the tools to use to improve their employability. On the other side, GFR had traditionally a more centralized design of social (labour, educational) policies, in which the main stakeholders defined the interventions that must be done and also the ways to do it and the subjects that can implement it. This difference implies a greater effort, in Lombardy and in MFR, on guidance, to make young adults aware of the opportunities that they can enjoy, could improve the self-awareness of young adults, but also give them more responsibilities. In addition, MFR, thanks to the greater vitality of supply, can favour a more proactive behaviour of young adults. The opposite situation occurred in the past in GFR, where the weakness of labour supply and the greater importance of skill market, joint with the greater distance from a quasi-market environment, can favour a more passive behaviour of young adults [...]. Generally, MFR is more innovative and competitive rather than GFR: this Functional Region is going to adopt policies closer to the MFR’s ones, but within a very different socio-economic context. Regional and Municipal government (now right wing as in MFR) seek to use models coming from Lombardy. However, Liguria used to have a strong consociational tradition. The main actors are Regional Government and supply system, while in MFR the leading role of the regional government is so strong that can afford the direct involvement of young adult and citizens through Dote Unica, strengthening also the participative construction of policies with the main stakeholders. In this frame Lombardy Region tries to match a market model with the institutional coordination model. A strong point in MFR and in the Lombardy region is that the involvement of young people seeks to make them an active part of a path where employment services appear to be able to provide adequate guidance and accompanying support for direct insertion working or through vocational training. In the GFR, employment services seem less effective and less able to engage young people coaching them in their paths. The current trends show a growing orientation towards market regulation, more advanced in MFR than in GFR. What is unclear is whether the partial failure of institutional coordination systems, which is perceived above all in GFR, is due to the too fast socioeconomic change or to the conservatism of the operators (implementing defensive strategies of their interests have favoured the mismatch). Certainly in MFR institutional coordination is much stronger even among the institutions (the Region and the Metropolitan City) and more participated by the other stakeholders, and the market is generally much more dynamic; then it is not easy to see if the best results are due to the structure and economic dynamics or goodness of the policies. Nevertheless, until 2015 we can speak of quasi-market policies versus “traditional public policies” (MFR vs GFR), but recent changes in politics (right government both in Liguria and in Lombardy Region) seem to suggest that the GFR strategic policy framework is going to the MFR approach” (Palumbo et. al 2017c, pp. 53-54). Moreover, the different skill ecologies of the FRs entail different implications of



the young adults. Indeed, in the Genoa FR “reproducing the national trend, [...] the skills formation is based on the skills demands from the labour market; this means that the training courses and the apprenticeships opportunities are defined by the professional skills requested by the local labour market and, consequently, they are developed in order to meet as much as possible such expressed needs. The local public actors are the ones steering the skills formation for disadvantaged young adults, providing skills formation courses aligned as close as possible with labour market sectors and occupations. The common assumption seems to be that the way to smooth the transition from education to the labour market is by providing work placement learning opportunities, by supplying ready-to-use skills targeted to the regional labour market needs. However, the training supply doesn’t always meet the actual needs of young adult and the skill formation system provides skills not always in line with the labour market’s needs. This refers to the well-known mismatch between educational and employment systems, requiring to consider the actual local young adults’ needs” (Palumbo et al., 2017c, p. 32). On the contrary, young adults in the Milan FR seem to be generally favoured by the features of the local skill ecology, considering that it is characterized by “a good integration between public and private bodies, a wide and high quality training offer, an interesting and effective policy experimentation as Dote Unica, a lower rate of NEET” (Palumbo et al. 2017c, p. 51). Furthermore, the macro analysis of the living conditions of the young adults confirms the distance between the two analyses contexts, as “in general living conditions in Lombardy are better, and this evaluation emerges both from objective data, both from perceptions of citizens. We must consider that Liguria is the region with the oldest population, as said heavily affected by economic and demographic crisis, caused serious disturbance in educational and social sectors. Less young people in an ageing context with fewer opportunities and a greater part of population at risk of social exclusion contribute also to lower levels of subjective wellbeing and lower expectations for the future” (Palumbo et al., 2017b, p. 6).

This general frames obviously affect both the “structures of possibilities” and the choices of the young adults in the contexts, and when it comes to their relation with the measures analysed as case studies, we have to take into consideration a significant difference in terms of vulnerability between the groups of interviewed youths in our FRs. In fact, although they both face difficulties in the labour market integration, it is important to further highlight that “none of the interviewed Milanese young adults have completed the upper secondary school and most of them had experiences of long-term unemployment, in addition to a general condition of limited economic and cultural resources. On the contrary, the Genoese young adults achieved higher levels of education (mostly university degree) but they experienced a lot of short-term and/or unstable jobs, living the precariousness of the local labour market (which is much less dynamic if compared to the one of the Milan Functional Region). This condition often leads them to perform unqualified jobs, despite their high educational qualification. Thus, in the case of the Milanese young adults it is proper to consider a “structural vulnerability”, while for the Genoese young adults the concept of vulnerability applies especially to their professional profiles” (Palumbo et al, 2017b, p. 4). Accordingly, we can recap our case studies as a measure targeted to weak profiles in a “strong” context (Milan) and a measure for “strong” profiles in a weak context (Genoa). Both the measures worked well in terms of task achieving, and this is proved, for instance by their very low dropout rates.

In terms of policy-making approach, both our cases integrate within the general scheme of Youth Guarantee, then they interact with a top-down perspective. Nevertheless, both the NEETwork project and the Civic Service fold in also bottom-up elements. Specifically, the NEETwork project has unfolded starting from the impulse of a private foundation which operated in a subsidiary function with the local policies, overcoming in this way a lack of the traditional scheme of Youth Guarantee in terms of most vulnerable target engagement, thus compensating the potential “side-effect” of further exclusion of the weakest profiles of Youth Guarantee. In turn, Civic Service has modified its well-established governance network according to a “bottom-up” need of the ONG participating to its network, namely the rationalization of their same pattern of collaboration through the creation of a unique ATS. By the ATS the ONG bodies has shared a knowledge about their “new” target (deriving from Youth Guarantee) and, in addition, they have stopped competing each other for the funding of the Civic Service projects. Furthermore, the Civic Service in Genoa FR and, more generally, the Liguria Region Youth Guarantee scheme have given a crucial role to local Public Employment Agencies, especially in the implementation phase, and this represents a chance for these Services in terms of acquisition of a proper expertise in matching and placing a young target in the local labour market (thus tackling one aspect of “traditional” weakness of the Public Employment Services, which are rather ineffective in terms of actual market integration of their users).

As already introduced, both our cases design and implementation have been run through the collaboration of public and private institutional actors, but in the case of NEETwork this is consistent with a well-established pattern of participation of the stakeholder involved in the LLL field, with the new addition of the Third Sector organizations.

Our cases are contrasting also in terms of activation of their addresses, at least in the engagement phase. Consistently with the subsidiary approach widespread in its context, NEETwork provided in fact the direct engagement of its addresses, who have been directly contacted by the Private Employment Agencies, while the enrolling in the Civic Service required an higher level of initial activation, since the measure was integrated within the Youth Guarantee catalogue. This difference looks coherent with specific features of both cases targets and their different typologies of vulnerability, as the NEETwork one is particularly disengaged from local institutions, while the Civic Service one tends to be more experienced in interacting with the institutions of the LLL field.

There’s a common strategy shared by the policy-makers of both our cases, namely the choice of contextualizing their traineeships in third sector organizations, as they are deemed to be a proper environment for a gradual and “protected” approach to work. This has fitted with the actual needs of at least part of the NEETwork addresses, who acknowledge their lack of soft skills, but for the Civic Service case the weak focus on employability in favour of soft and citizenship skills learning was a critical aspect, which potentially might have led to the side-effect of modifying the trust of its addresses about the effectiveness of the LLL policies. Furthermore, on a more general level of aims both the cases share the task of reintegration of vulnerable youths (see early school leavers, drop outs, people excluded by the selection of the National Civic Service and so on), following (re)activation strategies which, however, gives limited guarantees in terms of short/mid-term employability and, above all, tends to transfer the responsibility for the further planning to

individuals who, regardless of the different extent of potential customization in the different FRs, have also to face with the supply in the LLL system, which does not necessarily correspond to their needs and aspirations.

Interweaving again with the different vulnerabilities of the cases targets, the analysed measures have entailed different effects on their addressee's life courses. All the NEETwork young interviewees have in fact expressed the will (or in some cases even a more structured plan) for returning in education (mostly by enrolling the adult evening schools). Thus, during their traineeship, they have taken the decision to tackle their main lack (both at actual and symbolical level), which they perceive as the primary reason of their disadvantage on the market. Then we can observe the effectiveness of NEETwork in the mid-long term (re)activation of its addressees, which might connect to a "new" trust in their ability to cope with request of the educational system and may somehow compensate their difficulty in the future planning. Indeed, as reported in the WP5 Italian national report "even though high degrees of education do not necessarily guarantee good performances on the labour market (as the case of the Genoese youths clearly shows), the qualification lack shortens very strongly the range of achievable opportunities, even in the market of low-skilled jobs. Furthermore, this condition affects not only the coping tactics applied by the young adults in the present, but it also shapes their future planning, which gets even more blurred in absence of a formal qualification to lean on" (Palumbo et al. 2017b, p. 4).

Instead, the interviewed Civic Service addressees joined the project owning higher levels of qualification and more structured life plans. "the Genoese young adults are on the one hand very aware of their actual skills (acquired both in formal and informal educational contexts), while on the other hand they complain for the low competitive value of their university degrees on the labour market. Nevertheless, they tend to rely on their high-educated and high skilled profiles to define their life projects" (Palumbo et al. 2017b, p. 55). Then Civic Service has been considered particularly useful by those who had greater availability of economic, social and cultural capital, since they have been able to optimize their previous experiences and personal resources, "exploiting" the Civic Service paths as a "bridge" to more stable professional relations. This latter aspect is worth pointing out, as it might be considered as a unintended effect of the general Italian Youth Guarantee scheme, which as diverse experts told us, has been frequently "exploited" by the already competitive profiles in order to strengthen their employability through the employment incentives, to the detriment of the "actual" NEETs who consequently suffered a further exclusion.

The less qualified addressees of Civic Service have in turn often lived their traineeships as a transitory experience, a "cooling out" strategy for their expectations, as a period in which they have been able to postpone the problem of future planning. At the same time, the Civic Service has represented a chance for acquiring a deeper acknowledgement of their aspirations and potentialities, strengthening their soft skills and broadening their networks toward a context, the third sector actors, which was formerly nearly stranger to them.

Concluding, the Third Sector organizations confirmed to be an adequate environment for the most vulnerable profiles in terms of market integration and available resources. Then measures like our cases actually improve the potential employability of their addressees, yet not providing real integration on the market. As a consequence, once they have positively concluded their paths, the

addressees with greater resources are advantaged in job seeking, while the most vulnerable ones threaten to experience further exclusion. Thus, the taking over of the addresses should also provide a follow-up, supporting the paths toward market integration, otherwise further inequalities may be reproduced.

On the other side, we should also wonder until what extent the tailorisation of measures might entail distortions, as well-fitting measures according the youths' specific needs might not necessarily improve their employability. Hence, an effective guidance should mediate between the customization of the LLL paths and the changes of subjective attitudes and behaviours needed for an actual market integration, because a good match requires a complex triangulation among market opportunities, implementers' ability and youths' awareness.

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**Work Package 7**  
**Regional/local Case Studies**  
**Portugal National Report**

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## 1. Executive Summary

This national briefing paper presents the analysis of the two case studies chosen for Portugal: Professional Courses, in Vale do Ave (North), and Adult Education and Training Courses from the Institute of Employment and Professional Training, in Alentejo Litoral (South).

We used a multi-level and multi-method analysis methodology. This analysis focuses on the intersections of the three theoretical approaches used in which the YOUNG\_ADULLLT project is grounded: Cultural Political Economy (CPE), Life Course Research (LCR) and Governance (GOV). It also focuses at different levels: transnational, national, regional, local, organizational, interactive and individual. The data that informs this analysis was collected for WP3, WP4, WP5 and WP6. The data collected are both qualitative and quantitative, resulting namely from interviews, statistical document analysis, and the analysis of lifelong learning policies: Labour Market policies (LMP), Educational policies (EDP) and Social and Youth policies (SYP).

The main objective of the analysis presented here is to explore policies and programmes at the regional and local levels, identifying policy-making and implementation networks that include actors and institutions involved in lifelong learning policies directed to young adults. Also, we try to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the policies from each case study, by presenting best practices and failures from these policies and projects. The main focus of this analysis is to understand how the selected case studies articulate with education, labour and other social realms, and how this impacts young adults' life courses.

In a national context of high rates of youth unemployment and lack of adequacy of young adults' qualifications to the labour market, both case studies presented in this paper focus on measures that were designed to fight the current socio-economic and educational situation. They are both national policies, but each of them gets a particular emphasis on each functional region, according to each region's characteristics. Both policies translate into different types of education and training courses, based on the academic qualification of the candidates, and are carried out based on the training references provided by the ANQEP (National Agency for the Qualification and Professional Education).

Professional courses introduced innovation in 1989, when professional schools were created. These schools were private, which allowed the ending of the monolithic model of the public school, and enabled the existence of a new, more dynamic, practice- and labour-market- oriented educational offer. In 2014, the offer of professional courses was extended to public secondary schools, widening the offer both geographically and in terms of the professional areas covered. Professional courses contribute to an increase in young adults' motivation and professional and personal fulfilment, qualifying them for

concrete employment needs. They offer double certification, granting students both academic and professional skills, and enabling them to either work in their specialisation area or pursue further studies in Higher Education. These courses have a special connection to the labour contexts and special relationships with regional institutions and companies. Also, they encompass a pedagogic model that is easily adapted to the young adults' educational paths, thus helping to combat dropout and failure rates.

Professional courses are part of the vocational offer and this may be one of the keys for their success, as young adults get a professional qualification, with high rates of employability, according to their actual interests, abilities and skills, resulting in more motivated students. However, vocational education and training and, more specifically, professional courses, still carry a legacy related to prejudice and misconception, especially in what regards young people and young adults. There are still recurrent informal discourses mentioning that these educational pathways are the resources for students that don't succeed in regular school or have lower academic skills. This leads to a bias and hides the real purpose of professional courses, which is the qualification of young adults with the objective of lowering unemployment rates and providing equal opportunities in diverse contexts.

Adult education and training courses from the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) are related to an educational policy for adult education and training (EFA) that was established in 2000. Adult education and training courses are aimed at young adults with low or inadequate school qualifications who want to increase their level of professional qualification. This educational policy intends to raise the levels of educational and professional qualification of young adults and, consequently, to increase their employability rates. These are also courses with double certification, granting both academic and professional qualifications. Adult education and training courses aim breaking away from previous forms of adult education provision, based mainly in formal second-chance education aimed at providing school certification, ranging from the 1st cycle of basic education (4th year of schooling) to secondary education (12th year of schooling), and corresponding to a professional certification at qualification levels 1, 2, 3 or 4.

The Alentejo Litoral case study is focused on the adult education and training courses provided by the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP), which is a national institution with regional delegations. Its mission is to promote the creation and the quality of employment and to prevent unemployment through the implementation of active employment policies, including vocational training. Attending to this particular responsibility, this report argues that EFA courses delivered by the IEFP local unit redesigns the policy's target-group, specifically aiming at those in unemployment situation.

## 2. CS\_PT\_1 – Professional Courses - Vale do Ave

### 2.1. Introduction

#### *Short account of the case study*

The Vale do Ave case study for WP7 focuses on Professional Courses (*Cursos Profissionais*). Professional courses are high-school level courses aimed at young people/adults aged above 15 that have completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Unlike regular courses, professional courses are pretty much labour market oriented, both in what concerns their offer and their curricular approach. Taking into account the students' personal profile, the learning carried out in these courses enhances the development of skills for the exercise of a job, in articulation with the local business sector. Besides, after completing a professional course, students are able to access Higher Education.

Professional schools were created, in Portugal, in 1989. Professional courses were exclusive to private professional schools until 2004, when the Portuguese Ministry of Education extended this model of education and training to public high schools, through the law Despacho n.º 14 758/2004. Today, professional courses benefit from a strong commitment of the Portuguese Government to young adults' certification, both educational and professional. These courses allow training in school, practical training in the work context, the involvement of enterprises in practical training and in supporting the transition of young adults to the labour market. In 2014 there was the need of broadening professional courses and the dual certification of young adults, in order to match the real professional needs of the different contexts and, at the same time, to improve youth employment rates. The law Decreto-Lei n.º 92/2014, which establishes the legal regime of private and public professional schools, recognizes the need to significantly improve the quality of the offer in vocational courses at secondary level, namely through the articulation between different stakeholders, like companies.

This educational offer addresses problems that are recognised not only at the national and regional levels but also at a European level. In the wake of the economic crisis that began in 2008 and which affected Europe severely in 2011, we can say that the educational policies that support professional courses are adequate to the current socio-economic context. A street level professional that was interviewed for WP5 mentioned the German educational model, and how it relies on professional courses for developing a specialised workforce, reinforcing the idea that it is an example to follow given all the technical development and advance that they represent today. One of the managers interviewed for WP5 argues that professional courses should make available an educational offer before secondary school (beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade). For this manager, professional courses still need more measures and an earlier intervention in order to become an educational offer equivalent to regular courses, as many students around 11/12 years old already reveal more aptitude for practical training than regular academic education.

In national terms, and in the last years, educational policies have emphasised professional courses. The widening of the professional courses' offer in the country is a measure for combating early school dropout, failure, and more broadly, unemployment, NEET and emigration. There has been a change of paradigm as, a few decades ago, professional courses were envisioned as a second choice and today the latest policies are bringing professional courses to the forefront, together with regular scientific/humanistic courses.

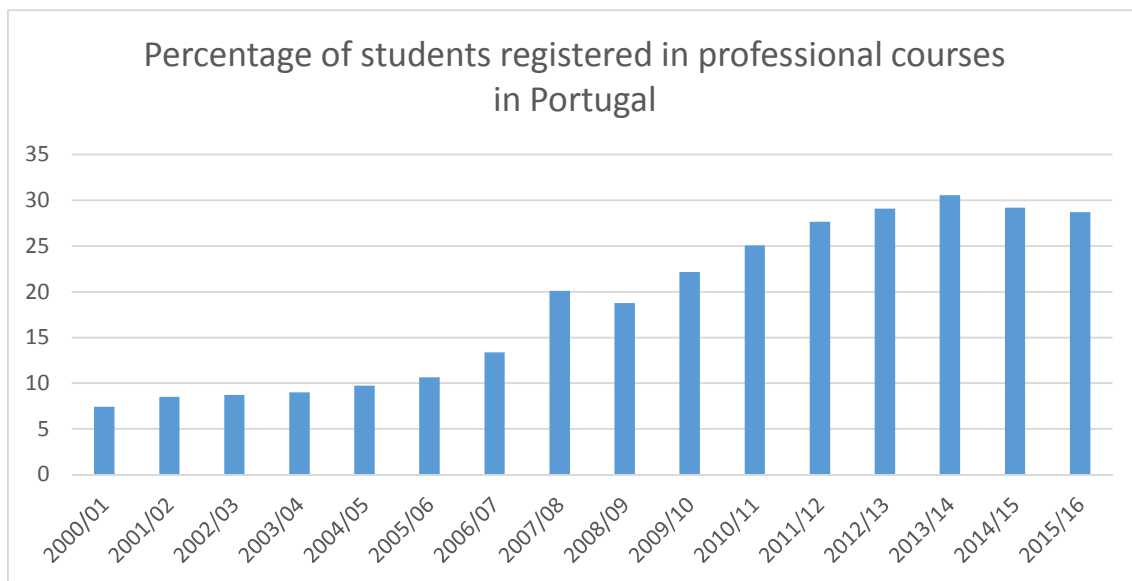
On Table 1, we can see how many students were enrolled in professional courses in Portugal (NUTS I), in the North (NUTS II) and in the Vale do Ave region (NUTS III), between 2011 and 2016.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Portugal (NUTS I)	110462	113749	115885	117699	1144848	112395
Norte (NUTS II)	41812	43333	43667	43586	42316	41242
Vale do Ave (NUTS III)	5488	5728	5781	5993	5924	5858

**Table 1:** Number of students in professional courses in Portugal, Norte and Vale do Ave, between the years 2011 and 2016.

Source: PORDATA

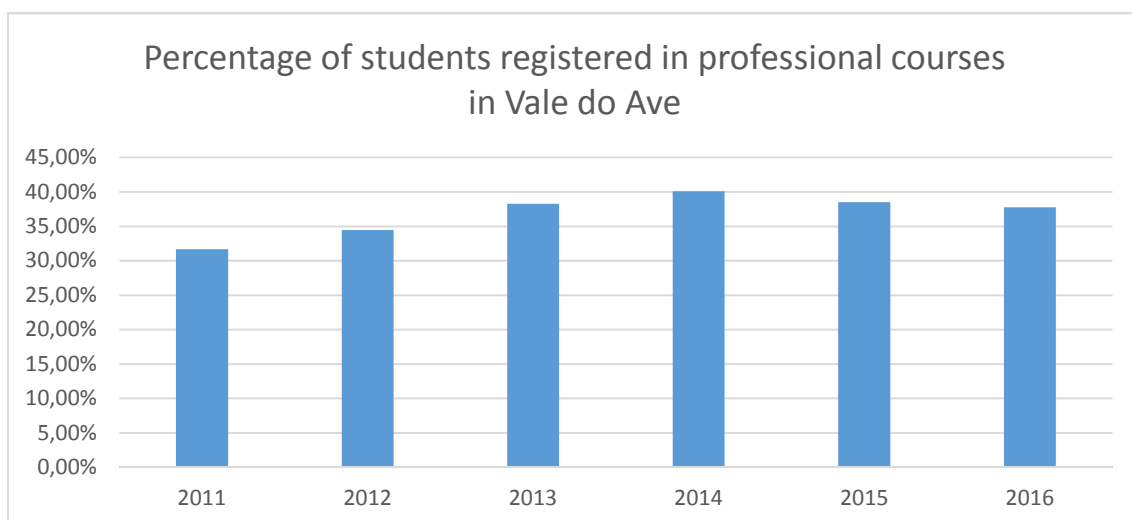
As we can also see in Graph 1 below, the data show that, in Portugal, professional courses started having more students from 2009/2010. We can notice a tendency for increase between 2000 and 2016: in 2000/01, only 7,4% of the total of students enrolled in secondary education were in professional courses; in 2015/16 that figure had increased to 28,71% and, in 2013/2014, it reached 30,55%.



**Graph 1:** Percentage of students in professional courses in Portugal, between the school years 2000/01 and 2015/16.

Source: DGEEC- Education and Science Statistics from the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science

If we take a closer look at the Vale do Ave, in graph 2 we can see the percentage of students in professional courses in this region, between 2011 and 2016. The data show that the average percentage of professional courses students in Vale do Ave is higher than the national average. As we saw in the previous graph (**Graph 1**), the higher percentage of students in professional courses in national level was around 30% and, as seen on Graph 2, in Vale do Ave that represents the lower percentage registered, in 2011. In this region, the percentage of students enrolled in professional courses is between 30% and 40%.



**Graph 2:** Percentage of students in professional courses in Vale do Ave, between the years 2011 and 2016.

Source: PORDATA

In Vale do Ave, professional courses are offered both by public high schools and by many private professional schools. The general offer is currently grounded on the SANQ report results, as the institutions that are responsible for it in the Vale do Ave region, like CIM AVE and ADRAVE, make an exhaustive mapping of the education and training needs, and the matching with the labour market. The companies also play a very important role in what concerns the professional courses, once they dictate the labour market offer. It depends on the companies' needs which professional courses' areas are more likely to be available, and, at the same time, these companies provide professional training and jobs for the young adults who attend those courses. Vale do Ave is a quite industrialized region, specialised in textile, agriculture and food, and metallurgy and metalworking, and professional courses are oriented towards these regional needs.

In this region, there is a case that stands out, that of a professional school that has a particularly close relationship with companies. This school responds to the needs of the region's companies for qualified young adults through the professional courses they provide. The students do their professional training in a dynamic partnership between the school and the companies, as they are offered internships and jobs at the end of their professional qualification. This is understood as a win-win situation, both for the schools that are able to offer a professional training that has high rates of employability in the region, and for the companies, who receive qualified young adults, specialised in their field of work, that are also trained by them. This particular school, for example, is able to open courses and classes financed by the companies themselves when public financial support is not available or when financing doesn't allow the school to open more classes.

According to the managers interviewed for WP6, the main challenges that the Vale do Ave region faces today concerning young adults, are mostly related to the lack and/or inadequacy of qualifications. This problem is, in part, a consequence of the dropout and failure rates in the region and gets translated into unemployment, NEET and emigration. This is not just a problem of Vale do Ave; it is also a national challenge, but this specific region has two features that stand out when compared to the rest of the country. Vale do Ave is a rather young and industrialised region. The industry and the companies are the engine of the economic development of the region and the young population is the potential working force that will generate that development. Being a region so directed to technical work, professional courses play a significant role in the qualification of the region's young adults. In addition, for the young adults, in a region and in a country with high rates of youth unemployment, this is a particularly interesting situation. A professional course offers young adults a professional qualification with a high probability of employment, and it also makes it possible for them to stay in the region. Currently, in Vale do Ave, many young adults are quitting regular school and switching to professional courses, given the success rates they have in the region.

The young adults that were interviewed for WP5 mentioned they were happy about their decision of enrolling in a professional course. They mention that the more practical component of these courses and the early contact with the labour market, through the internships in the companies, are an added value in this educational offer. Furthermore, the high rates of employability and the opportunity to remain with the companies they get their training in, are an advantage and a key factor in their life's decisions. In spite of this, professional courses still suffer from prejudice and misconception from society in general, and this needs a special attention from the educational policies. Today, these courses are still seen as second choice education, aimed for young people with inadequate skills for regular education. The latest policy regulations already display an effort to make regular and professional courses more equivalent, but according to the young adults, the managers, the street level professionals and the experts interviewed, there is still more work to be done.

## 2.2. Telling the story of the case study

### *Reasoning on correspondences*

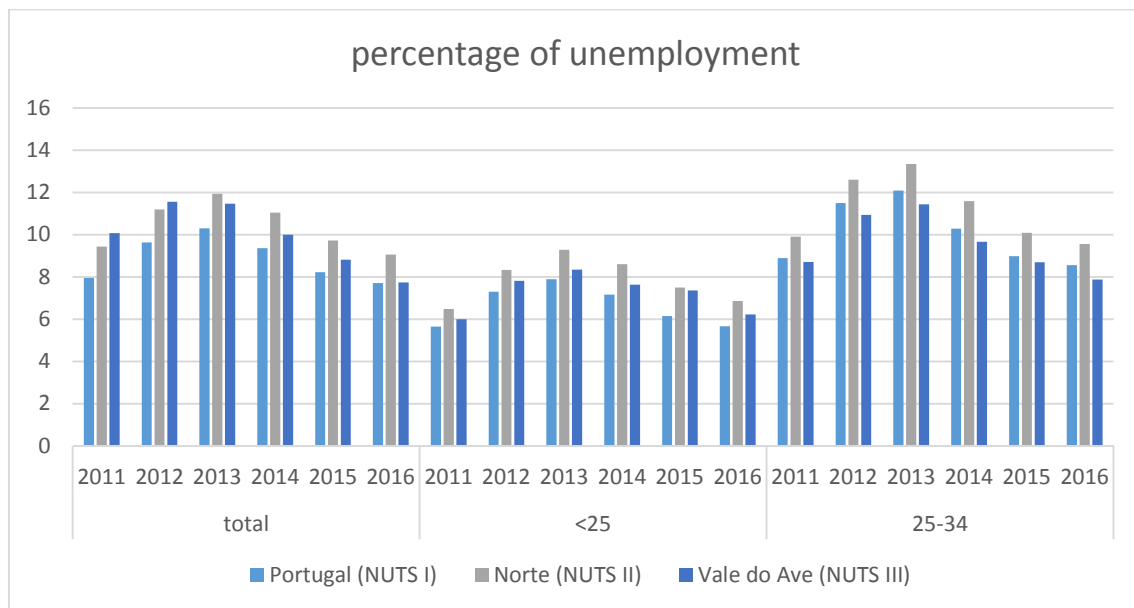
Professional courses are, according to the data collected, a consensual measure in the Vale do Ave functional region, in the sense that the CPE is coherent with the LCR. The main objective of this policy is employability, that is, to qualify young adults to make them capable of getting integrated in the labour market.

*When speaking about the Intermunicipal Community of Vale do Ave, we are talking about a group of municipalities that were plagued by the crisis, particularly within the textile industry. Additionally, illiteracy still exists, and it is something that embarrasses us. Despite the proclaimed equality of rights, the rate of illiteracy and secondary education attainment of women is still high. Also, the rate of students that do not complete secondary education is very high; so, with no certification, these people will increase the youth NEET's (neither in education, employment or training) rate. Therefore, we must invest in adult education with double certification - not only the academic but also professional - that is, to capacitate them for entry into the labour market (E\_PT\_VdA\_1).*

That is why proximity relationships are so important and the articulation between companies and professional courses works in a very assertive way. The fact that there are professional schools implanted in the core of the Vale do Ave industry and that they have partnerships with the companies gives a sense of immediacy that allows not only to have the institutions nearby but also to have the human resources necessary for the jobs, translating this into socio-economic development for the region. The success of the professional courses in Vale do Ave may rely on some factors. First, the synergies and the close work between the actors and institutions involved in this measure. Second, the large potential that the region has, as it is highly industrialised and provides many employment opportunities. Professional courses allow young adults to have an early contact with the labour market, which may be highly motivating, and have high rates of



employability in the region, which is very attractive in the national socio-economic context of high rates of young unemployment and emigration. As we can see in graph 3, data shows us that between 2011 and 2016, in Portugal, unemployment rates increased between 2011 and 2013, and decreased from 2014 until 2016. The North region (NUTS II) has higher rates of unemployment when compared to Portugal (NUTS I) and Vale do Ave (NUTS III). Also, over the time, the Vale do Ave region shows the lower rates of unemployment, especially among young adults and when compared to Portugal and the North.



**Graph 3:** Unemployment rates for NUTS I, II and II, total and young adults, between the years of 2011 and 2016.

Source: PORDATA

Actually, at the GOV level, professional courses in Vale do Ave benefit from private funding from companies, whenever public funding is not enough to respond to the regional needs of qualification. The companies that are associated with the private professional school that we interviewed, fund new courses or new classes in existent courses when there is a manifest interest in having specifically qualified employers. The companies are part of the corporate bodies and the advisory board of the school, and everything the school does has to be validated by the associates. Because the school has a solid connection to the companies, they are able to get funding for professional courses that have a very high demand for candidates. If this professional school didn't have this close relation with companies and they didn't finance courses, the school would have to return these students to the public school, to any other course, under the risk of frustrating young adults' expectations and their vocational guidance.

In terms of conflicts, all experts interviewed, both managers and steel level professionals, mentioned that there isn't much conflict among the actors and institutions from the Vale do Ave region and when it exists, it is easily solved. There are discussions

that help overcome conflicts and reach decisions that benefit all partners' interests. It is in the best interest of all partners involved to respond to the region's needs, both in quantity and in diversity.

*There is no point in having different interests, it's in everyone's best interest to be in the market, that each one does what they know best according to each one's quality and skills, and the answers should be those that the municipality and the region need, both in quantity and in diversity. To arrive at this final proposal, obviously, there is discussion, I would not say conflict. The result is positive; if this discussion did not take place, we would possibly be here running over each other and maybe we could not do a job with the quality and assertiveness with which we do (E\_PT\_VdA\_6).*

The different actors seem to share the same CPE orientation regarding professional courses. We believe that this is mainly due to the fact that the policy has a vertical, top-down, approach, which means that it has national guidelines that are applied regional and locally. The interviewed managers mentioned that the conflicts or disagreements that occur are mainly due to the lack of correspondence between the interests of the actors and institutions involved in the process, however these tensions are easily solved and overcome.

From the CPE perspective, in Vale do Ave, professional courses don't differ or diverge from the transnational and national levels, responding to the same objectives and target population. The measure allows implementers to fit professional courses to the needs felt in Vale do Ave. This possibility for adjustments happens through the elaboration and implementation of the SANQ report, as this instrument is the one that allows adjusting the measure to the local and regional realities. The managers interviewed say that it is fundamental to listen to the productive sectors, meaning the companies, and get to know what they define as a priority. Companies are the wealth source of the region and they rely on human resources. It's not enough to have good ideas, good products or state-of-the-art equipment; the basis of the companies' productivity is human resources, who must be specialised and qualified for the jobs. This qualification is all about competences, not only in technical terms, but also competences for mobility, availability, languages, competitiveness... for the 4.0 industry that is currently settled. The end result of this work is regional social and economic development. And, for this result to be achieved, the work that is done in schools, through professional courses, must give a response to the needs, the reality and the resources of the region. If the school doesn't respond to the context, the result should be the opposite: unemployment. The school's work must also take into account the concertation with international policies because it is also important to train people for mobility and to be recognized at the level of competences both nationally and abroad, at least in the European Union. It is not only important to define the competences, the training units, the curriculum, but also this training needs to be credited and accredited so that there is this permeability between countries and the recognition of the qualifications obtained.

According to the managers and young adults interviewed, there is still a very strong preconception and bias concerning professional courses from families, friends and even

public schools. Public school teachers still think that professional schools don't enable students to pursue further studies or to be successful in professional terms. This often contradicts the student's vocational orientation, creates false expectations in some students and low expectations in other students who might even go to regular school but are soon segmented and oriented to professional courses because of their low academic achievement. This bias may be the main responsible for creating some generalised distrust regarding professional education.

### *Reasoning on implementation*

The implementation of the educational policies related to our case study, professional courses, lays mostly in the interaction between the actors involved in this policy. As we have previously mentioned, in Portugal, educational policies such as professional courses are centralised and national, but their implementation may present some nuances in the different regions. In Vale do Ave, there is a network that involves different actors and institutions who work very closely together in the development of the region.

The implementation of the professional courses is mainly a responsibility of the schools and educational agents, such as private professional schools and public secondary schools. The professional courses offer responds to the results of the SANQ report, that is elaborated by some of the institutions of the region, who work together to identify the qualification needs of the region and to match the education and training offer with the labour market.

*This work is done based on a diagnosis of needs, which is then confronted with the diagnosis of CIM Ave. Our advantage is the strength that our education and training network has already acquired and the prestige acquired with the Ministry of Education, which often allows us to counter some guidelines that come from the diagnoses made by the IEFP, CIM Ave, and that we locally managed to advance with training in areas that were not considered as priorities in diagnoses, but which are validated by enterprises. It makes perfect sense for us to work this way (E\_PT\_VdA\_6).*

The institutions involved in the construction of this report are CIM Ave, ADRAVE, IEFP, schools, companies, local authorities..., all the institutions and actors that are somehow connected to the education and labour market fields and, more specifically, to the professional courses in the region.

Professional courses enable young adults to overcome some of the challenges they face nowadays in the region, and Vale do Ave has higher frequency rates in professional courses than the national average. The challenges most mentioned by the managers interviewed are linked to employability, and professional courses have proved to be a strong contribution for the improvement of employability in the region. The managers of the region mentioned that young adults' qualification is a great challenge, usually because they lack of have inadequate qualifications.

*The current situation of the labour market, with this extreme destruction of work relationships and even the growth of structural unemployment, which will certainly continue to increase, and other changes that are occurring put very complicated challenges to initial training systems (E\_PT\_VdA\_4).*

The outcomes of professional courses are becoming visible once, as mentioned by the IEFPP member, Vale do Ave is one of the regions on the North where unemployment is decreasing and where net employment has been growing over the last years. Vale do Ave is a highly industrialised region and companies are the major employers. This means that it is a region where young adults have the chance to occupy those job vacancies, and they are also able to stay in the region. Another challenge that young adults face today is emigration, and professional courses enable them to stay in the region after completing the course.

*Training employees is what enterprises need. As stated by the enterprises, the great source of wealth is human resources. It is not useful to have a very good sales agenda or high-tech equipment if you do not have the skilled human resources ready to work. This preparation is not only about technical skills, but it also has to do with the other skills. Nowadays, the enterprises need people trained for mobility, for availability, and language skills (E\_PT\_VdA\_6).*

Professional courses are double certification courses and this grants these courses high rates of employability and, hopefully, fulfilment. Concerning the aspect of fulfilment, the region (through a network of psychologists in the region and the councillors in the private professional schools) provides, according to the managers interviewed, vocational counselling, guidance and help to young adults to choose their educational pathways, according to their particular interests, abilities and skills.

*I think that to go in the line of professional courses turns out to be an added value for the whole business fabric and looking at the examples of the countries out there, it is a bit this policy that is followed, namely by Germany. I believe that is an example to follow, likewise all the technical development that Germany has undergone and which has made it possible for enterprises to have skilled labour (E\_PT\_VdA\_7).*

The managers interviewed mentioned that the work between the different actors and institutions of the region, concerning professional courses, takes place without major conflicts, and that may be the answer for the fact that the articulation works so well in Vale do Ave. Some of the tensions and discussions that arise during their work are informal, have easy resolution and are mostly related to individual interests that each partner wants to get attended.

The fact that the expansion of professional courses to secondary public schools accompanied the expansion of mandatory education to 12 years (or 18 years old), allowed young adults to also expand their education and professional opportunities and to lower school dropout and failure rates. Many of the young adults that were interviewed had experience in a regular scientific/humanistic course in secondary education before

going to a professional course. It is noteworthy that they all refer that switching to a professional course was the best decision they made and are happy about their choice.

Concerning implementation, one street level professional who works in a private professional school mentioned, when interviewed, that professional courses still aren't taken as seriously as they should in public secondary schools, although they integrate these courses since 2014. This professional mentions that public schools lack the connection to the companies and that teachers aren't specialised in the areas they teach. The strong connection that companies have with this type of education is fundamental and it does not exist in public schools. In professional schools, teachers have specialized vocational training and this is not always the case in public schools. In his opinion, public schools are compelled to have vocational education, which is seen as second choice education and, this way, professional courses do not receive the attention they deserve. In spite of this, it should also be taken into account that the interviewee indicates that there are also good examples of work with professional courses in public schools.

In spite of all above, it is yet hard to evaluate the impact of this measure, as the effects of education are not immediate, *maybe in three or four years, or maybe a bit later* (E\_PT\_VdA\_1), even though the field professionals believe it helps young adults *by showing them alternatives, and giving them instruments* (E\_PT\_VdA\_5), and *enabling them with decision-making skills* (E\_PT\_VdA\_1). The experts understand that *it is not only about politics, it is also about a whole set of economic, social, and familiar conditions* that influence young adults' life trajectories (E\_PT\_VdA\_1).

### *Reasoning on originalities*

The Vale do Ave region, located in the North of the country, is a very industrialised and young region. As such, professional courses stand out as they offer young adults professional paths integrated in the region. This is a very significant issue in Vale do Ave. This policy enables the region's young adults to stay in the region, to study and work, mitigating current national problems: unemployment and emigration. This also generates an economic increment within the region, as the investment in young adults' qualifications has a return once they become the working force of the region.

Although in Vale do Ave professional courses have had a significant relevance over the last years, this was not so visible in the rest of the country. Professional courses have had a significant growth since 2014, when the national educational policies enlarged the offer related to the professional courses in the country. Private professional schools exist in Portugal since 1989, but since 2014 professional courses became part of the secondary educational offer in public schools. This widened the offer, both in terms of professional qualification offer and geographical coverage. This geographical factor is relevant when we talk about a region like Vale do Ave. As we had the opportunity to mention before, Vale do Ave encompasses much heterogeneity among its municipalities and accessibilities, especially in the more rural part of the region, are not as good as in the more urban and industrialised part. From the point on when professional courses became part of the public educational offer, this democratised and widened opportunities

for more young people to have access to professional qualifications and, consequently, a qualified job.

*People will find themselves dealing with very different things in the future from the point of view of work, employment, and their lives. Therefore, the whole question of the production of qualifications in terms of initial training has to be rethought not only in the light of the region and the country, but in the light of this new reality that is quite global and that will affect everything and everyone (E\_PT\_VdA\_4).*

Another aspect concerning originalities is the system that allows the matching between the education and training offer and the professional needs of the region. This is also done through a national policy but the implementation is, once again, regional. The system is the SANQ report and its implementation happens within the Vale do Ave region through the coordination of the Intermunicipal Community (CIM AVE) and in articulation between the several actors, institutions and stakeholders of the region. The regional institutions interviewed were IEFP (a national institution with regional delegation), ADRAVE and CIM AVE, who also participate in the SANQ report, along with other institutions such as local authorities, schools and companies. According to the interviewees, this articulation between the several actors and institutions works very well in Vale do Ave. There are working networks and a great communication flow and this allows all the people involved to know each other and the region very well. This is the result of a joint, cooperative work between public and private institutions, both regional and national.

Originalities also lay in funding in what concerns professional courses in Vale do Ave. In a private professional school, we found a unique way of articulation between education and training and labour market, as this school integrates in its board some of the region's companies. The end result is a school with associated companies, who hold shares and responsibilities in the school.

*A company became available to finance an entire action, a three-year course. This is unprecedented at the country level, there is no example, we made this proposal to the Ministry of Education, which granted the possibility of opening this action and the group is operating with its own funding. This means that there are three years of full training, all student allowances, all trainers, all the technical material that is required for training, and in these areas equipment is required, study visits, scholarships for on-the-job training and more, and these students have it all because there is a company that is replacing the government in funding. We are talking about an investment of about €300.000 (E\_PT\_VdA\_6).*

Besides the associates, the school also has partnerships with other companies. These associates and partners play a very important role in the school's work concerning the qualification of young adults in the region. These companies inform the SANQ report about their qualification needs, in terms of employability, and then receive internships related to their field of work; they also fund professional courses in specific areas when

they need qualified working force and the national funding is not enough. The Vale do Ave region is best known for some specific, and traditional, industry areas, such as textile, agriculture and food, and metallurgy and metalworking, but there are also new, emerging and innovative professional areas that are being integrated in the region, such as Electronics and Polymers. This results in tailor-made professional qualification for the companies, provided by the professional school, which is added value for the young adults who are offered qualification with high rates of employability in the region. Also, young adults are offered the possibility of pursuing further studies in higher education.

These more recent measures came to consolidate the educational policies concerning professional courses. Although these measures are national, we understand that the Vale do Ave region comprises particularities and specificities related to its socio-economic, demographic and geographical characteristics. The originalities of the professional courses lay in the uniqueness of the Vale do Ave region.

Regarding the young adults' perspective of professional courses in Vale do Ave and their life course, on the whole, young adults seem very happy with their decision of enrolling in a professional course. Either we are talking about young adults who have quit from scientific/humanistic courses to start over in professional courses, or about young adults who finished a professional course and are now integrated in the labour market or in Higher Education, all the interviewed young adults, and even the experts and street level professionals, mentioned that professional courses, with their vocational character, serve fully their policy purpose of lowering rates related to unemployment, school dropout and failure. Besides, young people seem to be more satisfied and motivated for school and plan their professional lives in a more concrete way.

### 2.3. Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives

#### *Analysis of the case from the CPE perspective*

According to the managers interviewed for WP6, the main challenge young adults face nowadays in the Vale do Ave region is finding a job. Actually, this is a challenge not only for the region, but for the whole country. Having qualifications is crucial to find a job, and Vale do Ave is no different from other region in Portugal, as policies (both education and youth policies) are centralised and national. Though, in the North region (NUTS II), Vale do Ave is where youth unemployment rates have been lowering in the last years.

Vale do Ave is one of the youngest regions, and young adults are finding it hard to find a job in the region, and stay in the region. Although Vale do Ave is a very heterogeneous region, the managers work in articulation in order to respond to the needs of young adults.

The region is known to be a rather industrialised area. It is organized in 8 municipalities with different characteristics. Vieira do Minho, Mondim de Basto, Cabeceiras de Basto and Póvoa de Lanhoso are very rural, low population density and older municipalities.

Fafe is the transition municipality. Vila Nova de Famalicão, Guimarães and Vizela are deeply industrialised, have a high population density and a younger population.

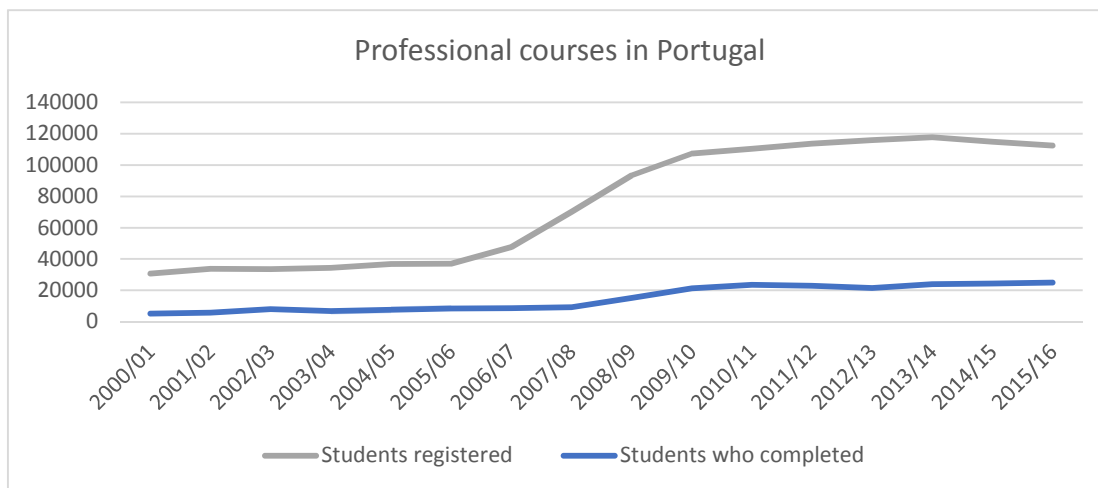
In order to find a job, companies' managers understand that young adults need labour-market oriented qualifications, in order to fulfil the industry's and, consequently, the region's needs. The dominant sectors in Vale do Ave, today, are high employers, but, at the same time, they demand high qualification levels and very specific training. These areas are mainly: agri-food, metallurgy and metalworking, textiles and cutlery. Professional courses play a central role here. According to the expert manager interviewed for WP5, the companies are interested in qualified talented young adults and this qualification is achieved through professional courses.

Professional courses are part of the secondary education offer. They are designed for young adults aged above 15 that have completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and consist in vocational education. They combine academic education with training in work context and are very much labour market oriented and usually combine partnerships between schools and regional companies. In Portugal, the general educational offer is centralised and educational policies are national and even though professional courses are a State long-term policy, they are regional and locally implemented by private and public schools, in partnership with companies and other institutions like local authorities. Until 2004, professional courses existed only in private professional schools, but Despacho nº. 14 758/2004 introduced these courses in public high schools, together with the regular general offer. This introduction of professional courses in public high schools had two main political goals: to offer an alternative to the fulfilment of compulsory schooling (now 12 years of schooling or 18 years of age), and to meet the policy benchmark of reaching 50% of students enrolled in upper vocational secondary education. In 2009, compulsory education was extended until the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (high school) or 18 years old, which ended up broadening and consolidating the vocational education offer. Professional courses are part of a set of measures aiming competitiveness, growth and the employment of young adults through a match between the training offer and the actual contextual needs of the labour market. In Portugal, this matching is done by the SANQ (System of Anticipation of Qualification Needs) report, elaborated with the involvement of national institutions (like IEFP), regional (like CIM AVE and ADRAVE), and local (like the industry, companies, local authorities, schools, ...).

Professional courses aim at preventing school dropout and youth unemployment. Regarding unemployment, the managers refer that, in Vale do Ave, the unemployment rates have been decreasing over the last years, and that the existing current unemployment is pretty much related to long-term unemployed people that have settled to receiving social welfare benefits and are not interested in the labour market or education and training.

As we can see in **Graph 4**, between the school years 2000/01 and 2015/16, there was a significant increase in the registered students in professional courses in Portugal, as well as in those who completed a professional course.

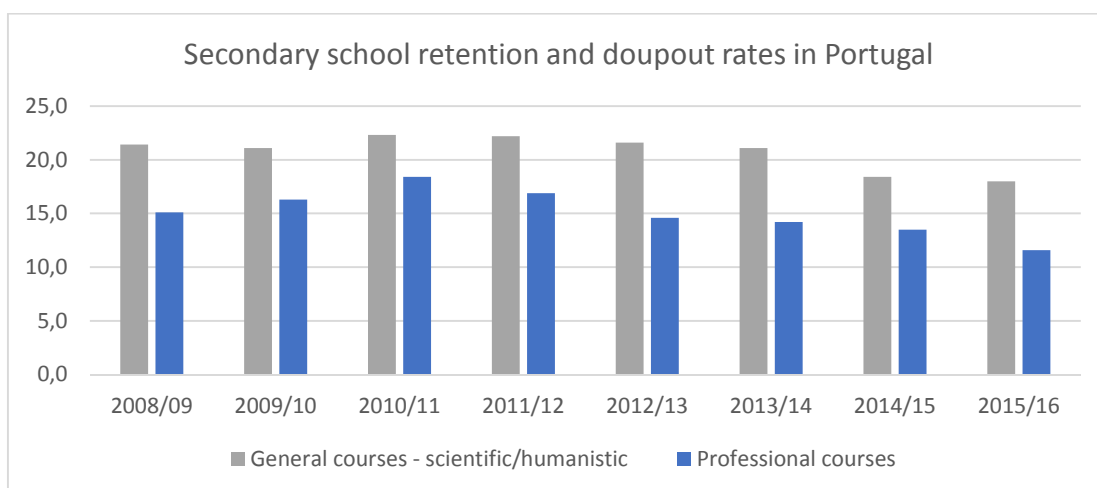




**Graph 4:** Students registered and students who completed professional courses in Portugal, between the school years of 2000/01 and 2015/16.

Source: DGEEC- Education and Science Statistics from the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science

Concerning secondary school retention and dropout rates between the school years 2008/09 and 2015/16 (Graph 5), the data show that they are higher in general education courses than in professional courses. This data is coherent with some the interviews undertaken with young adults in Vale do Ave, who left general education courses and switched to professional courses.



**Graph 5:** Secondary school retention and dropout rates in Portugal, between the school years of 2008/09 and 2015/16, for general and professional courses.

Source: PORDATA

According to the interviews with experts and young adults for WP5, young adults feel that in professional courses they have full support from the professionals during their professional training. This fact is more accentuated in the private professional school than in the public high school with an offer of professional courses. Thus, in general, young adults feel more support in professional courses than in regular ones. The communication between young adults and the professionals is maintained long after they finish their courses.

*They always have the concern for not letting us demotivate. If at any moment they think that we are unmotivated, they try to understand why we are not motivated and then motivate us again with more practice activity in the lab, more jobs and stuff like that. (Y\_PT\_VdA\_2).*

*A very strong monitoring that helps us to take better advantage of what we want; there is a very visible difference at the grade level (Y\_PT\_VdA\_3).*

From a more individual perspective, young adults claimed to have felt prejudice and misconception about professional courses from people outside the "system", like family and friends. Some of the young adults mention that people try to diminish professional courses because they are not as academically oriented as the general courses.

#### *Analysis of the case from the GOV perspective*

Professional courses are funded directly by the European Social Fund and, at a national level, by the Portuguese Government. Regionally, and according to the interview made with an expert from a private professional school for WP5, they are also funded by companies and other institutions, especially those where young adults develop their internships.

According to the interviews with experts for WP5 and WP6, the SANQ report plays a significant role in the region, as it matches the qualifications of young adults with the actual needs in the region. This work is done in articulation between the several actors and institutions from the region, who operate in the design of the measure. The networks and the intermunicipal actors work very well in the Vale do Ave region, although it might be challenging to match the interests of all the involved institutions in such a heterogeneous region.

In Vale do Ave there is a network of education and training (at the intermunicipal level), that includes schools with vocational training offer and, consequently, professional courses. IEFP (a national institution with regional representation) also provides vocational training through the Employment and Professional Training Centre (IEFP) and the Protocol Centres, which are training centres that work in partnership with business and industry associations. Also, IEFP partners with other organizations such as professional insertion offices, local authorities, schools... Professional courses are suggested by the schools and approved by the Ministry of Education, and chosen from the menu offered by the National Qualifications Catalogue (in connection with the SANQ

report). The public and private sectors work together with the mediation of regional institutions and platforms.

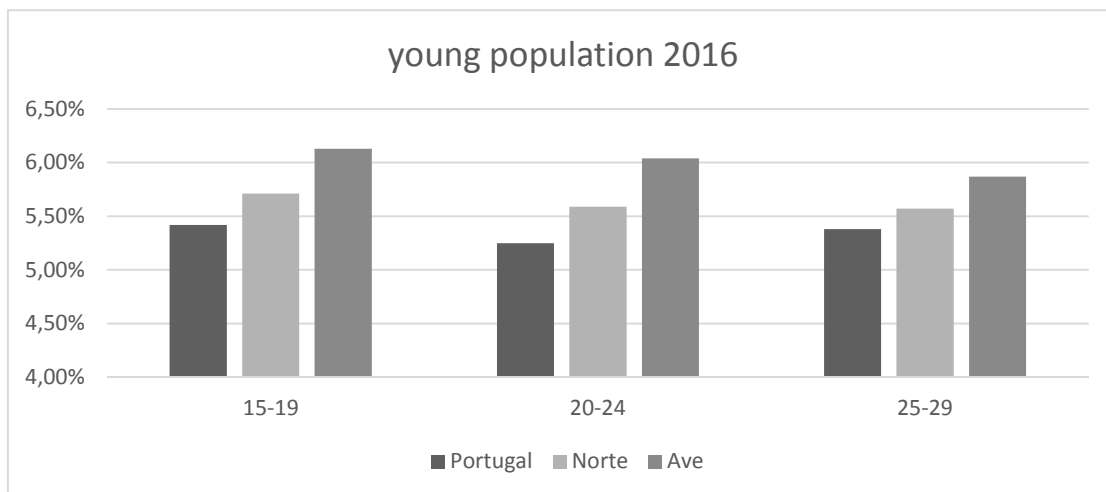
The private professional school where we did some of the interviews for WP5 mentioned the indirect funding they receive from companies where curricular internships take place. These companies can actually take part in the professional schools' boards and their interest in financing courses is directly linked to the fact that they need qualified workers in specific areas, and also to the fact that this partnership between education and training and the labour market is a winning strategy for schools, companies and young adults.

*This proximity enables us to be near the institutions and to have the human resources. At the moment, the school is empty because we have sent students for internships: an entire building dedicated to Continental [a tire company], in which they do training for the employees, and this training is being done inside the EPR facilities, with the participation of EPR teachers, who both giving and receiving training. This means that our technical professors have the possibility of integrating the training groups of the companies. Also, they give training to companies, there is sharing of knowledge here, which is very valid, because then they bring the knowledge and contents to the curriculum we have developed, to make it as close together as possible (E\_PT\_VdA\_6).*

In Vale do Ave, young people may engage in vocational training courses in the entire intermunicipal area, and not only in their municipality. This is due to the synergies between all municipalities in the region, and is the result of a cooperative work between actors and institutions from the region.

#### *Analysis of the case from the LCR perspective*

The Vale do Ave functional region has a rather young population, as we can see in Graph 6, especially in comparison with the North (NUTS II) and Portugal (NUTS III). In 2016, in Portugal, the population in the age range 15-19 was 5,42%, whereas in the North region it was 5,71% and in Vale do Ave it was 6,13%. The next age range, 20-24, represents 5,25% of Portugal, 5,59% in the North region and 6,04% in Vale do Ave. This age range has less population than the previous, but Vale do Ave has the higher rate of young people. The last age range, 25-29, in Portugal it represents 5,38%, in the North region 5,57% and in Vale do Ave 5,87%. Once again, as we can see, this last age range presents a lower value when compared to the previous age ranges, but, again, Vale do Ave has the higher percentage of young people.



**Graph 6:** Young population in 2016 in Portugal, North region and Vale do Ave

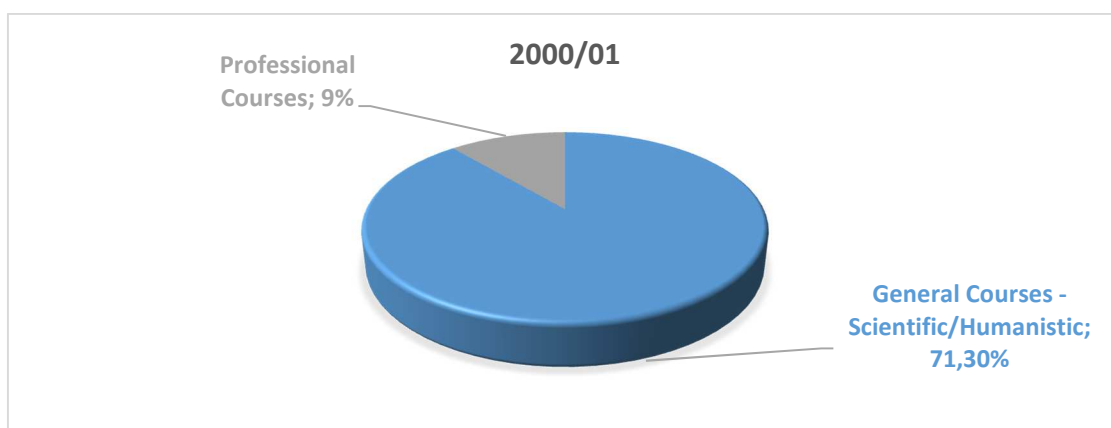
Source: PORDATA

The number of students enrolled in upper secondary education and post-secondary non-tertiary education as a percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 years old is 36,5% in the North region of Portugal (ISCED 3-4). Early leavers from education and training (18-24 years) amount to 20,5% in Portugal and 19% in the North region. In Vale do Ave, in 2012, the retention and dropout rate was 7% in basic education and 15,3% in high school.

In 2016, the NEETs (neither in education, employment or training) represented 10,6% of the population aged 15-24 in Portugal and 11,1% in the North region. The youth unemployment of young people between 15 and 24 years old was 32% in Portugal and 32,8% in the North region. The ratio of young adults on the overall unemployed population was 10,7% for young people in the age range 15-24, and 15,1% for young people in the age range 20-29.

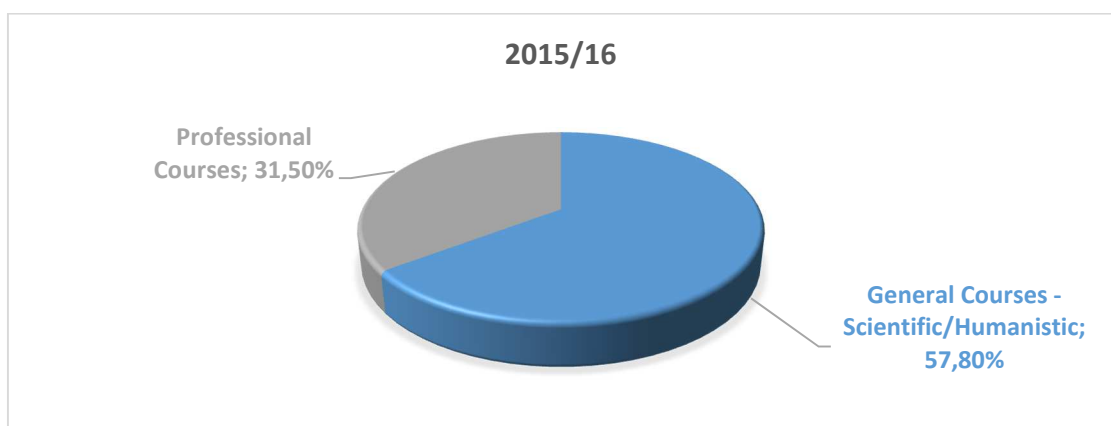
Regarding education and training, young people must make the first track choice in the educational system at the age of 15, and secondary school (either regular or professional) consists of 3 years. In 2015, in Portugal, 44,9% of young people were enrolled in vocational education and training and in the North region this rate was higher, at 46,2%. In 2013, the percentage of apprenticeships as a share of students enrolled in VET programs, and more specifically the vocational specificity (based on the percentage of upper secondary vocational education in a dual system), was 30,88% in Portugal. In 2014, in Portugal, the rate of participation of young adults aged between 25 and 34 years old in adult education was 16,8%.

In what concerns professional courses, as we can see in graphs **Graph 7** and **Graph 8**, there was a quite significant growth of these courses in Portugal. In the school year 2000/01, 9% of the students registered in secondary education were in professional courses and, in the school year 2015/16, this number increased to 31,5%, amounting to a growth of 22,5% in 15 years.



**Graph 7:** Students registered in general and professional courses in Portugal, in the school year of 2000/01.

Source: DGEEC- Education and Science Statistics from the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science

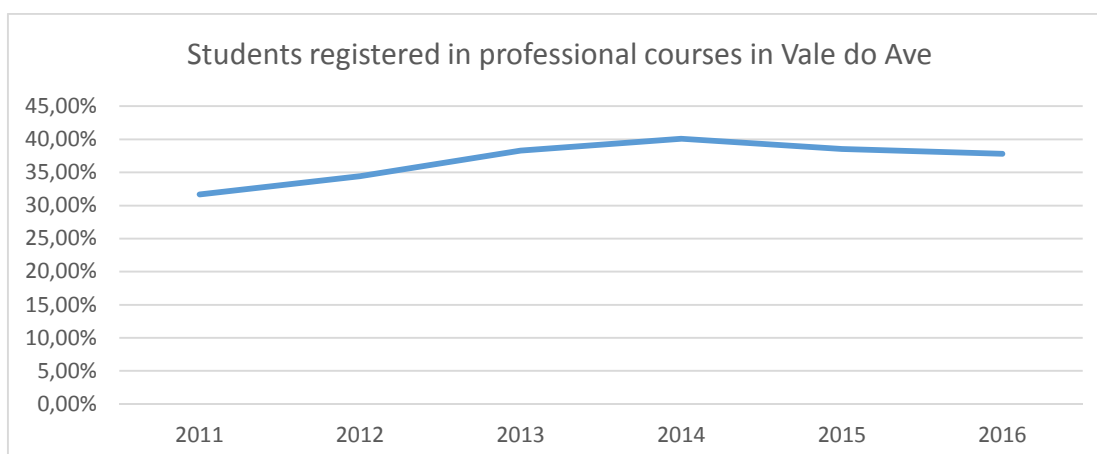


**Graph 8:** Students registered in general and professional courses in Portugal, in the school year of 2015/16.

Source: DGEEC- Education and Science Statistics from the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Science

These data may be representative of the changes and the widening of the educational policies relative to professional courses in Portugal, especially in 2014, as seen before.

In Vale do Ave, and maybe because this is a rather young and industrialised region, the numbers of students in professional courses are quite stable and high over the years. As we can see in **Graph 9**, between 2011 and 2016, the rates of students enrolled in professional courses was always above 30%, higher than the national average.



**Graph 9:** Students registered in professional courses in Vale do Ave, between the years of 2011 and 2016.

Source: PORDATA

The socio-economic context of the Vale do Ave region encompasses some real challenges for young adults. This is a rather young and industrialized region and, in spite of this, young people from Vale do Ave face similar challenges to those from the rest of the country, such as unemployment and precarious work due to the lack of specific training that meets the real needs of the region. Professional courses do play, in this context, a significant role in fighting the lack of skilled young adults in the region, lowering unemployment rates and increasing personal and professional fulfilment. According to the interviews we did to experts in the region, in Vale do Ave the dropout rate is not that high, but the main problem schools face is failure. The region also has some municipalities that are more rural and isolated, and this makes it difficult for mobility, both to study and to work.

According to the managers interviewed, the intermunicipal community (CIM AVE) provides vocational orientation in the region through a network of psychologists who work in the Vale do Ave schools. Also, professional schools provide vocational orientation for young adults to help them choose their qualification area. The professionals that work with vocational orientation, namely the psychologists, make the referral to both higher education and the first job. Also, in terms of employability, their work consists on trying to find young adults that suit the existent job vacancies. Private professional schools have selection criteria and take into account the profile and vocational orientation of the students. As we were able to assess, based on the interviews made to managers and young adults in the region, many students quit the regular school to switch to a professional course, and these cases are accompanied by professionals.

In order to deepen the LCR perspective of educational policies related to our case study, we conducted biographical interviews with young adults who fulfilled four criteria related to professional courses in the Vale do Ave region: 1) young adults who are currently

attending professional courses, after quitting a scientific/humanistic course in regular schools; 2) young adults who finished a professional course more than 6 months ago and are currently working; 3) young adults who finished a professional course more than 6 months ago and are currently in Higher Education; and 4) young adults who quit a professional course. We collected cases both from a private professional school and a public secondary school that offers professional courses.

Interview code	Gender	Age	Situation / criterion	School
Y_PT_VdA_2	Female	21 years old	Young adult enrolled in a professional course, after quitting regular school	Private professional school
Y_PT_VdA_3	Male	20 years old	Young adult enrolled in a professional course, after quitting regular school	Private professional school
Y_PT_VdA_4	Female	27 years old	Young adult who finished a professional course more than 6 months ago and is currently working	Private professional school
Y_PT_VdA_5	Female	20 years old	Young adult who finished a professional course more than 6 months ago and is currently in Higher Education	Public secondary school with professional courses offer
Y_PT_VdA_6	Male	20 years old	Young adult who finished a professional course more than 6 months ago and is currently working	Public secondary school with professional courses offer
Y_PT_VdA_9	Female	19 years old	Young adult who finished a professional course more than 6 months ago and is currently working	Private professional school

Y_PT_VdA_10	Male	19 years old	Young adult who quit a professional course	Public secondary school with professional courses offer
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**Table 2:** Presentation and resumed characterization of the young adults interviewed in the Vale do Ave functional region, for the Professional Courses case study.

Young adults don't define themselves as being a part of a vulnerable group, although they feel the prejudice and misconceptions commonly associated with professional courses. In spite of this, the interviewed young adults who currently attend or have finished professional courses showed feelings of finally fitting in the educational system and happiness towards labour market.

*In the area of vocational education, we learn not only the necessary skills to apply in the labour market, but we also learn on a personal level. Because we, too, have the relationship, which is something that shows with the older teachers, they have another experience of life but also share that experience with us. As many teachers have passed through regular education and are now teaching in vocational education, or other teachers who were students in vocational education and now are our teachers. They have already gone through the same and tell us these stories and we learn from it. Then over the course of the three years, starting from the 10th to the 12th grade we evolve and we always end up learning a lot. The interaction between people, between students also helps a lot (Y\_PT\_VdA\_3).*

*It may be because it has more practical parts, I remember in classes, for example, Public Servicing, the teacher gave the material but later at the end of the lesson, it was a very funny part (laughs) because we had to be us, each colleague practiced servicing another. For example, the teacher would say "You have to play a very demanding customer and the salesman has to get is way. Because a person goes to a store and all kinds of customers will appear and I was not used to at the beginning. Here at school, we begin to see what can happen, how we can turn things around, the teacher later helped us to improve (Y\_PT\_VdA\_5).*

Young adults all feel that the professional course was their best choice and are now able to envision and plan their professional future.

*First, the commitment to the labour market, the commitment to the company because when we do an internship, we have to show that we are capable. (...) The owners of the company want someone who is committed to the work and who likes to be there. I am already mentioning the second point, which is to like*



*what you are doing, what we notice is that, nowadays, we have to find work and often, we do not go for what we like, but for that which is available to us. It is much better to spend eight hours or ten hours working if we like what we are doing than if we do not like it. Third, I listened to it a lot there, is that we have to always think about development, we can never be stagnant in the same place. We start from the bottom, but we always have to be thinking of development, not only within the company but also at the professional level. I'm going to finish 12th grade now, I have no intentions of going to college right now, I want to start working, but my goal as well, is to in three to four years from now, if I have that in mind, to keep studying and try to develop academically as well (Y\_PT\_VdA\_3).*

*I started working at a young age, that's when I finished high school. Sometimes the sense of authority is something that we cannot distinguish and is something that stays with us throughout life, I think that only after starting our professional lives, we feel that we really have a leadership. She is our leader and we have to have that respect, (...) I think it is a fundamental value, to know how to distinguish hierarchy and to respect the hierarchy (Y\_PT\_VdA\_4).*

Concerning their future expectations, the interviewed young adults revealed more aptitude for the labour market rather than to pursue studies on Higher Education.

*I never failed, I was a reasonable student, I entered secondary school and opted for a vocational school because I had an interest in starting work after complete secondary education. (...) The university has remained on stand-by (...) (Y\_PT\_VdA\_4).*

*Now, now, now, no, but maybe if I get a part-time or a full-time job and I manage to complete university at night, or doing it during the day and have a part-time. Because at this moment I started to part time work, outside of school hours, and if I can continue with this part-time, maybe I will later think of going to university (Y\_PT\_VdA\_2).*

For these young adults, a professional course allows them to envision a more accurate situation for their future lives. Professional courses provide the opportunity of having qualifications for a job and this means economic autonomy and stability for the young adults' lives.

*I want to start working right away, get into the job market, start earning some money for myself, so, start building something already. And later, possibly, if I have that taste, which is something that I might even have an idea of, in some time to be able to deepen my knowledge in my area, and try to go up a bit and gain other responsibilities. Not only being a Polymer transformation technician, which is what I will be when I finish 12th, but possibly going to the university, to take a degree (Y\_PT\_VdA\_3).*

*To be well, to be able to support myself, without having to get to the end of the month counting the change in my pockets, having some savings, starting to select houses, and at the end saying: "It's mine", I think, I like to feel that. Now,*

*by the way, when I started the professional internship I started taking the driver's license, I paid for everything, and I want to, I worked for it, and I think there is nothing better than that. Because if my parents gave me everything I wanted, I might not grow so much, would I? (...) The next step is to buy a car, get some savings to buy a car. Arrive at 30 and have a car and then start getting things together more, I think that is anyone's dream (Y\_PT\_VdA\_9).*

### 3. CS\_PT\_2 – EFA courses at the IEFP - Alentejo Litoral

#### 3.1. Introduction

The case study selected in the Alentejo Litoral Functional Region consists on the Adult Education and Training Courses, also known as the EFA courses, at the Training Service of the Institute of the Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) of the Alentejo Litoral. During the fieldwork of the WP5 it was clear that the EFA provision was where to find students/trainees in the age group of the YA project, as well as in more vulnerable situations, being unemployed, when starting the course, with non-linear school paths and having the experience of the school-work transition. In the AL sub-region this Training Centre is the main deliverer of this training typology (Observatório QREN, 2012) <sup>1</sup> and the only targeting unemployed and young adults at risk.

With the setting of the Lisbon Strategy by the turn of the century aiming at enabling the European Union's economy to be the most competitive within the World-Wide Information Society, the main orientation of the national adult education policies of the state-members became subordinated to the Economy of Learning by preparing the suitable workforce (Lima, 2012). Programs such as Europe 2020; Youth Guarantee; Youth on the Move and the Agenda for the New Qualifications and New Employment are the European Policy framework of the national's adult education policies, now as known as Lifelong Learning policies.

Considering the significant number of low-qualified adults, the high rate of youth unemployment, the above EU average of ESL in Portugal, VET provisions with professional and academic certification allow proceeding studies as well as a professional qualification, coming as a solution to address those identified situations. Specifically, as described in the WP3 National Report (... , 2017), all the different typologies of Adult VET aim at the generalization of secondary education as the lower qualification level of the population (50% by 2020). In addition, also aims at the qualification of the workforce with double certification<sup>2</sup> in order to reduce the unemployment rate (Portugal 2020). Particularly, the EFA courses aim at low qualified unemployed adults, behaving as an active employment measure, as stated in the WP4 National Briefing Paper, although the official documents point at the qualification of the workforce as the main measure's aim.

This measure has permanent and single ESF Funding, apart from the national contribution. Funding criteria is according to the conclusion rate and the employment rate. A relevant funding pattern concerns the subordination of the education and training policy to the economic aims and strategies, aligned with the European Union discourse. From this point of view, economic aims and strategies are defined and afterwards education and training aims are established as long as these are coherent with the

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<sup>1</sup> p.46

<sup>2</sup> Law 230/2008 7th of March

former ones. This is expressed in the funding indicator of having at least 50% employment rate in the 6 months after concluding the course as well as in high conclusion rates<sup>3</sup>. Another pattern concerns the high level of funding dependence from the ESF, as no other existing funding is significant for the implementation of the EFA typology. This pattern concerns the funding model adopted in Portugal to fund the EFA typology. Additionally, the State controls the distribution of funding among different institutions, the monitoring and the control of expenses made by these institutions. According to the IEFP activity annual report of October 2017, 704 people enrolled in EFA courses in the Alentejo Litoral training centre.

One last note on data availability. Data availability regarding the EFA courses for NUTS III depends on the provider: Ministry of Education provision is monitored by the its specific statistics office, which makes public much figures related to NUTS III. On its turn, the IEFP has most of the data only for the NUTS II level. From 2015, NUTS III data referring to numbers covered by each policy can be found.

### 3.2. Telling the story of EFA courses at the Institute of Employment and Professional Training

The adult vocational education and training courses, also known in Portugal as the EFA courses, were established in 2000. These guidelines have stressed the individualisation character of forms of provision in education, the valuing of the training component and the relevance of (lifelong) learning. Additionally, training within the link between education and economic development was also stressed. The purpose was to have forms of provision that developed skills, namely hard skills related to traditional school disciplines, according to an innovative curricula, flexible paths and modular training units, but also soft skills that had not been traditionally provided by school education and that were relevant for enterprises and existing jobs following neoliberal trends (Griffin, 2006; Lima & Guimarães, 2015; among others).

*The raising of the levels of professional and academic qualification of the Portuguese population requires a strong commitment of the whole society, since the sustained development and the training of the "social capital", in which the contemporary societies are based, suppose a growing investment in the qualification of the adults. In today's complex societies, based on a shared and responsible individual and collective freedom, it is indispensable to institute a duty to learn throughout life, along with the recognition of the traditional right to education. (...). Social cohesion, the development of a citizenship of participation and responsibility, employability and the need to prevent all forms of exclusion determine the prioritization of public education and training policies - especially for*

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<sup>3</sup> Portaria n.º 60-A/2015 de 2 de março

*the less skilled, certain that investment in these areas has positive consequences in all sectors of economic, social, cultural life and quality of life.* <sup>4</sup>.

This was very much in line with lifelong learning guidelines of the European Union, established a few months before in what is now widely known as the Lisbon Strategy<sup>5</sup>.

*The European Union is confronted with a quantum shift resulting from globalisation and the challenges of a new knowledge-driven economy. (...) The Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. (...) The shift to a digital, knowledge-based economy, prompted by new goods and services, will be a powerful engine for growth, competitiveness and jobs. (...) Europe's education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment. They will have to offer learning and training opportunities tailored to target groups at different stages of their lives: young people, unemployed adults and those in employment who are at risk of seeing their skills overtaken by rapid change. (EC, March 2000)<sup>6</sup>*

In the 1990's Portugal presented a very low position in what referred to school attainment education rates. This situation anticipated problems in economic productivity and competitiveness in the frame of the Euro Zone and in the reconversion process of the Portuguese economy occurring since the late 1980's, after this country became a member of the European Economic Community. At the time, 10% of the Portuguese population was illiterate and 20% had only completed the 6th grade of school education. Therefore, the EFA courses' aims were directed at adult learners that were "under qualified and under certified" (Melo, Matos & Silva, 2001), supported by a different education and training path. The European Union guidelines seemed to be appropriate to follow by policy-makers by the end of the 1990's.

From 2000 to 2007, these courses were directed at adults more than 18 years old, employed and unemployed as well as people at risk of social exclusion. As a basic adult education provision, these courses were directed at all learners that had not achieved compulsory education and did not hold professional qualification, not entailing any kind of gender, race or age requirements. But due to these courses' structure, based on a long-term provision, mainly unemployed people and those at risk of social exclusion (that were not working full-time) attended them (Couceiro & Patrocínio, 2002; Ávila, 2004). These adult learners were mainly on social benefits. Therefore, these learners had priority in attending these courses, although other groups could also attend, as stated in the law:

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<sup>4</sup> ME/MLSS Joint Law n.º 1083/2000, DR 268, SÉRIE II, of 20 of November – It regulates the creation of Adult Vocational Education and Training Courses (EFA courses), with dual school and professional certification

<sup>5</sup> Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000. Presidency Conclusions.  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1\\_en.htm#b](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm#b).

*Priority is given to people employed or unemployed, enrolled in the IEFP employment centers or indicated by other entities, in particular the beneficiaries of the minimum social income, those that are in professional conversion processes and workers in small and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>7</sup>*

For this reason, these courses generated a passive admission and/or an apathetic rejection by people in general and in particular by the stakeholders, owing to the fact that these courses were directed at those that were at risk of social exclusion, those that did not have any other kind of public basic education provision to attend. For those joining these courses, it involved an opportunistic acceptance: the official documents presented the EFA course as a great opportunity for a significant life change as they could improve people's employability, which was very much valued by those with no other foreseeable option. These courses were also an interesting way for spending a period while in the unemployment situation: people could get a grant and learn relevant knowledge for everyday life, whilst developing professional skills (Guimarães, 2011).

As we could hear in the YA interviews, these courses' message as the way to a life change are very present in many young adults, using the word «opportunity» when referring to the EFA courses as a mean to conclude compulsory education and get a decent job to a stable life.

*Now there is an opportunity to take the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, which is an asset to me. I've already lost some jobs because of this and (the actual course) it's an area I like (...). And now I wanted to choose to finish the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, because this (temporary job) is not a life. You can do well, but, hey, man, we're a long way from home. It's hard to organize a life working like that. It's complicated. (...) I had to choose: either I continue and I'm going to finish the 12th grade or it's never, isn't it? I was 27 years old, it's starting to be a bit difficult. (Y\_PT\_AL\_5)*

During the first years of this policy in practice, mainly unemployed women attended these courses, between 25 and 54. The grant these courses' attendance provided was a strong stimulus for adult learners - this was a provision directed at those at social margins. Meantime this grant was reviewed to a lower amount and still at the present time one expert regrets to see the trainee's motivation to attend the courses in the grant the EFA courses offer.

*These courses intend to give a second opportunity of learning to those who for various reasons did not have this opportunity within the normal period of schooling, in which they left school for reasons of exclusion, by economic family needs. And finally, this is a second opportunity to find a learning that may unfortunately in many cases, is linked in many cases to the economic side, having in the background an opportunity to earn some income. (E\_PT\_AL\_8)*

Around 30,000 adult learners attended these courses from 2000 to 2007. A wide range of organisations (a large number dependent upon the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (the IEFP) and other ones from civil society institutions) developed

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<sup>7</sup> ME/MLSS Joint Law n.º 1083/2000 creating the EFA courses and its regulation

this provision (Ávila, 2004). These local stakeholders did adapt themselves to supranational and national guidelines - these courses were strongly regulated and involved relevant funding, only from the European Social Fund, both for organisations implementing this provision and to adult learners through grants. These courses were considered a relevant opportunity both for organisations developing this provision and for adult learners: adult learners had the possibility of future integration in local labour market due to professional qualification acquired after attendance (Guimarães, 2011).

If during the initial phase the main providers were aprox. ten non-governmental organizations (Couceiro & Patrocínio, 2002), today this provision is delivered by the national network of regular and professional schools and the IEFP national network of training centres. Funding is totally dependent from the ESF. Experts from the training centre 2 mention how the funding rhythm and conditions largely interfere in the success of the policy, due to the local characteristics of the AL highly dispersed territory and the seasonal labour market.

*"We scheduled, for example until the middle of March we started about 8 to 10 EFA courses, we had a very interesting pace. And as time was passing by, there was also some internal limitations, which have to do with the commitments, (...), we had to slow down the activity a little (...) and at the moment we were trying to start what is possible to start monthly, but we are no longer able to complete the courses' groups. (...) Because people are already disappearing, they are working, there is work. (...) then to wait until after the information on the release of the money, it had to slide towards the end of May, (...) and in the meantime the group, a part of the group was lost. (...) And at that moment when we went to try to identify/call for more people, it was not possible and we had to interrupt the course.» (E\_PT\_AL\_7)*

*«That is, maybe we do not have an answer for those who have difficulties at the pedagogical level and did not complete a training because they did not have this, could not (...) because we could not form a group and we became limited in terms of number, we must have 15 or in some cases even more» (E\_PT\_AL\_8)*

In 2004, an official report on adult education and training courses (Ávila, 2004) claimed for widening of access, namely for those employed adults. Although already previewed in the law, the circumstances of the courses, operating only with a day shift, were not compatible with working schedules. The answer came later in 2007 with the New Opportunities Initiative and the involvement of regular schools as providers that offered shorter courses (allowing only school certification) in the evening of working days.

In 2005, the then elected Socialist Government presented a programme reinforcing the link between lifelong learning and economic development, stressing the increasing of productivity and competitiveness based on raising low qualifications, in specific forms of provision that allowed a school certification and a professional qualification. This connection was combined with the emphasis on reducing young people's drop-out, by enlarging the young people's attendance in certified vocational education and training provision (Portugal, 2005). The programme established afterwards, the New Opportunities Initiative, was directed at adults and young people and stressed education

and training as an investment: the official texts presented again education and training as a solution, allowing people to change their lives by getting a new (and better paid) job (Lima & Guimarães, 2012).

In fact, from the biographies of the young adults in the present research, we can understand that the vast majority of the attendees of this provision chose a VET path as an alternative to regular school. They did so due to learning difficulties and lack of motivation or an option after dropping out. Here is one young woman who dropped out due to lack of interest in regular school and to whom this provision helped her to like to be in school again:

*I did reconcile myself [with school] [Laughs] ... The subjects are different. There are many things I remember, there are others that I am learning again. Then there's the practical part I like a lot, learning how to do the hairstyles, and the various kinds of things you can do with your hair. It is different (Y\_PT\_AL\_9)*

After 2007, within the New Opportunities Initiative development, there was a clear political will to direct adult education and training courses at young people, in specific those that had not achieved compulsory education. Courses allowing school certification and professional qualification were kept, but a new typology was created: the adult vocational education and training courses only directed at school certification. It allowed a 12th grade school education certification, as after 2009 compulsory education involved 12 years of schooling.

*The programme aims at bringing the general schooling up to the upper secondary education level and raising the basic qualification levels of the adult population to overcome the low qualification levels of the Portuguese population, in line with the renewed Lisbon Strategy and the European Agenda for economic growth and social cohesion. Defining the completion of secondary education as the minimum qualification level will allow young people and professionals to play a role in today's knowledge economy. The programme addresses secondary education for both adults and youth. For youth qualification, it is designed to curb the high rates of failure and drop-outs in the initial education and training system. For adults, it seeks to improve access and encourage participation of the labour force in the training programmes and vocational education.<sup>8</sup>*

One board manager described how at some point in time, coinciding with the upgrading of the compulsory education to 12 years, the schools made a great effort in keeping all under 18 youngsters in school, even those who did not want to be in school, rebuilding there offer with more appropriate provisions.

*There were young people, at the time, these schools did not want to keep, did not give them a way. (These youngsters) created problems to these schools and they even saw with good eyes that they came to the training centres. And that too is over. So young people, regardless of not liking or not wanting to stay in*

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<sup>8</sup> UNESCO, International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training In [http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pubs/New%20Opportunities%20-%20Portugal.pdf](http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/New%20Opportunities%20-%20Portugal.pdf)



*school, now they stay. And there was a rearrangement of the offers and the way the students worked, and they started offering more appropriate courses and this kept the students in school (E\_PT\_AL\_7).*

Existing researches argue that mainly people aged 25-34 years old are attending this form of provision (Dias 2012; Oliveira, 2014; Pereira, 2017). Following a similar pattern, national data show EFA courses being attended by people ranging 20-44 years old<sup>9</sup>. As one WP6 informant explained, EFA courses are chosen over the Apprenticeship courses, due to negative social stigma over the latter and the higher training grant offered by the former. Therefore, the actual addressee profile differs in some extent from the initial official target established in 2000, but it is clearly in line with the aims set in the New Opportunities Initiative and with the most recent national adult education programme – the Qualify programme.

Since 2007, regular education schools developed this provision offering only an academic certification. Professional Schools dependent on the Ministry of Education and Training centres dependent upon the IEFP continued developing courses allowing also professional qualification. This situation involved a polarisation among stakeholders including regular school education organisations (developing adult education courses directed only at school education certification) and the ones involved in vocational education and training (developing adult education courses allowing a school education certification and a professional qualification after attendance) (Lima & Guimarães 2015), which can still be observed today<sup>10</sup>.

Indeed, as the IEFP holds the double function of managing the unemployed population, through its Employment Centres and organizing vocational training, with its national training centre's network, its training offer's target-group seems to serve both aims. A Board Manager clarify about the EFA courses' aims at a Training Centre:

*«To qualify our unemployed people, who are primarily unemployed, in order to give them initial qualifications so that they can be integrated, (...) so that we can try to improve their conditions of employability» (E\_PT\_AL\_7).*

This situation was also evident in the WP4 National Brief Paper:

*Youth long-term unemployment in both regions (ALENTEJO e NORTE) is higher than the national and the EU27 average. Figures show qualification as the most important active labour market policy to deal with the increasing unemployment rates. (Alves et al, 2017)*

In this way, it can be expected that the participants of this measure differ according to its provider's aims, even though developing the same policy. The training centres of the National Institute of Employment and Professional Training target those unemployed, using the EFA courses as an active labour market policy and the schools, regular or professional, register in these courses young people under 18, aiming at the compulsory

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<sup>9</sup> IEFP's Finance and Physical Execution Report, October 2017 at <https://www.iefp.pt/estatisticas> Accessed on 20/12/2017

<sup>10</sup> For more details, see <https://www.qualifica.gov.pt/#/pesquisaCentros>.

education attainment. As expressed in the WP5 report (Alves, 2017), the interviews held to board managers of one IEFP local training unit and of professional schools show that the former is were to find the young adults' population with non-linear school paths, within the over 18 and having unemployment experiences.

EFA courses are a significant form of provision for young people who had not achieved compulsory education following a regular path in due time and are in need of a fast labour market insertion, specifically in regions presenting such a significant economic growth as the Alentejo Litoral region (Training Centre's manager interview). For these reasons, these courses can be considered an interesting provision matching local labour markets needs and learners' needs of fast labour market insertion as was referred by a board member of training centre 2 in the interview.

*Here from our side, in the Centre for Employment and Training, the challenge goes by, we have to qualify our unemployed, the unemployed population, basically unemployed, in order to give them initial qualifications to be integrated, both in the tourism sector, in the various professional areas, both in the area of catering, table service, bar, but also hotel reception, floor employees, all these professions and not only those. The gardeners themselves and all the hotel maintenance staff, and so on, and in the industrial centre of City 1, all the activities that revolve around the port pole of City 1 (...) And I think it is a privilege to have a sub-region with these characteristics, I do not know if there will be another sub-region of the country that we can say, without any false modesty, that has, like in here, three main sectors of the economic area with a certain strength, a certain growth and a certain economic impact on the sub-region. (E\_PT\_AL\_7)*

It is visible from the young adults interviewed how the purpose to attend the training is mainly to get the 12<sup>th</sup> grade certification, as an access path to the labour market and not so much a way of learning how to perform a profession with the adequate skills. One street-level professional mentions how, in general, trainees do not value knowledge and skills (in disciplines such as Maths, Natural Sciences and Physics) as well as lifelong learning. Fast organisational and technological changes in workplace settings require workers that are willing to "keep on learning and performing well their job". Therefore, the lack of interest these young people show concerning knowledge, skills and learning was considered by this expert a serious problem for the professional development of a specialised worker in all kinds of economic sector.

*That is, our target audience, which comes here, either at the Apprenticeship Courses level, which are supposed to come here with the 9th grade, or at the EFA level, even if they do come with the 9th grade, their knowledge at the level of Maths and Physical-Chemical Sciences is very low. Which is difficult, it is a very difficult task, then, for us to develop scientific knowledge, especially at the level of technology ... It is in the mind of people that those who come to take a professional course do not need to have scientific knowledge. Which is a basic error.(E\_PT\_AL\_9)*

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
EFA courses in schools	55,526	152,175	79,368	70,760	48,379	32,709	27,289	53,427	39,997
Recognition of prior learning	142,038	208,120	191,457	119,932	74,724	20,763	2,283	24,498	12,288
Formal 2 <sup>nd</sup> chance education	35,292	19,506	13,672	8,910	6,619	7,426	9,561	10,689	9,361

**Table 3:** Adult learners enrolled in public schools in forms of provision from 2007 to 2015

Source: GEPE

In what refers to the output provided (see

Table 3 and Table 4), EFA courses have been a relevant form of provision especially since 2012-2013: these courses are the most important form of provision provided by schools directed at adults owing to the highest number of enrolments, when comparing to recognition of prior learning and formal second-chance education<sup>11</sup>. From 2007 to 2016 approx. 250,000 learners joined these courses.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
EFA courses	17.873	26.161	33.869	33.309	32.106	36.241	53 008	48.830	45.763
Recognition of prior learning	11.812	15.801	24.988	26.118	26.161	3.500	-	8.239	70.781
Modular Training	-	30.682	95.961	99.393	87.709	154.565	318.270 (1)	388.808 (1)	372.191 (1)

**Table 4:** Adult learners enrolled in public training centres in forms from 2007 to 2015

Source: IEFP

(1) Modular Training and *Vida Ativa* Program

Following the reasoning of the qualification as the main active labour policy by the IEFP, Modular Training, based on short training units, seems to have been used with that purpose as 2013 was showing the highest peak of the overall unemployment rate, with 2009 and 2012 being the years with higher percental increases, as seen in the WP4

<sup>11</sup> Education Statistics ME. Available at <http://www.gepe.min-edu.pt/np4/96/> Accessed on 10/10/2017

report (Alves, 2017), corresponding to the same tendency in the training attendance. With the actual government policy, EFA courses are now one of the priority LLL policies, as described in the WP6 National Report (Alves, 2017).

Adult education and training courses allowing a school education certification follow the same core curriculum established in reference standards and EFA courses involving a professional qualification are based on vocational education and training reference standards and in-service training. These last ones are set according to needs of national and local labour market. These needs are identified by the ANQEP in the case of regular and professional schools and by the Institute of Employment and Professional Training based on studies and surveys (formal and informal surveys) to relevant economic actors (enterprises, sectorial organisations, trade unions, social partners involved in the Economic and social council, etc.), as seen in the WP6 National Report (Alves, 2017). Additionally, unemployed enrolled in local employment centres of the IEFPP receiving a benefit do have to join adult education and training courses if guidance and counselling practitioners of the Institute decide so<sup>12</sup>.

The EFA courses (allowing a professional qualification) include a vocationalism component that has been very much valued (Couceiro & Patrocínio, 2002; Guimarães, 2011; among others). This circumstance is very much appreciated by local entrepreneurs that are providing in-service training for learners. According to many young adults' interviews, this is a strong aspect of these courses, setting the difference with regular school. Having experienced regular secondary school, the professional school and the training centre, this interviewee can establish what makes the difference and why he likes it so at training centre 2:

*Well, the professional school is a bit more rigorous (...) Man, is more, more like secondary school, it is more secondary, it is more demanding ... You have to study a lot, you have to study, you have to study too a bit. Here you also have to study but it is not so much ... but in the professional school you have to study more ... to really understand... (...) Here is much easier. We learn with practice, it is not with theories! You see, certain engineers..., everyone says and everyone knows... theoretical, theoretical, theoretical. No, this is wrong. This is practical! Theoretical is what it does, isn't it? But practice ... and that's why the training centres are good, because it is theoretical and practical, and more practical. I like it. (Y\_PT\_AL\_6).*

If vocationalism is the distinctive trace of this provision, the trainees who mentioned the styles of the trainers mentioned it as an independent factor from the kind of the organization, whether school or training centre:

Although the training offer is built on the labour market needs collected near different local stakeholders, it seems not to meet very specific local labour market needs, as one expert expresses.

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<sup>12</sup> According to interviews to local IEFPP informant (WP5 expert interview). Additionally, guidance and counselling are main tasks developed by Qualify centres (according to Law n.º 232/2016, 29/08.) and by local employment centres.

*In the area of electricity, welding and the health area, namely the auxiliary health technician and aesthetics I believe that courses do meet the (labour market) needs. But interestingly enough a few days ago I had a conversation with an individual from a car repair shop. He said: "you never train anyone who comes to work here in garages and we need qualified people, you do not provide these courses and we do not have people doing this kind of work, if we have a good person here the person will soon leave, people do not do this training". And in fact in some areas it turns out we are not able to give such a response. Because of the specificity of which I spoke to you just now: as learners are in small number, we end up seeing reduced options in terms of career opportunities. We end up doing some training that could be different, that does not meet everyone's interests, neither of those who attends nor of those who then have the need for specific technicians.*  
(E\_PT\_AL\_8)

Within this line of reasoning, the mentioned interviewee claimed for needs assessment including local trainers and entrepreneurs' opinions and suggestions. In general EFA courses start when unemployed people are available to attend this provision, i.e. when people are not working in (informal or formal) jobs. Due to seasonal fluctuation of local labour market, allowing an increase in economic activity in summer in tourism and in some industrial sectors, courses do open in autumn when learners are available for attending courses developed during the whole day. From this point of view, these courses respect labour market trends.

This matching of labour market's needs and these courses' professional qualification aims has however been criticised in several occasions. An official evaluation developed in 2012 stressed the fact that these courses «*did not make people more employable*». This was the situation of working trainees that (did want but) were not able to find another (and better paid) job (Lima, 2012). But, recently, some academic researches (Dias 2012; Oliveira, 2014; Pereira, 2017) have expressed the opposite and mention adults becoming more employable after attending EFA courses. To be noticed that these last ones were case studies, evidencing the inexistence of a significant research in extension with the aims of assessing the results and outcomes of this policy.

Experts of the training centre 2 put in evidence how these courses' evaluation is nothing more than an internal bureaucratic process or as a requisite for the ESF. It does not contribute for the improvement of this provision and also the local providers do not have access to its results.

*«We do not do any analysis, no evaluation of the training itself in terms of impact or in terms of success. This is done at the central level (...) Yesterday, incidentally, at a meeting I attended in Lisbon, a colleague of a Quality centre there present mentioned (...) that experts in Brussels asked about it and he said (...) "These studies and these evaluations and analyses are done every year, both at national level, with samples.»* (E\_PT\_AL\_7)

*«In particular, and I can mention to you what I have most in mind, "I think these courses", the tourism course "instead of having the German should have more hours of English". And what happens next? Then there should be a task of getting*

*someone of the training side and trying to give feedback to this case. Eventually this information is sometimes registered in terms of the evaluation documents of the process of evaluation of the process of the in-job training, but I believe that not always it has the follow-up that it should»(E\_PT\_AL\_8)*

As this last interviewee points out, the trainers' temporary work contract, does not offer the working conditions, such as stability and the necessary time to respond with the adequate means in order to favour the trainees' success.

*"With this precarity, as I said just now, there isn't a strategy for the future and therefore the accompaniment and the experience that we have accumulated in these courses and the knowledge of how things work and the interconnection that later is necessary between several entities, we are getting to know the procedures that we are using in a more intuitive way and it ends up getting lost when we leave and when there is no continuity in terms of what work should be done (...) Because the quality of training is often far from the desired, it is not only because we do not have the physical resources to execute things, it is because there is often no common work strategy because we are all running from one side to the other, we do not have time to make an articulation as it should be, but ... we are also asked to solve many situations and if we had a better stability in terms of the training staff, of those who work with the training, maybe we could make a more specific offer».*  
(E\_PT\_AL\_8)

### 3.3. Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives

The following section condenses the most relevant evidences according to the three main conceptual perspectives of this research, considering the overall research questions of the present project, when considering the EFA courses implemented by the IEFPP local unit of the Alentejo Litoral sub-region.

#### *Analysis of the case from the CPE perspective*

This offer is part of a policy that stresses VET. This is a very distinctive aspect from previous policies. This offer has an inclusive character with a social justice scope, considering those who no longer have a place in regular school but need an academic certification and a professional qualification to a fast entry in the labour market. This offer's target is one of a universalist kind: it is directed at people over 18, under certified and under qualified, those in need of an insertion or progression in the labour market. In practical terms, in the IEFPP setting, this offer acts as an active labour market measure, by specifically targeting the unemployed.

*The aim of these courses is to prepare a group of people, to give them, let's say a minimum training to enable them to pursue a profession (...) Because they are in*

*the unemployed pool, they are eventually invited to participate (in training) since this is also the duty of the employment service, to seek solutions for (E\_PT\_AL\_8).*

Another specific characteristic of this provision is a more humanist curriculum based on the Referential of Key-Skills that includes subjects such as Citizenship and Professionalism; Society, Technology and Science, and Culture, Language and Communication. As defined in the first law regulating this provision<sup>13</sup>, its training model approach privileges the individualized and flexible training paths.

When looking at the outcomes of this policy, we come across with centralized bureaucratic procedures which serve the ESF funding.

*It's like this: we do not have (knowledge about the training impact) because here in the Training, in the Training Service, no. The trainee finished the training, it is finished. (...) As a rule, no (the central services do not report results). They do with a sample, nationally do a generic study, then do those averages then come to something like "The trainee had in average x time of unemployed. But in general terms (E\_PT\_AL\_7).*

Also, ESF criteria stresses employment rates. Additionally, trainees' success criteria is referred in the law regulating all operations under the human capital scope<sup>14</sup>; this law mentions that at least 50% employment rate 6 months after concluding the course or the enrolment in further studies has to be achieved.

A fundamental condition to make this policy successful is the funding available to providers. When funding is not given to providers or when it is given with delay, EFA courses cannot take place; in some occasion, due to these delays, trainees are no longer available, owing to a seasonal labour market. This is so as the present policy totally depends on the ESF. The procedures for trainees' attraction for enrolment can work, as long as these do not interfere with seasonality of the labour market. Although the training centre 2 schedules training courses avoiding stronger economic sectors' seasons, the ESF has its own calendar which is an European Union one and it is not adapted to local labour market characteristics.

*We are no longer able to complete the courses' groups. (...) Because people are already disappearing, they are working, there is work. (...) then to wait until after the information on the release of the (ESF) money, it had to slide towards the end of May, (...) and in the meantime the group, a part of the group was lost (got employed). (...) And at that moment, when we went to try to identify/call for more people, it was not possible and we had to interrupt the course (E\_PT\_AL\_7).*

*The companies, the work they have, it's a work, let's say, it's not continuous in the true meaning of the word. They have some continuous work, but it is, so to speak... perhaps continuous work is the greatest, but then here is a slice of work that is temporary. For example, we already know that enterprise 3, next year, will have work, will have a stop of 3 months or so of the sort. At that time, there are not*

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<sup>13</sup> Despacho conjunto n.º 1083/2000.

<sup>14</sup> Portaria\_60\_A\_2015 of 2nd of march

*enough people, not at all. Everyone is employed at that time. If we do an inquiry, for the Ministry, at that time, everybody is employed (at the time of the machines' maintenance stop is when the man workforce is most needed) (E\_PT\_AL\_6).*

Another condition for success is the official documents' discourse on the direct link between qualification and employment, as it responds to the trainees' aspirations. Therefore, one cause-effect sequence that can make the present policy successful is the double certification, that is the opportunity for adults of getting a compulsory education certification along with a professional qualification, highly valued by the trainees. At last, a condition for success is the inclusion of the in-job training as part of the curriculum; this element facilitates the labour market insertion after the course's conclusion, as many interviewees have referred to, when asked about course-work transition.

*But I think I'll learn this when I go to the internship and when I have those more practical classes later. But I think if I want, I can be a good professional. (Y\_PT\_AL\_3)*

#### *Analysis of the case from the LCR perspective*

EFA courses promote equal-life opportunities in specific for under qualified people over 18 years old, no longer allowed to the regular school attendance. It offers a training model focused on differentiated flexible paths, considering the individual contexts and experiences of trainees. The pedagogical approach of these courses is practice oriented and it is based on the national qualifications' referential. This approach is highly appreciated by young adults and the pedagogical relationship among trainers and trainees is reported in the interviews as easy, respectful and different from those most have found in regular schools.

*Here is much easier. We learn with practice, it is not with theories. You see, certain engineers, everyone says and everyone knows, theoretical, theoretical, theoretical. No, this is bad. This is practical. Theoretical is what it does, isn't it, but practice ... and that's why the training centres are good, because it is theoretical and practical, and more practical. I like it (Y\_PT\_AL\_6).*

By being designed at the national level, this policy does not seem to recognise de-standardised life courses. It previews various economic supports (meals and transport expenses), children's care expenses, on top of a (short) grant. In spite of this support, interviewees refer that it is not enough to face trainees' poor life conditions that are traditional in this sub-region in these trainees' social group.

*(adolescence was difficult) Because of having to stop studying to work, small sacrifices I had to make in life. I had to grow very when I was young. (...) I never stopped wanting to take the 12th grade, it was never forgotten. There were priorities, I had to do that (to earn money). Now, as I am more calm, more*



*comfortable, I will take it now, taking the opportunity now while it is time (Y PT\_AL\_5).*

These courses come as a second or even a last chance to make a life change, in the young adults' discourses for attending this provision. Achieving compulsory education and at the same time a professional qualification of their interest, corresponds to the trainees' initial expectations. And therefore, to get a stable economic situation and to have a family life are central aims. This linear correspondence between training and labour market in the official documents reinforce the young adults' aspirations of a life change.

*Yes, because there was a time there that I thought, "Dam, this is nothing. I'm going to finish the 12th grade, that's what". Then I asked if there were courses to finish the 12th in the evening or something. Then they told me about this. (...) But I, my intention was even (the course of) welding, my hobbies, and one earns rivers of money (Y PT\_AL\_6).*

There is no public data on these policies' outcomes such as employability rates; therefore, it is not possible to affirm on this offer's success concerning this linkage between education/training and labour market.

*We do not do any analysis, no evaluation of the training itself in terms of impact or in terms of success (E\_PT\_AL\_7).*

Also it has to be mentioned that the European Union economic agenda expressed in the Lisbon Strategy is shaping LLL policies, as seen in policy discourses. It does so by favouring economic sectors' needs assessment of skilled working-force in order to face the challenge of becoming the most competitive knowledge economy in the world. Therefore, certification and qualification are pointed as the keys to respond to unemployed and under qualified people.

By listening to key informants of the National Employment and Professional Training Institute, (IEFP), youth unemployment is not listed as a socioeconomic challenge in the Alentejo Litoral subregion. Instead the long-term unemployment among the 40-50+ low qualified adults is the pointed issue. Furthermore, with a vibrant local economy in expansion and a well served area in terms of VET offers, youth unemployment in the AL region is, in the eyes of local and regional public training providers, an individual issue, due to lack of soft skills not developed due to fragile socio-economic backgrounds.

*There is, there is, there is (youth unemployment), but it is often an unemployment that I would say stems from hmm situations that derive from social situations. What do I mean by this: it has to do with family disruption problems, hmmm and therefore it is not properly related to the fact that there are no employment for young people or opportunities for qualification. That is, they exist (such opportunities exist) (E\_PT\_AL\_7).*

In WP4, WP5 and WP6 National reports (Alves et al, 2017) it was put in evidence the naturalization of a regional labour market based on precarious working conditions. The

words of the young adults' working experiences in the three stronger economic sectors of the subregion, - agriculture, industry and tourism - put in evidence structural characteristics of the AL labour market. They use key expressions like: "*inhumane work*", referring to the great physical work under extreme heat in agriculture; "*impossible to organize a life*" considering the temporary work contracts and the internationalized working shifts; "*degrading working conditions*" describing the lack of working material, as well as eating and toilet pauses in a food industry assembly line or "*a person has no life of its own*" considering the intense restauration schedules in restaurants and coffees work settings, incompatible with the social life of a 22 year old young man.

To avoid these instable and degradable working conditions, which these youngsters do not conform with, is what draws them to get a qualification in order to one day put up their own business.

*Because we have already complained about it, but they (the industry) are always advised in advance of when an (working conditions') inspector is going and when there are inspections everything is working properly. But then, after several stressing periods, I decided that I was 21 at the time and did not want to kill myself, to finish my life in a wheelchair, or within 4 boards. And I thought, "No! If at this age I do not think about having a better life it is not when I'm 40 or 50 that I'm going to change that". (...) And, right now, my goal is to end the course and have my own business (Y\_PT\_AL\_8).*

#### *Analysis of the case from the GOV perspective*

As a national policy with local implementation, the States' central departments take on the decision-making process. The ANQEP centralizes the decisions on the National Qualifications Referential and Catalogue, with its own advisory structures such as sectoral councils or qualifications needs assessment system (SANQ), also in form of a web portal. In this portal, employers can submit a qualifications' request. Additionally, it includes a regional deepening phase anchored in the network coordinated by the Intermunicipal Communities (CIM) as sub-regional administrative structures. The linkage between all local stakeholders to accomplish this sub-regional needs' assessment should allow cooperation. But such does not happen in the AL sub-region, as the CIM in AL favours non-participation and passivity within the local qualification's system, as seen in the WP6 National Report.

*From CIMAL? In fact, this year, they (ANQEP) said that we were obliged in the (Vocational Education) network, before the meeting, to send our network proposal to the CIMAL, which is what I did. And not a word. (...) It was supposed to be discussed there (at the network meeting) with them. They did not even show up. (E\_PT\_AL\_5)*

The IEFP, that implements EFA courses, decides upon which qualifications from the national catalogue is adequate to each local territory. Although considering previously defined national priorities, local units may determine the actual skills's offer by consulting

their formal, as well as informal (based on personal contacts) networks of providers, employers, local governments and civil society. The IEFP assumes a role of cooperation towards its other partners within the public VET network, complementing existing offers. Implicit and unreachable conflicts may arise between the ANQEP and the IEFP, when the bureaucratic structure of the ANQEP cannot respond to a request from the IEFP to create a new qualification.

*I do not say that the relationships are good or bad (between the ANQEP and the IEFP), these are strange (...) Tense, no. They are strange. (...) For example, the (national qualifications') catalogue ... the catalogue's example, which is managed by the ANQEP. The catalogue was an excellent tool for the regulation of training. Undoubtedly, in 2007, under the reform. Some people do not like to call it reform, but it was a reform. It was very good, because it regulated, and we know what is there. But then we have a problem. If there is a local specificity, we have to go to the ANQEP, then it takes time. (...) We (the IEFP) integrated the ANQEP but we integrate the ANQEP, we do not manage the ANQEP and the structures of the ANQEP are heavy. (...) The labour market is dynamic and we have to be dynamic to follow the labour market (E\_PT\_AL\_2).*

This situation envisions a structural governance conflict between the Ministry of Education (that also supports ANQEP) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity (supporting the IEFP), in the decision-making of the local skills' offer. Although the ANQEP is under the joint tutelage of both referred ministries, it is ruling alone the vocational education local networks where the schools' VET offers are negotiated. It includes the IEFP local units but under an observer status and do not include the other public training providers within the IEFP's network. From the training centres experts interviews this situation is calling for a better articulation of both networks', including all education and training public operators.

*I do not know if it would not make sense to have an articulation body here, in which also the IEFP training units, the Training Center 1, the registered centers, the direct management center, the associated management centers, which let's say are the spine of the public training system, could also articulate. I am not saying that there are no relationships, that there are no articulations. But I mean, that I know of, although I have been three years out, structurally it does not exist: the Ministry of Education does its network work, the IEFP and its network of centers, participative and others, do their work, the ANQEP here makes a definition of joint policies, namely for vocational education and that somehow gets the part of vocational training ... (...) Now, if that could come to exist (this articulation body), all the better, if we (training centre 1) help in the definition of the network, with our knowledge of the region's own socio-economic fabric... (E\_PT\_AL\_1).*

Professional Schools' experts interviewed express also misunderstanding on the ANQEP's decisions concerning the skills' offer. They argue the inflexibility of the SANQ by describing how in this sub-region the CIM is not taking its responsibilities and the employers do not know the SANQ, asking directly schools when in need of a new qualification.

Although the SANQ was established as an innovation with clear strategies to make a needs' assessment reflecting local's labour market characteristics it does not offer much alternatives. Specifically, it does not consider the IEFP's and the Schools' knowledge of local territories, as some experts have noticed, when describing the process undergone to propose a new qualification, assisted by local stakeholders and based on local labour market's needs. Proposals are refused or ignored by the ANQEP, with the argument that the SANQ's procedure has to be followed.

*It is a very interesting course, we think. And in their perspective (the local association of the sector), with good professional opportunities. And last year, for example, we tried to open it, we proposed to open, and they (ANQEP) said "No. Not provided on the network". If not provided in the network, this course cannot exist, must be replaced by another. (...) They say it's not a course ... (in the priorities set by the SANQ) ... Why? Because they limit themselves to going to the SANQ, to the Anticipation System, but that is often still unknown to the employers. Employers do not know that they have to go to the SANQ... (...) I think we know, as schools, what are the courses in need, because we work directly with the companies and what are the courses that have better prospects for the region than they do there in Lisbon, isn't it? Because they are based on the SANQ and not always the SANQ, I think, reflects what is in need... (...). And then, what they (ANQEP) said: 'Ah, and the farmers', the farmers, whom they consider important, 'have to go to the SANQ.' (...) Afterwards, they will have to go to the SANQ, according to the National Agency for Qualification (ANQEP), they will have to go there, they will have to register, they will have to say what is the need for a qualified workforce, so that it can be, in the following year, part of the list of the courses. So that the schools can later propose (in the VE network's meeting) (E\_PT\_AL\_5).*

In the implementation, decisions are taken with wider autonomy by the local IEFP provider in terms of in-job training places, trainees and trainers' recruitment, pedagogical materials, considering the characteristics where the training takes place. But the EFA courses' policy does not give much margin to 'local' adjustments. Although policy-makers and providers, within the IEFP, have autonomy on the skills' offer definition, its action is still tight in opening courses. The interviews often mention how a minimum trainee enrolments' to open a course (N=15) is not adequate to a region such as AL with a high territory dispersal and a bad public transports' network.

*The great constraint we feel is how can we bring people into training. It has to do with the issue of accessibility and the public transport network (...). Because we have large territory and few people and scattered ... What we have tried is given the difficulty in bringing people to training and the training center 2, we try to go ourselves there. We try to decentralize our training. Because we sincerely have done it more, because the access requirements were also different, now they are a bit more difficult (...) [I speak] of the minimum number of trainees, ... we could make a small group of 15 more easily than with 20. Then to do 15 we have to work with a lot more (people), to do 20 we have to work with much more (E\_PT\_AL\_7)*

Another case of mismatch between policy and local characteristics, as mentioned earlier, is the imposed ESF calendar that does not consider local labour market specificity.

Different providers of civil society and young adults are even less heard than state departments, economic sector or labour market actors. Within the local State's structures, we can find the Municipal Education Councils, where some civil society actors are represented, but only at the education/training level. These Councils include economic and labour market agents but do not comprise all civil society organizations. Also, economic sectors and labour market agents are not formally organized, and no aggregate chambers were found in the AL sub-region. It is the IEFP itself that mobilises local contacts and builds informal networks to listen to big and small companies to find answers to qualifications' needs. Microenterprises, seen as individual elements due to lack of organization to bring forward their aspirations, are very hard to reach and seldom heard.

*Indeed, our access to large companies is relatively easy. (The access to micro-enterprises), it comes from a lot of this perspective, our proactivity, contacts, passing through the territory, also as a way of getting to know the territory, that sometimes we visit an accounting office and next door is a restaurant and next to it is a consulting company, that also knows that meanwhile in the Industrial Zone opened a manufacturing company of materials of something... and that's it, it is a bit through this relationship. Or by way when they enter the Employment Service, they are looking for us proactively looking for us or not, we have to be proactive and proactive in this perspective (E\_PT\_AL\_7).*

The CCDDR, the regional development coordination commission, mobilizes several society sectors to elaborate strategic planning documents to guide the ESF implementation, according to the EU framework documents. Nonetheless, in an interview, the key informant mentions how all this effort, driven by the ESF condition of strategic planning, it is not followed up due to a lack of coordination culture among State departments in Portugal.

*In theoretical terms this (the Alentejo 2020 strategy) is done, in terms of the document, of the preparation of these planning documents and all. Then, going from planning to practice, that is, implementing the regional strategy of intelligent specialization, for example, is a very big step and is not being sufficiently given. Because the CCDDR does not have the means to do it (...) It does not work, first and foremost because of a cultural issue. Unfortunately, at national level. (...) And of lack of preparation and a lack of training and say of a collaborative attitude of the various services. (...) Agriculture is agriculture, CCCDDR is the CCDDR education is education and therefore there is "nothing here for anyone". The cultural weight of the attitude of each one in each farm, has more significance than the rest (E\_PT\_AL\_2).*

4. Emerging issues and cross-case issues to be explored in comparative analysis

Coming to the final part of this report, we now take the opportunity to identify the main similarities and distinctive aspects among both cases described and analysed before.

Professional courses and EFA courses are two of the many training provisions integrating the national VET offer. We find similarities regarding the policies' aims as both intent at the attainment of the Portugal 2020's benchmark of generalization of secondary education as the lower qualification level of the population. Policy discourses mention these as measures to defy high levels of ESL, school failure and youth unemployment. Additionally, both offer evidence on the linkage between education, training and the regional labour market, being characterised by a vocationalist approach, also aligned with the EU guidelines.

However, differences allow us to stress target groups that are different as Professional Courses are targeting young people (15 or more with 9<sup>th</sup> grade) choosing for a fast labour market insertion, over an academic path towards higher education. On its turn, the EFA courses target underqualified young adults over 18 years old, employed or not, as an option to those who are illegible to re-enter / continue in school by being over its age limit (18 years old).

As evidenced in the "Story of the Case" Section, EFA courses delivered by the National Employment and Professional Institute (IEFP) have their target-group redesigned, focusing the unemployed over 18 without compulsory education. Due to the Institute's main function of managing the unemployed population a side with assuring professional training, EFA courses, in this particular setting, behave as an active labour policy and Professional Courses as an education sector policy. Therefore, EFA courses end up concentrating unemployed young adults with incomplete school paths and Professional Courses host students accomplishing their vocational education, in a parallel path to the regular education.

Another similarity can be found in the top-down vertical approach of these two policies, applying locally the guidelines set by national law. The state rules on target-groups, certification, course structure, teacher/trainer profile and subjects' evaluation, holding also the function of monitoring and main funder. Although the VET offer is defined according to the regional labour market with more or less control from the state, the course's curriculum and the national skills framework is centralized, as described in the following paragraphs.

Considering differences, from the WP6 National report description (Alves et al, 2017; Ribeiro et al, 2017), the governance of the skills' ecology in both regions is antagonic. On the one hand, the local coordination in Vale do Ave is a notably example of a good practice. CIM AVE and the ADRAVE are the main institutions bridging the several stakeholders and structures in the sub-region. The main role of both institutions is to recognise the region's needs and the available instruments, mediating the work between all the several elements of the network, in order to reach the region's aims in the several social areas. Despite the ANQEP's intention to encourage a skills needs' diagnosis at the regional level, it still centralizes the definition of courses' curriculum. It affects both Professional and EFA courses, as previously mentioned.

On the other hand, in the AL sub-region, where the EFA courses are one LLL policy priority, it is visible the disarticulation and the absence of a coordinator element and an active networking between the different stakeholders involved. The state plays a central role and CIMAL, by not assuming its responsibilities in taking an active role in the regional skill system, gives room to the state to define the regional skills agenda (WP6 National Report). Therefore this situation puts in a marginal place, municipalities, business associations, civil society associations and trade unions. Contacts between providers in order to build a relevant training offer are mainly informal, spontaneous and dependent on personal contacts, mainly with big or small enterprises. Additionally, these contacts do not consider the workmanship needs of microenterprises, which are the main element of the Portuguese economic sector. If not organized, which is commonly the case, their training needs stay unknown.

In what refers to differences, as seen in the data brought forward to illustrate both policies' attendance numbers, Professional courses show figures with an impressive regularity, in all NUTS' levels in comparison to the EFA courses.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Portugal (NUTS I)	110462	113749	115885	117699	114848
Norte (NUTS II)	41812	43333	43667	43586	42316
Vale do Ave (NUTS III)	5488	5728	5781	5993	5924

**Table 5:** Number of students in professional courses in Portugal, Norte and Vale do Ave, between the years 2011 and 2016.

Source: DGEEC

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Portugal (NUTS I)	32.106	36.241	53 008	48.830	45.763

**Table 6:** Adult learners enrolled in EFA courses in public training centres from 2011 to 2016

Source: IEFEP

This occurrence can be given to the fact of a more stable funding trend to the Professional Courses. As seen in VdA, Professional Courses can be totally funded by private corporations with interest in specific qualifications or when national funding is not enough. Such does not happen with EFA courses, as funding is totally dependent from the ESF, compromising the actual training in times of fund freezing, due to the ESF inner rhythm.

Another similarity is found in the interviews to young adults. The vocationalist dimension of both policies is highly recognised and highlight a significant difference between regular school and Professional or EFA courses. These come as an alternative to those young adults with less aptitude to academic education, that have experienced failure in regular schools or even dropped out, feeling more at ease with a practical approach.

Differences can be found as to the social attitude towards each policy. Professional Courses' students seem to suffer from stigma, as regular school's teachers and the students' families and friends mistrust this offer's quality in assuring professional success and an eventual higher education pursue, so much socially valued. This high social recognition is a consequence of an educational system structured to democratize and massify higher education's access, since 1974's democratic revolution. Until then it has been an option closed to the popular and working classes. Only on 1989 Professional Courses were finally established in the law as a legitimate educational path option, and not as a strategy to deal with school failure. Also, by the labour market characteristics, Professional Courses for long time were mainly aiming at qualifying the industrial workforce. This sector seems to offer unattractive working conditions and according to the salary tables, wages differ and are higher according to academic certification.

On the contrary, EFA courses come as a real option to make a life change, therefore receiving recognition from friends and families of the trainees. This provision is seen as the only available offer. It is recognised as an opportunity to complete compulsory education and get a professional qualification, or to realize a professional vocation with low cost, not available elsewhere.

Finally, in this line of ideas and regarding young adults' life projects, again, it is a similarity among both cases to find the majority anticipating an immediate entry in the labour market. For these young adults, it is the only way to a stable economic situation and to accomplish a family life, rather than pursuing academic studies in higher education. Although we can find a significant difference between those attending a professional or an EFA course. For some experiencing Professional Courses, this path is mentioned as a dream that might come true later or it is already happening in one of the cases. On the contrary, some attending the EFA courses have already failed at regular school, aiming at higher education and a few make reference to higher education but as an unreachable dream.



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**Work Package 7**  
**Regional/local Case Studies**  
**National Report Scotland**

**Queralt Capsada-Munsech**  
**University of Glasgow**

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## Acronyms

ACAR – Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region

CPE – Cultural Political Economy

DYW – Developing the Young Workforce

GCR – Glasgow City Region

GOV – Governance perspective

LCR – Life Course Research

LLL – Lifelong Learning

MA – Modern Apprenticeships

RSA – Regional Skills Assessment

SCQF – Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework

SDS – Skills Development Scotland

SFC – Scottish Funding Council

SG – Scottish Government

SQA – Scottish Qualification Authority

YA – YOUNG\_ADULLLT research project

## 1. Executive summary

### Objective and structure of the report

- This report focuses on the aims, meaning, implementation and specificities of the national policy *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW) in two Scottish regions: Glasgow City Region (GCR) and Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region (ACAR).
- The intention of the report is to tell the story of this policy in the two regions analysing the correspondence of meanings attributed to the policy by national policymakers, regional managers, practitioners and young adults' beneficiaries of the DYW policy, as well as identifying governance issues and (un)intended consequences on young people's lives.
- The report starts with an introduction to the DYW providing an overview of its aims, objectives and planning, followed by a brief historical overview of policy making in education and training in Scotland. The governance of the policy and the selection of the regional cases close the introductory section. Afterwards, the analysis for each region constitutes the main body of the report. Last but not least, the results for both regions are compared, pointing at the principal similarities and differences detected.

### Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) policy

- Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is currently the main education, training and employment national policy in Scotland. As its title indicates, the principal objective is to better prepare young people in Scotland (16-24 years old) for the labour market. It is steered by the Scottish Government (SG) and provides a clear 7 year programme plan (2014 to 2021) with specific objectives for different institutions (schools, colleges, employers) with concrete targets to be achieved.
- DYW aims at ensuring that all young people who leave school continue to be engaged in any kind of learning activity. Its strategy is to be as inclusive as possible, providing flexible educational pathways that facilitate a long term educational strategy for every young person. The way to make educational pathways more flexible is by strengthening the vocational and training education system and improving the work experience of young people starting from school.
- There are two key points in the recent history of policy making in Scotland that have influenced the priorities and guidelines of DYW: the focus on skills for the labour market and the direct link of youth education and training policies with the labour market ones.
- In the DYW policy document all objectives, milestones and measures are set at the national level. However, the production and setting of strategies translate into a local/regional implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to allow for some degree of flexibility to adapt these targets and processes set by the national policy to the local/regional needs.
- The fact of having to implement the national strategy at the regional level makes it an interesting framework for comparison across Scottish regions. We have selected

two regions with a relevant share of the population in Scotland, but that differ in their main economic activities, socioeconomic structure and composition of young people with regards to their qualifications and socioeconomic background. Moreover, both of them were early starters in the implementation of DYW at the regional level.

### DYW in Glasgow City Region

- The implementation of DYW in GCR is steered by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, as they were invited by the SG to apply for the funding to lead the implementation of DYW in GCR. The fact of having an organisation with established links with regional employers and organised activities facilitated the set in motion of DYW in the region with regards to employers' engagement.

- The main way to promote these flexible pathways focuses on providing information to young people in schools and trying to influence their educational decisions. DYW and managers in GCR think that familiarising students with other educational environments is a way to promote and facilitate these transitions, especially among young adults who lack other kinds of support and information from family or friends.

- The intention is not to normalise the educational pathways and ways to get into the labour market, but standardise the outputs of the process: education and employment, which in the Scottish policy sphere is labelled as "positive destinations".

- The architecture of the system is designed to link the different stages allowing to complete them at different speeds. According to their reasoning, it promotes that students stay in the education system after compulsory education, providing different options, such as Foundation Apprenticeships that can later link to the Modern Apprenticeship.

- The work of DYW managers and practitioners is to think in a pathway perspective and try to get as many regional employers engaged as possible to increase the opportunities for young adults.

- None of the four young adults interviewed mentioned the school as a place where they were influenced or set in direction of an apprenticeship, nor put in contact with an employer. They all heard of DYW and the possibility to engage in an apprenticeship scheme later on, when they had already left school and because of different circumstances.

- Some interviewees think that the current system does not support all young adults throughout their learning journeys. There is a clear educational pathway for those that want to follow the academic path, another one for those that do not fit into the academic route but "behave properly and are proactive", but there is no clear alternative to support those that are not in any of the previous. Moreover, some young adults have the feeling that the apprenticeship system is for those that do not want to continue to study.

- Although the "ideal" DYW pathway is that young people will never leave the learning component on their lives and that they will transition from school to an



apprenticeship, to college or university, reality is not certainly like this for a non-negligible share of young adults in GCR.

- The young adults interviewed come from a deprived area in GCR and none of them had a standard educational pathway and insertion into the labour market as expected in DYW policy document. They all have been getting in and out of education and work. However, the reasons for having these non-standard trajectories vary.

- According to practitioners in the region, working in a case work basis is more effective for disadvantaged youth. The weekly contact with a person that builds on young adults' confidence and preferences seems to influence to a larger extent these young adults than the general talks and activities they might have received at school. Support to these young people should come to an earlier stage and with higher intensity than the one suggested in DYW national policy document

- The implementation of DYW at the GCR is strengthening the coordination and partnership model beyond the previously existent relationship and partnership working culture. Each institution has a different role and they need each other in order to attain their objectives and DYW goals. One good example of this formal and systematic coordination is the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) scheme.

- One of the main peculiarities of GCR is that most of the people in charge or related to DYW management and implementation already knew each other. The fact that their organisations were previously in touch and collaborating for other reasons has probably facilitated parts of the coordination and implementation process.

- Another one of the main specificities of GCR is the above average number of young people coming from socioeconomically disadvantaged families and/or living in deprived areas. This is the main reason why the equality measures in the DYW national policy take special relevance in the region.

- One of the feature shared by all institutions taking part in DYW in GCR is that they all have a good knowledge of the socioeconomic characteristics of the region and the problems that families and young adults in deprived areas are facing. This facilitates the adaptation of DYW to local needs to the largest extent possible, even if that might sometimes clash with the expected national targets.

### DYW in Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region

- The Scottish Government invited the Grampian Chamber of Commerce to candidate for leadership of DYW in the region, creating a regional group to govern the recommendations proposed by DYW policy.

- The underlying assumption of DYW policy is that potential influencers of young people's educational and career decisions have to have access to all the information available in order to support young adults to make the best decision for them. This perspective is shared by managers and practitioners in ACAR.

- DYW managers in ACAR stressed the relevance of parents as key influencers in the educational and career decisions of their offspring. Since they accept that they do not exactly know at what stage children really make decisions on their educational

pathways and future careers (primary and/or secondary school), ACAR managers have decided that influencing parents is a good strategy to indirectly influence young people.

- The testimonies of the young adults interviewed fit into the overall structure and planning of DYW, as the three young adults interviewed have had linear trajectories. After school they either moved to college and/or engaged in an apprenticeship that smoothed their transitions to the labour market.

- Although the young adults interviewed mainly argued that they made their own choices on their educational pathways and later careers, once the conversation developed they pointed out at some key influencers. Some of them are part of the DYW policy in the region. The discussions with the career advisors at school or college seem to have made young people reason and elaborate on their educational choices.

- The influence of the parents was also mentioned by two of the young adults. However, their influence seemed to have more to do with supporting and smoothing their decisions (get an internship placement or advice on how to prepare an interview) rather than in taking the actual choices. It is also worth pointing out at this stage that young adults interviewed in ACAR did not talk about other life spheres beyond the education and work ones.

- The bridging between schools and employers and the promotion of the vocational pathway described by the national document can be easily identified in the explanations of regional managers.

- DYW managers and practitioners recognize that the balance between promoting available careers and educational pathways that have available vacancies in the area is in tension with the type of jobs and careers that might interest young people. However, they still accept that their main role is to promote the different routes among young people to make sure that they continue into some form of learning after leaving school.

- There is some discussion going on about the main task of a career advisor, which is to support young people to make decisions, instead of making decisions for them. All young adults interviewed acknowledged the support of the career advisor.

- The different organization of the schools has challenged the identification of the right contact person and the subsequent systematization and linking with employers in ACAR.

- A lot of initiatives and programmes supporting young people in their educational pathways and transition to the labour market were already in place in ACAR. DYW has served as a way to organise them and try to coordinate efforts in the region. It has also served as a way to recognise already existing practices and to identify duplications.

- One way to face these duplications is coordinating people under the regional DYW umbrella: working on partnerships with educational institutions to make sure that there is a single voice promoting engagement between them and the regional

employers. So far, schools, colleges and universities have been contacting employers separately, making it a bit chaotic and difficult to employers.

- While the implementation in the region seems to be following the national directives, there are some tensions in reorganising and making clear which is each one's role and place in the big picture of supporting young people in their educational and labour market transitions.
- The oil and gas industry and the economic activity related to it used to show a dynamic picture and the market was self-coordinating to some extent. With the introduction of DYW the institutional coordination has been promoted and there has been a period of establishing links and meeting people in the different institutions. This has facilitated the process of systematization of the existing programs and initiatives to make them more efficient.
- The singularities of the area make that the careers youth have in mind are more related to engineering and technical fields than it actually is in other Scottish areas. Even the only female young adult interviewed chose a mechanical engineering career.

### Comparison of the two Scottish regions

- In both cases the DYW regional teams have prioritised the task of connecting schools with regional employers. In both regions this has served as a way to systematise and strengthen already existent connections between schools and the world of work and initiate new ones.
- In both regions there is a rational approach to educational and labour market transitions from DYW managers. Even if in the case of GCR it is acknowledged that some disadvantaged young adults might have more difficulties in building their learning journeys, it is quite assumed that the main education and career routes are not affected by other life domains. The fact of focusing on the 16-19 age group strengthens even more this assumption, leaving aside the rest of the targeted group by DYW policy (20-24).
- Policy managers and practitioners have to deal with quite different realities. While in GCR the involvement is mainly with disadvantaged youth coming from socioeconomic vulnerable families and deprived areas with a multiple number of barriers, in ACAR the youth interviewed come from working class or immigrant background, but they do not show a number of social and health barriers that difficult their educational and labour market transitions.
- Youth in GCR mentioned a number of personal situations (e.g. health problems, pregnancy, childbearing, elder care, financial constraints) that deviated them from the standard and smooth educational and labour market transitions considered in DYW policy document. This was not the case in ACAR, where the youth interviewed could easily fit into the definitions considered in the national policy.
- While in GCR the discourses of managers and practitioners are very much focused on equality issues and in working on the barriers that prevent these young adults to get back into education or into the labour market, in ACAR they focus on

identifying the key influencers of young adults and how to further support them to make their own educational and career decisions. In GCR the key influencers mentioned by youth are all family members or close friends, whereas in ACAR they have mainly mentioned career advisors or activities related to DYW

- Employer engagement with the school and providing information about the existent choices might work for non-disadvantaged young people, but not for disadvantaged ones. In GCR, DYW managers and practitioners have developed mechanisms to retake these disadvantaged young adults who left school if they get in touch with any local authority institution.

- Although DYW leaves enough flexibility to the regions to identify the local/regional needs to better adapt the policy to them, there is no further support on how to do it and the regional and local actors are left themselves to deal with these needs, regardless how challenging they are.

- While in GCR the DYW team seem very proactive in looking for employers, regional employers seem to have a more passive role. Conversely, in the case of ACAR it has been noticed a more active role from the employers side in engaging with schools and other educational institutions.

- DYW national policy seems to fit to a better extent in ACAR. DYW actions and ambitions might work to strengthen vocational education and training in Scotland among young people who are not highly disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms and that do not have difficulties in other life domains beyond education and training. Therefore, more efforts and resources should be directed to rethink the policy for the most disadvantaged young adults, who might need early intervention before they reach the last year of compulsory secondary education.

## 2. Introducing Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

### Overview

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is currently the main education, training and employment national policy in Scotland. As its title indicates, the principal objective of this national strategy is to better prepare young people in Scotland (16-24 years old) to participate in the labour market. This national policy steered by the Scottish Government (SG) provides a clear 7 year programme plan - from 2014 to 2021 - with specific objectives for different institutions (schools, colleges, employers) in Scotland and with concrete targets to be achieved. Since the policy is still being implemented and developed at the moment of writing this report, it is obvious that the analyses and results will only take into account part of the process and results that are being undertaken.

Overall, from a SG perspective the policy aims at strengthening and raising the standards and value of vocational education and training in Scotland, so that it is regarded as an equally interesting and useful form of learning as academically oriented education. The objectives of the national policy are built having in mind the educational and working trajectories of young people in Scotland. The main idea is facilitating the construction of individual “learning journeys”, which are educational and learning pathways flexible enough to be meaningful and useful for each young adult. However, it is expected that these individual learning journeys will lead to one of the situations considered as a “positive destination” by the SG. These positive destinations basically include any type of learning, employment and/or volunteering activity. Implicitly, those youth whose main activities do not include any of these situations are to be considered as not being in a positive destination, being maternity/paternity, caring for a dependent person or sick leave possible examples, although not explicitly mentioned by the DYW policy document.

The main tool that the SG is putting in place to raise the amount and quality standards of apprenticeships for young people - especially focusing on 16-19 year olds - is the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) scheme. The reasoning for focusing on apprenticeship scheme for this age group is making sure that young people who are not going to college or preparing for university have a route to take once they leave school that still ensures a learning experience. MA is a work-based learning scheme that aims at matching young people (mainly 16-19) who are not in education and training and who are looking for a first labour market experience.

Given the difficulties to find a chance in the labour market for youth without work experience and the difficulties of employers to find suitably skilled workers, the MA scheme is understood as a win-win situation for both the young adult and the employer: the learning component is funded by the SG (via the government’s skills agency Skills Development Scotland, SDS), while the employer gets the chance to train someone while working at the cost of a minimum wage. The compromise set by the formal scheme facilitates engagement from both parts (youth and employer) making it easier to continue into the job after the apprenticeship period, if possible and agreed by both parts.

The SG understands the involvement of employers in linking with schools, colleges and in recruiting young people as a key issue. The national policy understands that employers are the ones that can give young people a chance of gaining work experience and learning at the workplace. This is why a great part of the strategy is focused on how to promote the creation and establishment of links between educational institutions and local and regional employers. While employers “give young people a chance in the labour market” the SG ensures that young people continue into any form of education beyond compulsory education (+16). This is understood as a way of promoting equality among young people in Scotland. The underlying assumption is that continuation in learning activities will improve young peoples’ chances of better employment, especially for those subgroups of youth who are more likely to be unemployed or in non-standard employment trajectories (e.g. ethnic minorities, people with disabilities).

### Policy background

In order to understand DYW it is important to have a historical look at the recent Scottish policies in education and training, labour and youth. It is worth pointing out two key points in the evolution of policy making in Scotland at the national level that have certainly influenced the priorities and guidelines of DYW: the focus on skills for the labour market and the direct link of education and training policies with the labour market ones. The following paragraphs outline the recent policy history in education and training in Scotland.

For the past decade the SG has been quite active in the formulation of policies related to education and training for young adults. Following the devolution of powers on education, the Scottish Office saw Lifelong Learning (LLL) as a way to train the workforce and tackle social exclusion. It was an elegant solution to the main political Scottish concerns of the moment: social justice and international competitiveness (Cook, 2006). Therefore, LLL was part of a wider agenda, tackling social exclusion by helping people to get back to work and extending their learning opportunities.

While this agenda was initiated after devolution by the Labour party, after the May 2007 Scottish Parliament elections the new Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) minority government replaced the previous LLL agenda by a new skills agenda (Mark, 2013). In 2007 the SNP Scottish Government published the policy document “*Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy*” (The Scottish Government, 2007). It shared a number of messages and objectives with the previous Labour-led LLL strategy: understanding the relevance of an educated and skilled workforce for enhancing productivity, economic growth, at the same time that supporting employability and social inclusion by providing learning opportunities to individuals to improve their lives (Payne, 2009). The skills strategy introduced a renewed concern to develop a demand-led skills delivery system more responsive to both individuals’ and employers’ needs. It also introduced a lifespan perspective including early ages in the strategy. However, the main difference between the LLL strategy and the skills strategy is the focus on skills utilisation (Field, 2009; Payne, 2009). This shift became even clearer after the economic crisis, with the refreshment of the Scottish Skills Strategy “*Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the recovery and increasing*

*sustainable economic growth*" (The Scottish Government, 2010b) adapting it to the post-2008 economic recession context.

During the same period, educational strategies promoting learning options for youth after 16 years of age like *"16+ Learning Choices. Policy and Practice Framework. Supporting all young people into positive and sustained destinations"* (The Scottish Government, 2010a) or *"Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education"* (The Scottish Government, 2011) were setting the grounds for DYW policy. In 2012, the publication of *"Action for Jobs - Supporting Young Scots into Work. Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy"* (The Scottish Government, 2012a) by the Ministry for Youth Employment introduced the work and employment approach. The same year, this employment policy was linked with the education and training perspective via *"Opportunities for all: Supporting all young people to participate in post-16 learning, training or work"* policy (The Scottish Government, 2012b).

Given the new economic and social situation, the priority for the SG was still improving young people's education and training opportunities and outcomes, at the same time that promoting their use in the labour market, even in a post-recession scenario. Following this reasoning, in January 2013 the SG set the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. This commission, led by Sir Ian Wood<sup>1</sup> (The Wood Foundation), had the task to make recommendations to the SG in order to produce better qualified, work ready and motivated young people with relevant skills to the labour market. The recommendations of the commission would work as a basis to face the challenges of youth unemployment, scarce numbers of youth with vocational education and training and the limited opportunities for youth to gain work experience in Scotland.

In April 2014 the Scottish Ministry for Children and Young People published the policy document *"Our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people in Scotland. National Youth Work Strategy 2014-2019"* (The Scottish Government, 2014c). However, in June 2014 the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce published its final report entitled *"Education Working for All!"* (The Scottish Government, 2014b). The report included 39 specific recommendations for the SG concerning education and training (school, colleges, apprenticeships, partnerships, quality...), the involvement of employers (in schools and colleges and in recruiting young people) and how to advance in equality issues (gender, ethnic groups, disabled people...).

In December 2014 the SG published the policy document that drives this report: *"Developing the Young Workforce. Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy"* (The Scottish Government, 2014a), which basically is a strategy to implement the recommendations from the commission. The recommendations are organised in five main sections: Schools, Colleges, Apprenticeships, Employers and Equality. Each of the sections starts briefly stating the current situation, then outlines how to involve

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Ian Wood is the founder of The Wood Foundation, a philanthropic organization which has as one of its core objectives to support the development of the youth workforce in Scotland. More information at <https://www.thewoodfoundation.org.uk/>



people in the actions to be taken; afterwards, a yearly plan is set up with specific goals, which are further developed in yearly milestones to be achieved; finally, a set of measures are presented in the form of key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the progress of the work undertaken.

Although it is pretty obvious that DYW policy document is a result of the recommendations of Sir Ian Wood's commission, all previous policy documents set the grounds for the DYW strategy, which is expected to be the main policy for education, training and youth employment in Scotland from 2014 and is planned to take place until 2021.

## Governance

As Education is one of the devolved powers to the Scottish Parliament in the late 1990s, it is not surprising to observe this high degree of activity in the policy making on education and training, linking it to other areas of governance with more limited powers. In the DYW policy document all objectives, milestones and measures are set at the national level. However, the production and setting of strategies at the national level usually translates into a local/regional implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to allow for some degree of flexibility to adapt the targets and processes set by the national policy to the local/regional needs.

The "Scottish model" of policy making has been described as a "more negotiated, decentralised and network form of governance, with more attention to processes of consultation and accountability" (Cairney, Russell, & Denny, 2015; Grek, 2011) in comparison to the English one. DYW, as other Scottish policies produced during the past years, very much insists in the partnership model as a way to facilitate the implementation of national policies at the regional level. Nevertheless, the debate remains open regarding to what extent the incentives and promotion of partnership work can be easily undertaken at the regional level. The existent local/regional actors, institutions, their policy orientations and distribution of powers might easily vary across Scottish regions, facilitating to a lesser or larger extent the regional partnership work.

The fact of having to implement the national strategy at the regional level makes it an interesting framework for comparison across Scottish regions. This is why in this national report for "WP7 local/regional case studies" we compare how the two functional regions under study (i.e. Glasgow City Region and Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region) are adapting and managing the implementation of DYW in the regional context and which are the implications for the young adults in the region.

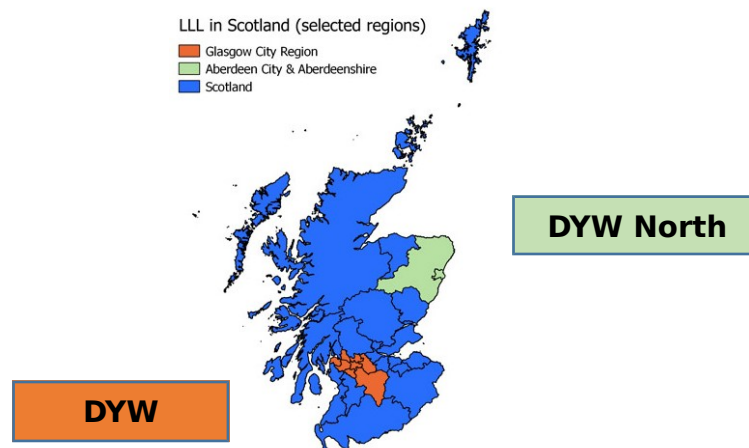
## Case selection and comparison

There are a number of reasons that make interesting the comparison of DYW in Glasgow City Region (GCR) and Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region (ACAR). Both of them were early starters of DYW in Scotland. The fact of having strong regional and local partners and the willingness of the regional Chambers of Commerce to lead the implementation of the policy at the regional level make them interesting cases to monitor for the rest of the regions. Both of them include a large percentage of the Scottish population. However, the composition of young people and the local



labour market characteristics differ. While GCR has a polarised youth population in terms of qualifications who work in a wide range of service sector economic activities, ACAR has traditionally been a pole of attraction for highly skilled young people to work in the oil and gas industry. Moreover, the 2008 economic downturn affected to a larger extent GCR than ACAR, although ACAR was hardly hit by the 2014 oil and gas price crisis. These are all good and interesting reasons to compare the development of DYW in the two Scottish regions and the intended and unintended consequences on young people in the region.

**Figure 1: Selected Functional Regions in Scotland**



Source: authors' own elaboration.

### 3. DYW in Glasgow City Region

In this section we present the case of DYW in Glasgow City Region (GCR). We first introduce the policy in the regional context, we then tell the story of DYW in GCR based on the empirical material gathered in the region paying attention to the different meanings attributed to the policy, its implementation and the originality and specificities of the case. Finally, we analyse the whole story framed in the theoretical perspectives used in the project, paying special attention to the objectives of the policy (CPE), its governance at the regional level (GOV) and the implications for young adults' lives (LCR).

The material analysed in this section comes from different WPs from the YA research project. The policy document and the identification of the main messages was initiated in WP3 Policy mapping, review and analysis. The quantitative data comes from WP4 Quantitative indicators and WP6. The interviews with young adults (n=4), managers and practitioners (n=3) come from WP5 Qualitative analysis, while the interviews with regional policy makers and managers (n=4) come from WP6 on the regional governance of skills supply and demand. The material has been reanalysed in order to further explore and understand the story of the implementation of DYW in the region and its implications for young adults.

#### 3.1. Introduction to DYW in GCR

According to one of the interviewees (GCR1), Glasgow was the first regional group in Scotland to start undertaking the DYW work. One of the recommendations of the Wood's commission report (The Scottish Government, 2014b) was to set regional employer-led groups to adapt the DYW to the regional needs. However, Glasgow pre-dated the Wood commission recommendation, as there was already an existing employer-led group in the region known as "Glasgow Employer Board". This is a closed employer group created by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce for other purposes, but when DYW came into the picture they decided to discuss DYW policy matters in the framework of this board, although they also discuss other topics.

The implementation of DYW in GCR is steered by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, as they were invited by the SG to apply for the funding to lead the implementation of DYW in GCR. The fact of having an organisation with established links with regional employers and organised activities facilitated the set in motion of DYW in GCR with regards to employers' engagement. The willingness and focus on engaging employers in DYW is quite clear in the DYW Glasgow website (<http://www.dywglasgow.com/>), as the welcome message is mainly directed to employers:

*"Developing the Young Workforce Glasgow engages employers with a range of partner led youth employment and development initiatives to help develop skilled, talented and work ready young people to grow our city.*

*As a Glasgow employer, you can help build an industry ready workforce and expand the skillset within your team. DYW Glasgow*

*will help you find the right opportunity to develop the workforce of tomorrow, future proof your business today and grow a legacy for the future."*

However, there is no representative from education institutions in the steering group. Hence, one of the points they have been working from the beginning of DYW Glasgow is establishing these links with schools and colleges in the region.

Glasgow City Region (GCR) is one of the largest city regions in the United Kingdom and it is Scotland's largest populated region, with 1,804,400 people living in the region, representing 34% of Scotland's population (UK Statistics Authority, 2015). In terms of youth population, Glasgow City presents a quite youth population, with 24.4% of the population aged 16-24 years old, way above the Scottish average of 18.5% (Scotland's Census, 2011)<sup>2</sup>. Although Scotland is not a very diverse country in terms of ethnical background (84% white Scottish), Glasgow City – jointly with Aberdeen and Edinburgh City – is one of the regions with the largest variation in terms of ethnicity (78.6% white Scottish).

One of the differential characteristics of Glasgow City is the larger share of socially disadvantaged people. The share of economically inactive people (aged 16-74) who are considered as long-term sick or disabled is 23.7%, way above the 16.6% Scottish average. This figure widely varies across GCR areas and it is mainly concentrated in the most deprived areas in GCR.

In the educational sphere, Glasgow City presents a more polarised picture. The percentage of 16-17 year olds in education is below the national average (74.4%, below the 79.8% Scottish average), which is considered one of the key transitions in the Scottish educational model (i.e. positive destinations). The share of the population with no qualification is also quite high (32%, compared to the 26.8% Scottish average), but the share of people with higher educational qualifications is 25.9%, similar to the Scottish average of 26.1%.

According to Skills Development Scotland (SDS)<sup>3</sup>, in 2015/2016 the number of Modern Apprenticeships (MA) in the region was about 3,370, representing 13% of the total MA in Scotland. Construction related MA were the most popular group, which represented 22% of the total MA in the region and it was heavily gendered (98% male). From April to September 2017 there were 6,368 registrations in My World of Work<sup>4</sup>, 1,298 MA started, most of them among 16-19 year olds (644), while the rest were taken by youth aged 20-24 (307) and older than 25 years of age (347). The total number of MA in training in September 2017 was 3,841, which already represented 75% of the total target to be achieved. The enrolment in

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2 Scotland's Census <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

3 <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43999/making-skills-work-briefings-winter-glasgow-city.pdf>

4 My World of Work is registration website to enroll in an MA, get career guidance or other DYW related services <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

colleges in the region represented 23% of Scotland's total. Therefore, Glasgow area concentrates an important proportion of vocational education and training.

Last but not least, in terms of employment and economic activity the most relevant economic sectors are quite similar across the whole GCR, being the service and retail sector the most important, followed by human health and social work activities and education (Skills Development Scotland, 2014). According to Scottish Census data (2011), the share of economically active people in Glasgow City is around 65%, below the Scottish average (69%). The unemployment rate in Glasgow City is 6.5%, also above the Scottish average (4.8%), although the youth unemployment rate (16-24) in the City is 27.8%, below the Scottish average (30.2%). However, these figures vary across the region and the percentages of economically active and unemployed people concentrate in different regions.

### 3.2. Telling the story of DYW in GCR

Following the WP7 proposal structure we have organised the story of DYW in GCR in three subsections corresponding to the analysis in terms of correspondence, implementation and originalities. In all cases the story is addressed from a top-down perspective, starting with the national policy aims and objectives and scrolling down to the regional implementation by managers and practitioners, the interaction with young adults and the impact in their lives.

#### Reasoning on the correspondences of DYW meaning in GCR

The first analytical perspective focuses on the correspondence and coherence of the meanings of the policy across the different actors involved at the regional level. As argued in the introductory section, DYW aims at ensuring that all young people who leave school continue to be engaged in any kind of learning activity. Its strategy is to be as inclusive as possible, providing flexible educational pathways that facilitate a long term educational strategy for every young person. The way to make educational pathways more flexible is by strengthening the vocational and education system and improving the work experience of young people starting from school.

The target group is young people from 16 to 24 and the policy is supposed to support all of them in their educational pathways and later transitions into the labour market. However, the main focus is in promoting the vocational route via the apprenticeship model. Policymakers at the national level certainly understand the policy as a way to support young people who would not consider university or college as their next step after leaving school. Instead of letting them go to the labour market with no further education or training, DYW wants to promote the vocational route among this subgroup of young people. However, no emphasis is made on young people who are planning to go to college or university, as the policy understands that they already have an existing route and that there is no need (or resources) to support their connection with the world of work when leaving school.

Following the directives of the national policy, at the moment in GCR the main way to promote these flexible pathways mainly focuses on providing information to young people in schools and trying to influence their educational decisions. As argued by one of the managers of DYW in the region:

*"Ideally what you are trying to do in terms of DYW in schools is the right opportunity at the right time. You are trying to encourage young people to realise what the opportunities are so that when they are being given choices, whether it is about subject choices or post group destinations, they have got the right information to make the right choice at the right time for them. That didn't exist 6 or 7 years ago." (GCR1 manager)*

As stated by the same interviewee (GCR1) *"it is a really interesting time to be a young person in school because your blended learning opportunities are probably greater than they have ever been"*. For instance, in the last year of school young people can take part of their studies in colleges (e.g. an afternoon a week) or they can combine college with an apprenticeship. This flexibilisation aims at smoothing

the transition from school to other educational stages. DYW and managers in GCR think that familiarising students with other educational environments is a way to promote and facilitate these transitions, especially among young adults who lack other kinds of support and information from family or friends.

Hence, the intention is not to normalise the educational pathways and ways to get into the labour market, but standardise the outputs of the process: education and employment, which in the Scottish policy sphere is labelled as “positive destinations”. Actually, the architecture of the system is designed to link the different stages allowing to complete them at different speeds. According to their reasoning, it promotes that students stay in the education system after compulsory education, providing different options, such as foundation apprenticeships that can later link to the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) scheme and so on:

*“So, the Foundation Apprenticeships will have been designed with component parts of Modern Apprenticeships. So, a young person who completes a Foundation Apprenticeship is completing modular parts of a Modern Apprenticeship. They are just doing it in school. They are going on afternoon release to college to be able to do that. Then they are doing the second part of their learning as work based learning with an employer. The same as you would with a Modern Apprenticeship, they are getting their applicational learning.” (GCR1 manager)*

At the moment the implementation of Graduate Apprenticeships is also taking place, which would be the next step in the apprenticeship scheme, combining educational courses at college and/or university and applying it at the workplace. According to another of the DYW managers (GCR2), the apprenticeship is understood as the main route to employment. The work of DYW managers and practitioners is to think in a pathway perspective and try to get as many regional employers engaged as possible to increase the opportunities for young adults. Actually, this is the second way to promote the vocational education and training pathway: by engaging employers with schools.

As part of the action of linking schools with regional employers each one of the 36 secondary schools in Glasgow City have been partnered up with an employer in the region (e.g. BBC Scotland, Scottish Power...) and there is a person from that firm going to the school and delivering information sessions on how it is like to work in this company, which kind of jobs are available and they even organise visits to the working place for last year students. In theory, this is aimed to familiarise students with labour market opportunities in the region and to facilitate the contact between the employers, the educational institutions and the young adults. However, the interviewees stated that most of the connections are based on matching schools and employers needs to the largest possible extent. The construction and strengthening of links between schools, colleges and regional employers are planned for the next year (The Scottish Government, 2014a).

These actions linking employers with schools are not taken as a crucial activity by young adults interviewed. None of the four young adults mentioned the school as a

place where they were influenced or set in direction of an apprenticeship or put in contact with an employer. They all heard of DYW and the possibility to engage in an apprenticeship scheme later on, when they already left school and because of different circumstances. However, it can certainly be the case that since these actions have started to be undertaken in 2014 some of the young adults interviewed were not in school anymore and the ones who were still there might have been at school only when initial steps to connect secondary schools with employers were taking place.

Regardless the flexible pathways approach, some interviewees (GCR3) think that the current system does not support all young adults throughout their learning journeys. There is a clear educational pathway for those that want to follow the academic path, another one for those that do not fit into the academic route but “*behave properly and are proactive*”, but there is no clear alternative to support those that are not in any of the previous:

*“If they do well at school, well enough then continue with education and that is the big expectation of the day, if they’re good at school but not academic but behave properly and are proactive then the education system will try pushing them towards apprenticeship but if they are neither of those I’m afraid they’re sort of just left.” (GCR3 DYW practitioner)*

Moreover, in addition to the academic bias and the behavioural one, it seems that some of the young adults interviewed also interpreted the information they got at school from the vocational route (apprenticeships) as a pathway for people who want to leave school and leading to subjects mainly dominated by men:

*“I haven’t heard about DYW until [name of the firm], but I think that was I would say I was more into subjects that into looking to leave school because I feel they were going our school was great but for apprenticeship it was more targeted towards the kids that were leaving in fourth year going into more plumbing, electrical jobs and I do feel that was because the kinda area we were in, it was very working class area so you want to give them something before they leave, even if they’ve not left with qualifications, so I feel that the apprenticeship really focused on that and if you were studying higher then you were to worry about that at a later date because you’ll probably go for further education.” (GCR4 young adult)*

Actually, the young adults interviewed come from a deprived area in GCR and none of them had a standard educational pathway and insertion into the labour market as expected in DYW policy document. They all have been getting in and out education and work. However, the reasons for having these non-standard trajectories vary. One of the young adults had to quit the course in the college because of financial problems (GCR4), as this person did not have enough money to pay back the student loan. Another one left education because of mental health problems (GCR5) and another because of caring responsibilities of an elder relative and then being pregnant (GCR6). The fourth young adult changed several times the sector in which

would like to work, which also led to a back and forth transition in terms of education and training (GCR7).

Probably these young adults and other disadvantaged ones would need further individual support than most young adults in this stage of their life to prevent them from leaving education at early stages. Certainly, employer engagement with the school and providing information about the existent choices might work for non-disadvantaged young people, but not for disadvantaged ones. DYW has mechanisms to retake these disadvantaged young adults who left school and who are probably not working if they get in touch with any local authority institution. As one of the DYW practitioners in this deprived stated:

*"You got to me because I work we work on a case work basis, you probably live in [name of region in Glasgow] and I would have been allocated to you I would have phoned you we would have met here in the ..... complex and we would spend I would try and meet you once a week or once every two weeks outside one to one for up to two hours at a time depending on whether your group one, multiple barriers, or group two no barriers, em that would dictate how often we met, if your group one you've got multiple barriers, you've got no qualifications, and you've never worked, em I would be meeting you once per week hopefully, you've also got a lack of confidence and some social anxiety em I would be spending months one two and three working through these issues with you putting you on other maybe local programmes other [name of the organisation] programmes to reduce those barriers, and once you've got if that worked months four five and six would be spent putting CV together em applying for jobs, applying for Modern Apprenticeships, maybe applying for college if it's the right time of year and perhaps applying for [name of organisation] programmes." (GCR3 DYW practitioner)*

It seems that this type of case work basis is more effective for disadvantaged youth. The weekly contact with a person that builds on young adults' confidence and preferences seems to influence to a larger extent these young adults than the general talks and activities they might have received at school. All young adults interviewed agreed that the DYW practitioner was a key influencer in their educational and work decisions. Beyond this person, for all the young adults interviewed the key influencers in their educational decisions, such as the subject of study (GCR4), the sector of work (GCR6) or getting back to study (GCR5) were very much influenced by family members, partners or friends. None of them mentioned teachers or career advisors as key influencers in their educational decisions, although some of them agreed that they got interested in specific subject areas in school or college.

### Reasoning on the implementation of DYW in GCR

The second analytical perspective concerns the implementation of the policy, which considers the interactions between the actors in the different phases of the policy



cycle. Given the nature of the DYW and the focus on implementation, we are taking as a starting point the policy document directions in implementation and tracking to what extent this national planning is conducted in GCR and how it is adapted and articulated.

The national DYW policy document (The Scottish Government, 2014a) is quite impressive in terms of the degree of specification on the implementation and direction for a document of its nature. As argued in the introductory chapter, each one of the sections includes targets for institutions (Schools, Colleges, and Employers) and subjects (Apprenticeships, Equality), a yearly activity plan for the seven years programme, milestone activities and how to measure the progress to attain the targets. The whole policy relies on establishing further links between existent policy frameworks and actors in the education and work spheres.

However, this articulation has to come at the regional level, as already previewed in the policy document. The aim of the SG is that the local authorities will work in partnership with the employers' representatives and unions to build this regional system. Part of the key success is also expected to be thanks to the commitment and efforts of partnership between local authorities and national institutions (i.e. Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)).

With regards to the relationship between the public and private sector, DYW document already states that there is a *“strong sense of cohesion of partnership”* at the moment between public institutions and businesses in Scotland and what has to be done next is to strengthen it. Actually, the DYW policy aims for a cultural shift, in which employers do not see themselves as simple customers of the education system, but as co-investors and co-designers. These few sentences in the policy document exemplify it:

*“Employers play a central part in these efforts. Through their understanding of the skills they require, and of future labour market demand, employers can help to shape the workforce of the future by helping to develop and deliver young people’s experiences of the world of work while at school, for example, in offering high quality work experience and in inputting to careers guidance.”* (The Scottish Government, 2014a)

In the case of GCR it is true that the partnership way of working is already existent, but not in a systematic and organised way. Specific partnerships were already existent in the region between concrete institutions (e.g. regional college and local business). People interviewed from different institutions stated that they have been in touch with each other and shared information for a long time. Actually, the geographical location of some of these institutions in George Square in Glasgow (Glasgow City Council, Skills Development Scotland, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce) facilitates coordination of activities and information.

However, these are more the result of personal leaderships and social networks than a planned strategy to strengthen the coordination between the world of education and work. The implementation of DYW at the GCR is strengthening this coordination and partnership model beyond the previously existent relationship and partnership working culture, as each institution has a different role and they need each other in order to attain their objectives and DYW goals. One good example of this formal and systematic coordination is the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) scheme, one of the flagship actions of DYW. In order to put it in place each institution has to play its own role and coordinate tasks with the rest (e.g. funding, communication, monitoring). Below follow a couple of examples of coordination among institutions to place a young person into the MA scheme:

*“So through SDS, if an employer comes to us [Glasgow Chamber of Commerce] and says we would like to take on a young person, we are thinking about an MA, we would refer them to SDS as employer engagement team and they would talk through the practicalities, what is it you are looking for? That would fit into this framework. Then through their network of training providers, post those vacancies and then the training providers say “I take that. I’ll speak to that employer and I will deliver that MA.” They will find the young person. That is a referral. We raise awareness with employers. We present them with an idea of an MA but when it gets down into who is going to deliver an MA, we would pass that to SDS because that is their area of expertise.” (GCR1 manager)*

*“We put them [employers] in touch with the appropriate stream to source about Modern Apprenticeships. It would come through if a business contacted us and “I have a young person who I have interviewed and who I want to employ and I would like to put them through a Modern Apprenticeship. Then we would signpost them to Skills Development Scotland for our working partner who would then contact them and take it to the next level.” (GCR2 manager)*

Glasgow Chamber of Commerce is leading the implementation of DYW in GCR based on the direction of the Employers Board. However, no representatives from the education system are present in this board. They have a good working relationship with SDS because of the coordination of the MA scheme and because of a matter of economic incentives: employers look for young people to take into an apprenticeship, but the training component is not paid by the employers but by SDS (i.e. public funding). For Glasgow Chamber of Commerce *“an apprenticeship is a job”* (GCR1), but for SDS and public authorities it is certainly a learning scheme that also leads to employment. However, it seems that this scheme works and is useful for both employers and young adults who want to stay in the job:

*“...the subsidy only covers the training element of it and they are paying a wage anyway, whether they get the training or not. They are still paying that person either minimum wage or Glasgow living wage and subsidy is a bonus for the training element of it. So the*

*training element stops when the training is completed. They still usually want to sustain the young person in employment.” (GCR2 manager)*

Another example of coordination comes from one of the practitioners working in a foundation that is involved in DYW supporting young people’s educational and labour market pathways. Therefore, it seems that the different institutions in the region are coordinated to link young adults with employers:

*“...we work in partnership, the project I’m on just now works in partnership with Glasgow Guarantee, which is a Glasgow City Council initiative back on the Commonwealth Games, so they refer young people to our project as well.” (GCR3 practitioner)*

Although DYW is facilitating the implementation and communication among policymakers, managers and practitioners at the regional level to put in place the MA scheme, the way young people get in touch with any of the related activities of DYW varies. Although the “ideal” DYW pathway is that young people will never leave the learning component on their lives and that they will transition from school to an apprenticeship, to college or university, reality is not certainly like this for a non-negligible share of young adults in GCR.

Among the four young adults interviewed in GCR none of them had a standard transition from school to an MA. Only one of them was referred by an institution (GCR5) which was the job centre. This young person was running out of unemployment benefits and the job centre referred this person to a foundation that could provide support to engage into an MA scheme. However, this young adult had already been to college and engaging in an MA had more a value of getting back into the labour market rather than a learning component. The other three young adults were self-referred based on the suggestion of the partner who was also in the MA scheme (GCR4), of a friend who posted the announcement of a job fair in a Facebook post (GCR6) and on an advertisement seen “somewhere” and went into the website to find out more about it (GCR7). They had all been out of school, either working, to college or both. Although these three were self-referrals, there are two different channels: via the website (we understand SDS’s “My World of Work” website, <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>) and via a job fair. Here it is important to raise again the relevance of key influencers on young adults’ decisions and the availability of information.

Even if Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, SDS, Glasgow City Council, foundations/charities and secondary schools in Glasgow work in partnership and are building on strengthening this relationship following the DYW guidelines, there is a fuzzier relationship with the regional colleges. DYW guidelines promote the partnership with regional colleges, but none of the interviewees of the Glasgow Colleges’ Regional Board (GCR8) and regional colleges (GCR9) in GCR mentioned any established form of partnership with SDS and Glasgow Chamber of Commerce in relation to MA scheme. However, it is worth pointing out that in DYW policy document the partnership work among colleges and schools to deliver vocational pathways is planned by the fourth year (2017-2018), which means that at the

moment the interviews analysed in this document took place the actions to link colleges with the rest of the system had not started yet.

Although the regionalisation of colleges and the information provided by SDS in the Regional Skills Assessments (RSA) is at the regional level, at the moment there is not any specific mechanisms in place to lead college students to MA apprenticeships or any similar scheme. GCR colleges have links with regional employers, but the interviewees did not mention any formal or established partnership or form of coordination between them.

### Reasoning on the originalities of DYW in GCR

The third analytical perspective is to identify the special features of the case study with regard to the integration of the specific measure into its context and in terms of its originality. One of the main peculiarities of GCR is that most of the people in charge or related to DYW management and implementation already knew each other. The fact that their organisations were previously in touch and collaborating for other reasons has probably facilitated parts of the coordination and implementation process. As mentioned above, some of these institutions have the main offices in Glasgow's central square. This geographical proximity facilitates frequent face-to-face meetings and further collaboration. This point is very much related to the previous section on implementation correspondences, although it is worth pointing out that it is quite specific of this case and it is not the common norm in other Scottish regions.

Another one of the main specificities of GCR is the above average number of young people coming from socioeconomically disadvantaged families and/or living in deprived areas. This is the main reason why the equality measures in the DYW national policy take special relevance in the region. Actually, one of the intentions of DYW is to improve opportunities for young people who come from a more disadvantaged background, being gender, ethnic minorities, disabled people and young care leavers among the targeted groups identified in the policy document. These groups were identified by the Wood's commission as having more difficulties or being somehow disadvantaged in their educational pathways and transitions to the labour market.

Although the Commission concluded that these are the main target groups to focus on and work to reduce the barriers they face, the policy document is not specific on actions or plans to raise employment among them. The goal is to reduce the unemployment rate of these groups, increase their participation in education and employment, but the way to do it is supposed to be the same as for the rest of young adults. The underlying assumption of DYW policy is that in order to be successful and contribute to society it is fundamental to be employed.

Although promoting employment among young people might be beneficial in general terms, the way the promotion of employment is done might be more or less successful in including different profiles of young people given their socioeconomic circumstances. Managers and practitioners in GCR are well aware of it. One of the feature shared by all institutions taking part in DYW in GCR is that they all have a good knowledge of the socioeconomic characteristics of the region and the

problems that families and young adults in deprived areas are facing. This facilitates the adaptation of DYW to local needs to the largest extent possible, even if that might sometimes clash with the expected national targets.

The main interviewee (GCR1) dealing with DYW in Glasgow stated and provided examples of ways in which equality is addressed as a cross-cut issue. Some of the programmes and links between schools and employers take into consideration some of these groups (i.e. disabled people). Some of the colleges in Glasgow receive an important share of students who come from a socially disadvantaged background (e.g. long-term unemployed parents, low income households, low educational attainment households...). According to one of the persons interviewed in the college (GCR9), part of their work relates to linking with local employers and persuade them to take disadvantaged young adults in internships to give them a chance. However, they also commented on the challenge of promoting it among young adults, who may not see the benefits of engaging on an unpaid internship. Although these unpaid internships are beyond the DYW MA scheme, they are still in line with DYW policy in terms of linking educational institutions with local employers.

According to another of the practitioners related to DYW the range of people supported under the policy might vary, but most of them have low qualifications and null or limited work experience (GCR3). The same person also states that most of these young adults get in touch with DYW policy or are referred to the scheme because of their socioeconomic background. In fact, all the young adults interviewed can be considered as disadvantaged and can fit into one of the targeted groups identified in the policy document. However, in some cases the main reason for having more difficulties in educational pathways and transitions to the labour market are not directly linked to one of the main targets of DYW. The young adults interviewed come from a deprived area in GCR and have a working class family background. One of them also stated that has a disability since birth (GCR7). However, the main reasons for leaving school or college without a qualification are related to mental health problems (i.e. depression, bullying at school) (GCR5), because of having to care for an elder relative and later on becoming pregnant and having a baby (GCR6) or funding reasons (GCR4). Obviously, these reasons might all be related or strengthened by the fact of belonging to one of the disadvantaged groups identified by the DYW.

Although DYW leaves enough flexibility to the regions to identify the local/regional needs to better adapt the policy to them, there is no further support on how to do it and the regional and local actors are left themselves to deal with these needs, regardless how challenging they are.

### 3.3. Analysis of DYW in GCR from the theoretical perspectives

After telling the story of DYW in GCR and analysing the main correspondances in meaning, reasoning the implementation and the originality of DYW in GCR, we analyse the results using the three theoretical perspectives that constitute the theoretical framework of the YA research project: Cultural Political Economy (CPE) (Jessop, 2010; Sum & Jessop, 2013), the Life Course Research (LCR) (Elder, 1998; Heinz, 2009) and the Governance perspective (GOV) (Altrichter, 2010; Ball & Junemann, 2012).

### DYW in GCR from the CPE

The way the DYW policy document, national policy makers and DYW managers in GCR think about young people educational pathways and trajectories into the labour market has a very rational choice approach. They assume that if they provide the right information and show young people at the schools the possibilities, chances and options they have in terms of education and labour market careers they will make the right choice for themselves. However, the opinion of practitioners dealing face-to-face with disadvantaged young adults is quite different. They are more aware of the “real” lives of young adults and the difficulties and problems they have that are not specifically taken into account in the policy thinking. Obviously, the policy document cannot take into account all possible situations and challenges young adults in each region might face. However, a less rationalistic approach that includes other life domains beyond the education and labour market one might help young people to “fit” into the policy.

The previous point is very much related with the target group. DYW basically targets all young people aged 16 to 24 in Scotland. The aim is to make sure that they continue to experience an educational element in their post-compulsory education life. The introduction of the apprenticeship scheme aims at facilitating it for youth not oriented to the academic path. As DYW is a large national policy planned for 7 years, at the moment the first steps have been taken focusing on the 16-19 year olds leaving school. The current restriction to this age group and to this early transition from school to the next stage is leaving a part of the target group out of the main policy focus.

Even if the measures show that most of the youth are in a positive destination (i.e. education, employment, volunteering) the educational pathways and ways of transitioning to the labour market are not always happening as expected in the policy document. None of the young adults interviewed in GCR had a standard transition. This is well-known among the regional DYW managers and practitioners. However, even if they have in mind the most disadvantaged young adults they also have to work on activities and build links for the rest of young adults at school. Although the national policies allows for flexibility to adapt to the regional needs, there is no flexibility on the targets to achieve and measures to provide. This interaction between the relationship of the meaning of the problem and the solution and the way it is to be measured might be affecting the prioritisation of resources and activities in the region.

### DYW in GCR from the GOV

One of the main peculiarities of GCR is that most of the people in charge or related to DYW management and implementation already knew each other. The fact that their organisations were already in touch and collaborating for other reasons has probably facilitated parts of the coordination and implementation process. As mentioned above, some of these institutions have the main offices in Glasgow’s central square. This geographical proximity facilitates frequent face-to-face meetings.

So far, regional colleges seem to be less engaged in the core DYW implementation, as their main involvement is expected for the forthcoming year. The regionalisation

of colleges a few years ago already structured them in regions, aiming to facilitate the linkage between colleges' offer and regional employment needs. Although they are in touch with Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and SDS, their engagement with DYW seems to be lower compared to schools, based on what different interviewees said and omitted.

As stated in the introduction of GCR, this is one of the most populated regions in Scotland, but it also has large concentrations of deprived areas and socially disadvantaged people. The fact of having the ability to adapt the policy to regional needs allows to address specific measures to further target this group. However, the tension remains on who makes this prioritisation. The Chamber of Commerce is in charge of DYW in the region and should work to achieve the national targets. But the practitioners and other institutions working directly with the most disadvantaged youth claim that they do not receive enough support and that these young adults should have been more strongly supported while still at school. This tension certainly affects the opportunities of young people in the region.

### DYW in GCR from the LCR

One of the feature shared by all institutions taking part in DYW in GCR is that they all have a good knowledge of the socioeconomic characteristics of the region and the problems that families and young adults in deprived areas are facing. This facilitates the adaptation of DYW to local needs to the largest extent possible, even if that might sometimes clash with the expected national targets.

However, it is worth mentioning that the educational expectations of these disadvantaged young adults are lower than other young adults with a different background. Therefore, it might be claimed that beyond the improvement of their educational and employment possibilities and conditions, some efforts should be directed to improve their confidence and raise their expectations before they leave school.

DYW policy focuses very much on the education and employment spheres of young people's lives. The forward of DYW policy document is signed by the Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills & training and that obviously places the focus on skills to support employment. Hence, the references to education and training are always connected to promote and ensure better employment possibilities for young people and do not explicitly consider other life domains.

Although it is certainly true that there is an equality perspective that aims at crosscutting the policy strategy and measures, the equality barriers identified refers to employment too. The focus on gender, ethnic minorities, disability and care leavers are considered because these groups present lower employment rates or poorer working conditions than the rest of youth. However, there is a lack of consideration of other life spheres, like the family, personal and leisure spheres.

Obviously, one way to address this is by providing education and career guidance. Nevertheless, if this is not individualised and single case based it is difficult that these more general careers guidance mechanisms work with disadvantaged young adults that are likely to have more important and immediate personal problems



beyond their educational and career choices. As argued by the same DYW practitioner quoted above:

*"I think there is careers guidance in secondary schools but it's I think it's under resourced I think it's patchy, I think sometimes the quality is not great, I think it's more one size fits all – my world of works that kind of stuff, which is fine for someone who's on a pathway to NATS and beyond, not so fine for someone who's not engaging particularly well at the main education system." (GCR3 DYW practitioner)*

Actually, one of the young adults interviewed agrees that the type of career guidance at school was very much oriented into which was the next educational step and was too broad:

*"[...] there was careers advice but it was more not careers advice, but call it career advice what stone are you jumping onto next are you going to college or University? That was the kinda thing, there were talks that would come in and things like that, there were talks and things like and there was open days in the school and you would go over, you would go like a hall, [name of the school] would open up and all the Universities would come in and give you out books and everything, I did go round and I collected them, but they done it in such like your break you could go over like for 15 minutes so it was such like if your gonna put so much pressure on my future, give us least more that 15 minutes to read about it please". (GCR4 young adult)*

The policy and the way they get through a person who supports them in career guidance, in getting them a place in an apprenticeship or in continuing to further education studies just comes as a way to save them when things have already happened or gone into the "non-positive destination". Sometimes they do not fit into the policy framework because something unexpected happened to them. Therefore, in the case of GCR given the strong presence of deprived areas it seems that support to these young people should come to an earlier stage and with higher intensity than the one suggested in DYW national policy document.

Actually, after interviewing the four young adults in GCR it can be claimed that their education and labour market decisions are more related to their personal situation and environment than to the influence of DYW. The policy tries to normalize (even if in a flexible way) and keep on the good track (or take back) young adults with regards to their educational and labour market spheres, but they do not always take into account a lot of the personal situations that might make it difficult, like health and mental health problems, pregnancy, childbearing or caring for elders. It is clear that the key influencers of these disadvantaged young adults are close relatives, partners and friends, rather than professionals from education and labour market institutions.



## 4. DYW in Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region

In this section we present the case of DYW in Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Region (ACAR). We first introduce the policy in the regional context, we then tell the story of DYW in ACAR based on the empirical material gathered in the region paying attention to the different meanings attributed to the policy, its implementation and the originality and specificities of the case. Finally, we analyse the whole story framed in the theoretical perspectives used in the project, paying special attention to the objectives of the policy (CPE), its governance at the regional level (GOV) and the implications for young adults' lives (LCR).

The material analysed in this section comes from different WPs from the YA research project. The policy document and the identification of the main messages was initiated in WP3 Policy mapping, review and analysis. The quantitative data comes from WP4 Quantitative indicators and WP6. The interviews with young adults (n=3), managers and practitioners (n=3) come from WP5 Qualitative analysis, while the interviews with regional policy makers and managers (n=4) come from WP6 on the regional governance of skills supply and demand. The material has been reanalysed in order to further explore and understand the story of the implementation of DYW in the region and its implications for young adults.

### 4.1. Introduction to DYW in ACAR

According to one of the interviewees (ACAR1) based at the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC), previous to the publication of the Wood's commission report (The Scottish Government, 2014b) there were already some concerns about the difficulties faced by young people in their transitions from education to the labour market in ACAR. This is why an audit on this topic was commissioned previous to the Wood's report:

*"The starting point was for some time before DYW existed actually, we've been interested in seeing how we could better prepare our young people for work and how we could better align what the industry needed and what the region needed with what was being taught in school. We were always aware that there were lots of things going on in school but it was very poorly co-ordinated. So we did an audit of the level of activity between schools and employers in about 2014. So it was just in advance of the Wood review taking place. When the Wood review was being undertaken and reported we were then well placed and were very interested in the findings."*  
(ACAR1 manager)

Similarly to the case of GCR, the Scottish Government (SG) also invited the regional chamber of commerce to candidate for leadership of DYW in the region, creating a regional group to govern the regional recommendations proposed by DYW policy (The Scottish Government, 2014a). In this case the region is denominated as DYW North East and includes the regions under the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils.

Differently from GCR, from its regional website (<http://www.dyw.org.uk/>) it looks evident that their main goal is linking schools with employers. The main messages in the website are *“Our mission is to be the vital link between businesses and schools in the North East of Scotland”* or *“DYW help build meaningful partnerships between employers and education to benefit young people”*.

Aberdeen City is the third largest city in Scotland and it is well known for its oil and gas industry. Traditionally, the region was dependent on agriculture, fishing, and forestry and related processing industries, but over the past 40 years the development of the oil and gas industry and associated service sector has broadened Aberdeenshire’s economic base, and contributed to a rapid population growth of 50% since 1975. However, since the dramatic decrease of the price of the barrel of crude in 2014, the region is facing economic and social challenges that are affecting the structure of the region.

For the past years the oil and gas industry has impacted ACAR in several ways. It has rapidly increased its population, mainly attracting young people with high educational qualifications from Scotland, the UK and abroad. According to Scotland’s Census<sup>5</sup>, in 2011 the share of people aged 16-29 in Aberdeen City was 25.6%, well above the Aberdeenshire 15.2%, being the Scottish average 18.5%. In line with the previous, in Aberdeen City 75.3% of the population consider themselves white Scottish, well below the 82.2% in Aberdeenshire and the Scottish average of 84%.

Regarding education, the region is in a better position than the Scottish average. Although the proportion of 16-17 year olds in education is lower in Aberdeen City (76.6%) than in Aberdeenshire (80.6%) and the national average (79.8%), the proportion of the population with no qualifications is lower in Aberdeen City (20.2%) compared to Aberdeenshire (23.6%) and the Scottish average (26.8%). The opposite applies to the share of people with high level qualifications: the share of people with high qualifications is larger in Aberdeen City (33.2%) than in Aberdeenshire (27%) and Scotland (26.1%), highlighting the relevance of qualifications in the city.

According to Skills Development Scotland (SDS)<sup>6</sup>, from April to September 2017 there were 2,371 registrations in My World of Work<sup>7</sup>, 481 MA started, most of them among 16-19 year olds (318), while the rest were taken by youth aged 20-24 (106) and older than 25 years of age (57). The total number of MA in training in September 2017 was 1,941, which already represented 85% of the total target to be achieved. Therefore, the further education sector is quite active in the region.

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5 Scotland’s Census <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/>

6 <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/43985/making-skills-work-briefings-winter-aberdeenshire.pdf>

7 My World of Work is registration website to enroll in an MA, get career guidance or other DYW related services <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

Last but not least, in terms of labour market and the economic activity ACAR is an active region in the Scottish context. The share of economically active population in Aberdeen City (73.3%) and Aberdeenshire (74.9%) is above the Scottish average (69%) and the unemployment rate is slightly lower in Aberdeen City (3.1%) and Aberdeenshire (2.5%) than the national average (4.8%). However, the unemployment rate among 16-24 year olds is quite similar to the Scottish average (30.2%) in Aberdeen City (29%) and in Aberdeenshire (31.7%). Probably, the fact of having an overrepresentation of young population in ACAR might be part of the explanation for these figures. As mentioned above, the gas and oil industry, mining and related activities are the most important economic activities in the region both in terms of employment in professional scientific and technical activities, but also in terms of revenues. Other relevant economic sectors are the service sector and the human health and social care activities.

## 4.2. Telling the story of DYW in ACAR

Following the WP7 proposal structure we have organised the story of DYW in ACAR in three subsections corresponding to the analysis in terms of correspondence, implementation and originalities. In all cases the story is addressed from a top-down perspective, starting with the national policy aims and objectives and scrolling down to the regional implementation by managers and practitioners, the interaction with young adults and the impact in their lives.

### Reasoning on correspondences of DYW meaning in ACAR

The first analytical perspective focuses on the correspondence and coherence of the meanings of the policy across the different actors involved at the regional level. As stated in GCR section, DYW aims at ensuring that all young people who leave school continue to be engaged in some kind of learning activity. Although a non-negligible proportion of Scottish youth continue their learning journey to college or university, there are less youth that engage in the vocational education system or in workplace learning. One of the goals of DYW is strengthening the vocational and education system and improving the working experience of young people.

DYW policy recognises that young people are likely to be influenced by a number of people around them when making educational and career decisions. The intention is to engage these young people's influencers in the process too:

*"Key to success is the dialogue with those who influence young people, including parents, carers, careers advisors, teachers and practitioners, as well as young people themselves. A focussed and sustained approach to engagement and communication which involves people in the development and delivery of these changes will feature throughout our planned activity.*

*[...] through a national campaign, we will support parents and carers as they help young people to make choices at key points in their lives about the future. Similarly we will develop guidance to help teachers and practitioners work with young people as they explore the advanced provision on offer to them."* (The Scottish Government, 2014a)

The underlying assumption of DYW policy is that potential influencers of young people's educational and career decisions have to have access to all the information available in order to support young adults to make the best decision for them:

*"Key partners such as schools, colleges, local authorities and Skills Development Scotland all have a responsibility to engage with young people, and those who influence them, to ensure they have the right information to make informed choices."* (The Scottish Government, 2014a)

This perspective is shared by DYW managers in ACAR, as they agree that their main aim is to make young people aware of the educational and labour market opportunities out there. Beyond school teachers and employers coming into school

to talk about the world of work and their firms, DYW managers in ACAR stressed the relevance of parents as key influencers in the educational and career decisions of their offspring. Since they accept that they do not exactly know at what stage children really make decisions on their future careers and educational pathways (primary and/or secondary school), ACAR managers have decided that influencing parents is a good strategy to indirectly influence young people:

*“A lot of what we do when speaking with schools and discussing the activity that they have and what young people get involved in, we do actively encourage them to include parents as much as they can so when it comes to careers advice parents are going to be the main influencers. So, I guess the parents – not all parents know everything that’s going on, but if you encourage parents to get involved in the activity that the school provide or get the parents involved with the business partnerships that you’re setting up with employers and organisations, then the parents are party to that information as well. So it gives them more information and more experience in order to support their children as to what they want to do when it comes to careers or what they’re basically going to do when they leave school. So, certainly parents would have an active part of the whole DYW setup.” (ACAR2 manager)*

They are also quite critical with the “positive destination” approach of the SG. Going into college or into an apprenticeship cannot simply be considered as an absolute positive destination, as the field of study and type of career that they choose is very much influenced by the opportunities in the area but, as well, on the type of employers coming into the schools to talk to them and their economic sector:

*“At the moment, I feel that the measure of positive destination is not entirely the right approach to take because people end up going to college. They might end up being in college in the wrong course because they have never had [name of the interviewer] coming in and speaking to them about research. What they did hear was an oil and gas person coming in and speaking about engineering. So they have missed something. So, what we need to do is make sure that each of these young people get touched by all kinds of those key sectors across their school life. At least then they can make an informed choice rather than a choice based on the sector that has got the most money or the most people.” (ACAR1 manager)*

Therefore, they recognize that the balance between promoting available careers and educational pathways that have available vacancies in the area is in tension with the type of jobs and careers that might interest young people. However, they still accept that their main role is to promote the different routes among young people to make sure that they continue into some form of learning after leaving school, as suggested by DYW policy document:

*“We would go into schools, and we would promote apprenticeships as being a good route into the workplace, because we’re all about*

*making sure that young people are aware that there are different ways into the workplace. So whether that's further education to university; or directly into the workplace in a trainee-type role; or whether it might be an apprenticeship, which gives you structured training; and the workplace practical training as well. So, again, we don't set apprenticeships up, we're not involved in running the apprenticeships, but all we do is we would certainly promote them."* (ACAR2 manager)

These statements are clearly in line with the vocational pathway promoted by DYW, which is constructed by the apprenticeship model that starts with the Foundation Apprenticeship, follows with the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) and ends up with the Graduate Apprenticeship. As stated in the GCR section, this apprenticeship structure is not rigid, as there are multiple ways to undertake the different stages and at different paces. Beyond the Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the main promoter and manager of the apprenticeship system related to DYW in ACAR. As argued by one of the regional managers (ACAR3), the apprenticeship is a useful experience either to know if young people enjoy the experience and sector or if they do not.

Nevertheless, what still remains as a discussion on the table is the role of career advisors. As stated by one of the regional managers, the main task of a career adviser is to support young people to make decisions, instead of making decisions for them:

*"Careers advice in schools, it is worth understanding that careers advisors are not there to help them make the choices, they are there to advise young people on how to make the choices, not tell them what the choice should be. I am not sure that schools understand that very clearly either because I do hear from teachers... Well careers advisors will help them with their CV or help them with their job application forms or help them understand what their skills are but actually, that is not a career advisor's job to do that. The career advisor's job is to teach them career management skills so where to go and find out things and how to do the research."* (ACAR3 manager)

As part of DYW the main idea is that career advisors and other key influencers will support young people (ACAR4) to design their own pathways from school into the labour market. Actually, one of the young adults interviewed in the region acknowledged that he initially wanted to go to the university to become a lawyer, but that he changed his mind in a job fair when he got in touch with engineering companies. He discussed it with his career advisor, and after a visit to a college organised by the school he decided to go into college and into an apprenticeship in engineering.

However, the experience of other young adults differs. One of them (ACAR5) says that career guidance was not that supportive for her and that she was mainly influenced by her dad and brother. Another one of the young people interviewed

(ACAR6) saw several adverts online saying “*Better choice than university, Modern Apprenticeships*”, which made him become interested in it and search for more information on the scheme. He later discussed it with his career advisor at school. He then got a placement in the company where his father is an employee. The common trait of the three of the young people interviewed (two male and one female) is that the three of them chose a career in engineering, which is not surprising given the ACAR labour market demand. However, it questions the idea of “positive destination” posed by one of the managers in the region (ACAR1), who wonders if we should start wondering about the field of study to assess if it is a real positive destination for young people.

### Reasoning on the implementation of DYW in ACAR

The second analytical perspective concerns the implementation of the policy, which considers the interactions between the actors in the different phases of the policy cycle. As commented above in the introductory chapter and in the GCR section, one of the main goals of DYW is to link the regional education institutions with employers in the region as a way to smooth the transitions from school to an apprenticeship or to the labour market in general.

In ACAR the DYW regional team bears this idea in mind all the time. As stated by some of the managers interviewed in the region, they think their main role is linking the employers with the education institutions, but they also aim at making their skills agenda converge (ACAR1).

However, managers in the region also bear in mind that this is a national policy promoted by the SG and it certainly has a top-down approach. After the publication of the DYW document the SG pushed for the creation of regional groups that would regionally implement the policy. One of these groups is the North East one, which includes ACAR. Their primary role has been to link with local schools and employers and make the connections between them. However, they have noticed that different schools are set up in different ways and sometimes the contact person is the head teacher, in other cases a deputy head teacher, a guidance teacher or a careers advisor that some schools are appointing as a DYW lead at the school level.

Therefore, according to some of the DYW managers in the region (ACAR2) it has taken a while to connect and get to know the organisation of each school. The same manager has also argued that schools “*have been told*” by local authorities that they have to engage in DYW activities because this is a SG driven policy. Hence, it poses some questions to what extent local schools are engaging in DYW activities to support young adults at school or, conversely, they just participate because they understand it is a compulsory action dictated by the SG.

Some of the interviewees have mentioned that a lot of initiatives and programmes supporting young people in their educational pathways and transition to the labour market were already in place previous to DYW. DYW has served as a way to organise them and try to coordinate efforts in the region. It has also served as a way to recognise already existing practices and to identify duplications. Nevertheless, as argued by some of the interviewees, duplications are still existent:

*“Sometimes what we find on our travels up ‘til now that there’s lots and lots of initiatives out there that are targeting young people, with a view to them benefitting and getting developed, making them up ready for the world of work. So, there’s lots of initiative out there around building confidence and building self-esteem and lots on leadership and lots on employability skills and employers’ expectations. So, there’s quite a bit of duplication, there’s lots of things out there that are very similar.*

*[...] So, we need to make sure that we are working closely with the local authorities so that each other know what we’re doing to make sure that we don’t duplicate because they obviously want to make sure that this is being rolled out through their schools and we’re certainly doing that. But because they’ve also got their own DYW agenda, we need to make sure that we’re working together to make sure we’re not duplicating and doing the same things.” (ACAR2 manager)*

One way to face these duplications is coordinating people under the regional DYW umbrella: working on partnerships with educational institutions to make sure that there is a single voice promoting engagement between them and the regional employers. Otherwise, what has happened so far is that schools, colleges and universities have been contacting employers separately making it a bit chaotic and difficult for employers, as explained by one of the DYW managers:

*“Now there is a bit of a problem here in what I see in practice is that my team go out and speak to employers, the work experience team and the local authorities go and speak to employers. I have said how we might try to join those together over time but also you have got employee engagement people from the college going to speak to employers and university people going to speak to employers as well. So you could have 5 different people in the north east coming to knock on your door on a single day.” (ACAR1 manager)*

Actually, the ideal model suggested by DYW national policy and what the regional team is trying to put in place is that the DYW team becomes the bridge between schools and employers. The regional DYW team would work as a node of information and a meeting place for employers and school, avoiding the need for educational institutions to go out there and look for employers to engage with:

*“Essentially I guess I’m the person that’s front-facing the schools and businesses - what I do is I connect with a business and encourage them to engage with their local schools. Then I will make the introductions, support the meeting, get the round tables, speaking about what the school needs or would like and if that particular business or employer or organisation can support and offer something relevant.*



*[...] So we're engaged with business and industry, and find out what they do already or if they want to do anything, and then we find out what the schools are doing. And a lot of what we do is just matching them up, making the introductions, introducing a business to a school or vice versa; we facilitate the meetings, we'll support the meetings, and we'll basically support the relationship – we'll encourage them to build a relationship long-term and work together so that they both get mutual benefits from that relationship. (ACAR2 manager)*

So far, the engagement has been between schools and employers, as this is the first stage suggested by the DYW planning. However, DYW managers in ACAR already have in mind the expansion of the connections with regional colleges and universities. They even mentioned the idea of starting working with primary schools, as a way to start earlier in making children think about their future careers. Even if the national policy plans these actions for the forthcoming years, the ACAR DYW team would already like to be working on them. However, they claim they have not been able to do so because of limited human and financial resources.

Last but not least, the main implementation challenge mentioned is in terms of figuring out which is the big picture. In other words, where each person and institution does fit and how can they better serve their needs and interests. While they think that young people's needs are quite well covered via creating qualifications and structures to recognise them, this is not quite clear for employers. Since the implementation of the apprenticeship levy for employers, the direct benefits for them have to be more obvious. As argued by one of the DYW managers:

*"It is working with all these people to try and help them understand where they fit in the picture but also we are still trying to work out what the picture is. So it is a constant tension from that point of view because we have got to try and make it fit. We can't just say, here is a qualification, we are making this and it is up to you to work out whether it fits or not. Because the employers are paying for it through the levy, we have to make sure that it is fitting the needs of the employers as well as fitting the needs of the young person. Fitting the needs of the young person is easier because you create a structure and you create it at an SCQF level that is valid and useful and you provide exit routes that are built up. That is part of our job." (ACAR3 manager)*

Therefore, while the implementation in the region seems to be following the national directives there are some tensions in reorganising and making clear which is each one's role and place in the big picture of supporting young people in their educational and labour market transitions.

### Reasoning on the originalities of DYW in ACAR

The third analytical perspective is to identify the special features of the case study with regard to the integration of the specific measure into its context. One of the main aims of DYW national policy is to be open and flexible enough to allow the

regions to adapt the policy to the local needs. As it is well known, for the past decades ACAR economic activity has been very much dominated by the oil and gas industry. The predominance of this economic sector in the region has influenced other economic sectors directly or not directly related to it. Even if this is the dominating sector and that makes that most of the offers and educational and career expectations of young people are directed to this sector, the 2014 oil price crisis has been making to rethink some of the career guidance. However, DYW managers state that they are working based on the regional economic strategy:

*“We have got a regional economic strategy so we know what our priority sectors are for the future. I have set up the teams to deliver against that so they have got a focus on getting employers from those sectors involved. We have also got a focus on employers which I believe are important to enabling a successful economy.”*  
(ACAR1)

DYW is also concerned with the engagement of local and regional employers. One of the strongest points in ACAR is the ongoing work in engaging with employers and promoting a cultural change among employers. They want employers to think about how they would like to plan the workforce and which of the skills young people have can be beneficial for their businesses:

*“We’re trying to get employers to think about their work force planning. Where there’s an agent work force, but then it’s also about getting new ideas into industry. You’ve got, you know, with young people great kinda digital skills and things like that, and you know, by having young people in job roles that kinda can maximise that knowledge that they have, you know, a business can take advantage of new opportunities if there’s young people who have good digital skills. So we’re trying to kinda sell young people to employers.”* (ACAR7)

However, this is quite challenging, as the region has a fair mix of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and multinational ones. The degree of engagement and the resources that they can put in place to support young adults at the beginning of their careers ranges from visits to schools to talk about the company and how it relates with their studies (SMEs) to a series of workshops on preparing for the world of work including preparing a CV, preparing for an interview, communication skills and so on (multinational companies). The approach from the DYW is to encourage all employers to participate to the extent that they can commit and feel comfortable with.

#### 4.3. Analysis of DYW in ACAR from the theoretical perspectives

After telling the story of DYW in ACAR and analysing the main correspondences in meaning, reasoning the implementation and the originality of DYW in ACAR, we analyse the results using the three theoretical perspectives that constitute the theoretical framework of the YA research project: Cultural Political Economy (CPE)

(Jessop, 2010; Sum & Jessop, 2013), the Life Course Research (LCR) (Elder, 1998; Heinz, 2009) and the Governance perspective (GOV) (Altrichter, 2010; Ball & Junemann, 2012).

### DYW in ACAR from the CPE

The main directions and pathways suggested by DYW national policy easily fit with the ACAR context. The bridging between schools and employers and the promotion of the vocational pathway described by the national document can be easily identified in the explanations of regional managers. The focus on the key influencers of young adults' decisions is also in line with the DYW assumption that providing the available educational and labour market information will make young people make the best decision for them, supported by their parents, teachers or other key influencers.

The testimonies of the young adults interviewed also quite easily fit into the overall structure and planning of DYW. Contrary to what we have seen for GCR, the three young adults interviewed have had linear trajectories. After school they either moved to college and/or engaged in an apprenticeship that smoothed their transitions to the labour market. Therefore, the empirical material gathered so far seems to suggest that the policy design is promoting the vocational path in the region and smoothing the transitions of young people.

### DYW in ACAR from the GOV

As argued above, the main task recognised and put in place by the regional DYW team has been coordinating and promoting the partnership work between schools and employers. ACAR has traditionally been an economically active region. The oil and gas industry and the economic activity related to it used to show a dynamic picture and the market was self-coordinating to some extent. With the introduction of DYW the institutional coordination has been promoted and there has been a period of establishing links and meeting people in the different institutions. This has facilitated the process of systematization of the the existing programs and initiatives to make them more efficient.

However, beyond this initial main task there are other priorities set by DYW, but they cannot be all done at once and some of the managers wondered how many priorities they can handle at the moment and how to prioritise them. Similarly to the case of GCR, there is the tension of deciding which one has to take the priority and this is something that the national policy does not provide guidance about and leaves it to the regional groups. Moreover, it is worth pointing out that they do not have any coercive measure to make the rest comply or follow them but the connections and information they might gather.

### DYW in ACAR from the LCR

Although the young adults interviewed mainly argued that they made their own choices on their educational pathways and later careers, once the conversation developed they pointed out at some key influencers. Some of them are part of the DYW policy in the region. The discussions with the career advisors at school or college seem to have made young people reason and elaborate on their educational choices. The job fair facilitated youth to get in touch with the world of work.

Furthermore, the online information available on careers and practical learning from MA scheme and the testimonies of other young people encouraged some of them to undertake this route. These are actions which take part under the umbrella of DYW in the region.

The influence of the parents was also mentioned by two of the young adults. However, their influence seemed to have more to do with supporting and smoothing their decisions (get an internship placement or advice on how to prepare an interview) rather than in taking the actual choices. It is also worth pointing out at this stage that young adults interviewed in ACAR did not talk about other life spheres beyond the education and work ones. Probably, they do not consider that other spheres of their personal life have not interfered in their career plans.

Last but not least, the singularities of the area make that the careers youth have in mind are more related to engineering and technical fields than it actually is in other Scottish areas. Even the only female young adult interviewed chose a mechanical engineering career. Therefore, it is quite obvious that in this case the context play an important role in the selection of the field.

## 5. Cross-case issues for the comparative analysis

Once we have presented the story of DYW for the two regions it is time to compare the two cases and point at similarities and differences with regards the development and implementation of DYW in GCR and ACAR and the influence on young people's lives.

There are two main similarities worth to be mentioned: first of all, the main intention of DYW so far has been to link secondary schools in the region with regional employers. In both cases the DYW regional teams have prioritised this action and have worked towards making sure that all schools have connections with the world of work. In both regions this has served as a way to systematise and strengthen already existent connections between schools and employers and initiate new ones. Similarly, the same has happened in the different actions already in place to support young people in their educational and career pathways. Support services such as education and career guidance from different institutions have been systematised and are being coordinated under the DYW regional umbrella. This has facilitated the detection of duplications and has linked different services to work more efficiently and better support young people once they enter into the DYW regional network.

Secondly, in both regions there is a rational approach to educational and labour market transitions. Even if in the case of GCR it is acknowledged that some disadvantaged young adults might have more difficulties in building their learning journeys, it is quite assumed that the main education and career routes are not affected by other life domains. The fact of focusing on the 16-19 age group strengthens even more this assumption, leaving aside the rest of the targeted group by DYW policy (20-24). Practitioners in GCR who have a direct contact with young adults have a less standard approach to learning journeys.

Although the policy analysed is the same in both regions, there are an important number of differences. First of all, policy managers and practitioners have to deal with quite different realities. While in GCR the involvement is mainly with disadvantaged youth coming from socioeconomic vulnerable families and deprived areas with a multiple number of barriers, in ACAR the youth interviewed come from working class or immigrant background, but they do not show a number of social and health barriers that difficult their educational and labour market transitions. Youth in GCR mentioned a number of personal situations (e.g. health problems, pregnancy, childbearing, elder care, financial constrains) that deviated them from the standard and smooth educational and labour market transitions considered in DYW policy. This was not the case in ACAR, where the youth interviewed could easily fit into the definitions considered in the national document. They were probably standard examples of what national policymakers and the Wood Commission members had in mind when writing their recommendations to strengthen the vocational path in Scotland.

This is also obvious in the language and priorities expressed by regional managers and practitioners: while in GCR they are very much focused on equality issues and

in working on the barriers that prevent these young adults to get back into education or into the labour market, in ACAR the discourses of managers and practitioners focus on identifying the key influencers of young adults and how to further support them to make their own educational and career decisions. While in GCR the key influencers mentioned by youth are all family members or close friends, in ACAR they have mainly mentioned career advisors or activities related to DYW (e.g. job fair).

Another of the differences worth mentioning is the relationship between the regional DYW team and schools with employers in the region. While in GCR the DYW team is very proactive in looking for employers, regional employers seem to have a more passive role. Conversely, in the case of ACAR it has been noticed a more active role from the employers side in engaging with schools and other educational institutions. The different economic sectors, the amount of vacancies, the size of the firms and the scarce of young people with vocational education and training probably form part of the equation to explain these differences.

In sum, the DYW national policy seems to fit to a better extent in ACAR. As argued throughout the report, DYW actions and ambitions might work to strengthen vocational education and training in Scotland among young people who are not highly disadvantaged in socioeconomic terms and that do not have difficulties in other life domains beyond education and training. Therefore, more efforts and resources should be directed to rethink the policy for the most disadvantaged young adults, who might need early intervention before they reach the last year of compulsory secondary education.

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**Work Package 7**  
**Regional/local Case Studies**  
**National Report Spain**

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## **1. Executive summary**

This report provides an analysis of case studies of the two Functional Regions (Girona and Malaga) selected by Spain in the WP3 of the YOUNG\_ADULLLT Project. This report complies with the objectives proposed in Work Package 7 (WP7) of the project and follows the proposal of WP7.

The Girona Functional Region presents as case study a Training programme (TP12), including the changes it has experienced from the outset until the present. The story of this case study affirms that, since 2012, the Youth for Occupation programme (JPO, in Catalan) has responded to many vulnerable young adults in many parts of Catalonia by providing them with short-term training and apprenticeship experiences along with counselling and guidance for improving their opportunities in the labour market. Additionally, it encourages the beneficiaries to sit for their Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate again. The lack of both vocational training and formal education is a relevant problem for the young people. A quick glance at some socio-demographic indicators reveals some of the most important features of the city, and also most of its potential challenges. In 2016 the immigrant population represented 37.39% of the total. As a result of the programme's implementation and its interaction with other agents, some improvements for future programmes (TP12) have been suggested to the SOC. According to the local workers and managers interviewed, the SOC seems to be taking into account and incorporating many of the suggestions made, albeit slowly. The interviewees highlight the relaxation in the registry of the Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS both in terms of procedure and requirements. They also emphasize the permeability of the SOC regarding its periodic feedbacks. In this sense, it is notable that the SOC is currently facing a process of remodelling the announcements. This implies a reduction of programmes and a promotion of local initiatives.

Concerning analysis of the case according to the different perspectives (CPE, LCR and GOV), from the CPE perspective, this case study addresses a particularly complex situation, in which the focus is placed more on the fact that the beneficiaries are young, rather than on the fact that they are unemployed. This adds interest to the analysis of this particular implementation, as it implies noticeable variations in the understanding of the causes of these young adults' situation of vulnerability, and of the solutions proposed in comparison to other levels of the administration. The GOV perspective analyses the importance of local LLL policies, such as adult education, under the control of the Catalan Ministry of Education, which governs such policies throughout the school system from September to July. By contrast, the SOC formally operates on the basis of a natural year calendar (January to December), but programmes often have to be adapted to the effective reception of funds (which sometimes does not occur until spring). These different sources of funding and calendars hinder both the coordination between Education and Employment policies and the ability to harmonically coordinate many different public and private suppliers, as well as implications and organization at a local level. From the LCR perspective, the workers and managers express their concern about the image that the local companies have with their young people. They are also aware of the potential role of these companies in improving the situation of local young adults.

The case study chosen in the Malaga Functional Region is the project called Workshop Schools – a programme falling within the framework of the broad plan of action of LLL policies, but which differs from other youth training and promotion of youth employment programmes (mainly between the ages of 16 and 25). This programme is not exclusive to the municipal organism or the functional region, but extends beyond these limits to take in the entire region of Andalusia. It is co-financed by the Department of Employment, Enterprise and Commerce of the Andalusian Regional Government, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and by the European Social Fund, which combines training and employment initiatives. The Workshop Schools are a result of the policies of the European Strategy for Employment, financed by the European Social Fund, but with application throughout an Autonomous Community, as they form part of the work-linked training policies (alternating periods of training at school and in the workplace) which is one of the features most highly valued by the different actors involved. This project seeks to make an integral intervention on training and employment, complemented by other activities carried out in coordination with the different agencies and actors involved.

The training received by these young people is designed for them to acquire and improve their skills and professional qualifications. The aim is for them to become qualified by alternating training with work experience in developing services of public utility or social interest, and ultimately to assist in their finding employment

Young participants and those responsible for the Workshop Schools in the Malaga functional region confirm the importance of this training programme for the employment of large numbers of young people, pointing out that these projects have been particularly successful in the labour insertion of young people who have not completed their compulsory education. Regarding the story of the case study of Workshop Schools in the Malaga functional region, it can be stated that this model of work-linked training falls within the framework of what was formerly known as Occupational Vocational Training, which became Vocational Training for Employment (VTE) in 2007 and was again regulated in 2015.

Concerning analysis according to the different perspectives (CPE, LCR and GOV), new regulations were approved in 2016, whereby training can take the form of a speciality leading to level 1 and 2 professional certificates. Training itineraries are considered with the aim of guaranteeing that the young and people with learning deficits can eventually earn their professional certificate for job placement. However, since VTE only recommenced in 2016, there is as yet no evidence of the suitability of the new regulations. The GOV perspective analyses the problems and difficulties during the five-year suspension of these programmes throughout Andalusia, which dealt a severe blow to the future of many excluded young people, who had seen in the Workshop Schools a viable alternative by which to obtain job-linked training that would allow them to find employment. Also, this perspective contemplates the high degree of involvement of municipal corporations and collaborating entities until 2011. The Workshop School projects, together with others such as the Trade Schools and Employment Workshops, represent an experience of local development and regional cohesion for local agents. Regarding the Life Course perspective, according to the testimony of the same young people who attend the Workshop Schools programmes, it is confirmed that young people who do not manage to conclude obligatory education or drop out prematurely, or are at

risk of social exclusion, are provided by these programmes with skills aimed at rapid job placement.

## **2. Girona Functional Region, Case Study 1**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The training programme (TP12)<sup>1</sup> is an emergency plan launched by the Catalan Employment Service (SOC, in Catalan) in 2012 to tackle youth unemployment throughout Catalonia. However, this programme did not start from scratch, but adopted many of the characteristics of a previous programme.

There follows a brief presentation of some of the main characteristics of the programme as it is being developed in a city near Girona, as well as the changes it has experienced from the outset.

The TP12 is a 12-15 month programme aimed at improving the employability of unemployed and unskilled young adults (aged from 16 to 24) by providing them with three months vocational training and one month of training in a work environment. It also provides career guidance and apprenticeship experiences to its beneficiaries. The intention is likewise to encourage the obtaining of the Compulsory Secondary Schooling certificate and to provide support in finding employment. In addition to these characteristics of the target group, all the beneficiaries are required to be registered under the YGS. The programme is funded both by the SOC and the European Social Fund (ESF), and additional funding is provided by the municipality (facilities, workers' bonuses, etc.).

As stated by different street-level workers interviewed, the programme has improved since its inception due to the increasing awareness in the SOC of its need for adaptation in order to improve its response to local needs. These improvements have led to the promotion of a new intervention strategy by the SOC, which will probably start in 2018. This strategy intends to decentralise the activity of the Catalan Service, and promote coordination and collaboration among local public and private actors in each territory. The shift seems to respond to two fundamental critiques from the local and organisational levels developing the programme. First, they complain of their lack of autonomy in managing the programme. This refers to the pre-established distribution of the resources they receive (fixed amount per beneficiary) among the different actions they develop, but also to their lack of ability to adapt some of the programme's rigidities to their own needs. Second, they complain of lack of coordination among all the providers at the local level. This problem started in 2014, when the YGS started its deployment in the region. While previously providers were already offering training to the same target group, competition among them became stronger with the introduction of the YGS. In this scenario, different public and private providers compete to recruit as many young people as possible, because their funding depends on the number of beneficiaries they recruit, meaning that there are overlaps and gaps in the training courses available in the area (the cheaper the

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<sup>1</sup> In order to preserve the anonymity of all the interviewees, the name of the programme has been changed. The nomenclature used is the same as in WP5. The name of the particular city where the study case is constructed is also avoided.

course, the broader its offer). Moreover, in many instances this implies bad counselling practices by the suppliers, who seek their own benefit more than that of the young people. The SOC therefore seems to boost the decentralisation process, both in order to address this situation, and also to gain the commitment of the different agents involved. In the opinion of the SOC, this is a good European recommendation and may improve the efficiency of this kind of programmes and the durability of its outputs.

Regarding the particular situation of the programme at the local level, some questions should be highlighted. Firstly, the programme depends on the Youth section of the City Council. This is an important difference in comparison with other implementations of TP12 throughout the Autonomous Community, where it is mainly managed by the Employment section and, to a lesser extent, by the Education section. What is interesting in this particular structure is that the technicians responsible are clearly aware of the difficulties faced by the young people in the region, regardless of their particular situation in relation to the labour market. In this sense, their trajectories are taken into account beyond their relationship with employment, and therefore a wider vision of their situation is expressed. Contrary to what seems to be the main political focus of the development of the YGS in Spain and also in Catalonia, the implementation of this programme pays attention to the different dimensions of the personal development of the young people, and not only to those related with their employability. Obviously, skills and abilities aimed at improving their opportunities to find a job are stressed, but they seem to be not the only ones that are taken into account. In fact, as stated by the person responsible for the Youth section, the skills on which all the activities of the section are based are those defined by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. These life skills are closely related with questions of self-satisfaction, motivation, stability, mental health, etc. and are considered as key abilities to address different questions such as education, democracy, gender equality, lifelong learning, etc. As we have already mentioned, this is an important difference in their approach compared to the focus of other administrations, which are more centred on “utilitarian” skills (employability, adaptation, etc.). This is exemplified in the differences between what the SOC uses to assess the results of the programme (labour market insertion of the beneficiaries) and the way its workers express their impacts (engagement, motivation, achievement of ordinary life trajectories).

Secondly, and regardless of this focus on life skills, the actual implementation of the programme strongly emphasises individual interventions over contextual or social ones. Despite opening their focus from employability to “quality of life”, the accent of the actions conducted through the TP12 programme is closely focused on each young person’s capacity to overcome his or her situation. To this end, close relationships are established between street-level employees and mentored young people. The former consider that they can not assist the latter if there is no interest shown, and that they need to be committed to the programme. The beneficiaries seem to find the programme to be somewhere reassuring for them to go when they have doubts about their employment or training trajectories, even when their participation in the programme has concluded. In this regard, the beneficiaries interviewed consider the programme as a good opportunity to rectify poor choices they have made or to reach life aspirations that have been hindered by their particular trajectories and environments.

Thirdly, the functional region and particularly the territory covered by the city of Girona and surroundings is increasingly characterised by a public effort to improve coordination among private and public actors, and among different administrative levels. For instance, much has been done to improve the training offer provided not only within the programme, but also in relation to what other suppliers are doing. In this regard, its employees are in permanent contact with their counterparts in other cities and towns, and they also try to coordinate their offer with what is provided by private actors in the city and nearby. As expressed by a street-level employee, their initiative has been encouraged by the SOC which, as already mentioned, is starting to boost this kind of practice throughout all the Autonomous Community. We can not know whether this particular initiative has affected the strategy currently promoted by the SOC, but it seems clear that its whole strategy is going in the same direction. Furthermore, the SOC is starting to condition its allocation of resources to the ability of the different local agents to agree common and mid-term strategies to address youth unemployment problems.

## 2.2. Telling the story of the Girona FR case study

*TP12 is a service rather than a programme. Compared to other programmes funded by the Catalan Public Employment Service (SOC), TP12 funds the wages of officers for a longer period. Therefore, when training providers have to apply when a new announcement is made, they do not need to recruit officers from scratch. Since most programmes entail that providers lose the officer [who was] in charge, all the previous experience of what is going on in the city is lost [E\_SP\_G\_11].*

This statement of a street-level employee on the TP12 in a city near Girona points out some of the elements that make this case particularly interesting. By relating the main characteristics of the regional/national agenda on LLL policies to the local context in which they are implemented, this professional highlights some of the existing tensions as well as the changes it has experienced over time. In fact, the statement identifies one of the main relevant features of the programme as it is implemented in this city, where the programme is led by the Youth Section instead of the Employment Section of the City Council. In fact, the common pattern is that municipal Employment Sections run SOC programmes on the grounds of goals strictly associated to the labour market.

Since 2012, TP12 has provided a response to many vulnerable young adults in many parts of Catalonia by providing them with short-term training and apprenticeship experiences together with counselling and guidance for improving their opportunities in the labour market. Additionally, it encourages the beneficiaries to sit for their Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate again. Both the lack of vocational training and of formal education are relevant problems for the young people of the city. A quick glance at some socio-demographic indicators reveals some of the most important features of the city, and also most of its potential challenges. In 2016 the immigrant population represented 37.39% of the total. The proportion of the population between 20 and 29 years old was in general higher than in Catalonia as a whole (12.46% and 10.1%, respectively<sup>2</sup>). This proportion was notably higher for the immigrant group (16.60%) than for the indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> Data from the Statistics Institute of Catalonia, register of inhabitants 2016 (<https://www.idescat.cat/pub/?id=pmh&n=9145&geo=mun:171557&lang=en>) and from WP4 Spanish National Report.

population (9.99%). The differences in the educational status between these two groups are also relevant. According to a diagnosis by the City Council<sup>3</sup>, 43.3% of the foreign young people have no education certificate (vs. 9.9% of the autochthonous) and only 16.9% of them have finished post-compulsory secondary education (vs. 27.4% of the indigenous population). Moreover, immigrants are almost absent in higher education.

In this city, the education figures are generally below the Catalan average. While over 40% of students failed to achieve their Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate (15% in Catalonia), almost 50% of immigrant students (35.4% in Catalonia) did not as well as 26% of the autochthonous students did not either (11% in Catalonia). Regarding the local labour force, foreigners amount to the 52% of the potentially active population, while they represent 29.4% in Catalonia as a whole. Therefore, in this local setting the target group for TP12 differs from the target group in other cities. We have no data on which percentage of the 230 beneficiaries of the programme from 2012 to 2017 were foreigners. However, despite the reluctance of street-level employees to make this claim, their indirect comments and our observations led us to think that foreigners are a clear majority.

This situation can be clearly detected in the statements of the policy makers, the street-level employees and the young people interviewed. This point helps us to understand the divergences between the employability focus of the policy and its broader understanding at the local level. As already mentioned, all the municipal programmes addressed to young people (including employment programmes such as TP12) are managed by the City Council through its Youth Section. In consequence, the official descriptions portray the beneficiaries as young people rather than unemployed, early school leavers or foreigners. Compared to the Spanish national and the Catalan governments, this premise implies another understanding of the causes of the vulnerability of these young adults. Additionally, the manager of the Youth Section of the City Council looked for another solution.

*I mean, the WHO [World Health Organisation] says “in the end, the most important thing is for you to be able to solve a conflict, for you to be able to work in a team, for you to be able to have proactive ideas, to provide something to the team in the work”. In the end. This is the most important thing. Of course, training equips you with these tools, but the eventual outcome is mainly a question of emotional education [E\_SP\_G\_13].*

Conversely, as broadly analysed in WP5, the bulk of official discourse attributes youth unemployment to the lack of professional skills. As we will see, however, course development is much more focused on behaviour or attitudinal skills than on professional ones.

In 2012 the SOC launched the TP12 as a revised version of a previous similar programme. The aim of both TP12 and its predecessor was to improve the employability of young people who were neither studying nor working (NEETs). Both of them were co-funded by the Catalan Government and the European Social Fund. This improvement had to be attained through the provision of professional training, counselling and opportunities to go back to the school at least until the achievement of the compulsory secondary

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<sup>3</sup> In order to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees, the source of this data cannot be provided.



education certificate. After two editions, in 2014 the TP12 was subordinated to the deployment of the Youth Guarantee Scheme (YGS) all over Catalonia. This new framework does not seem to have produced contradictions between the objectives of the different policies as they formally share their concern about NEETs and offer different resources to deal with this situation. Actually, a loose regulation allows local authorities to implement TP12 by means of the specific practices that best fit with their political orientation. In this regard, the TP12 programme in this city differs from the instrumental orientation of the original purpose and confers more expressive elements to it. Strong emphasis is therefore placed on the importance of the programme not only for improving the employability of its beneficiaries, but also for offering them guidance and support in all spheres of their daily life. The programme is thus conceived of by its employees more as a global service than as a temporary action, as shown by the first quotation. Over time, besides this formal agreement, the arrival of additional resources linked to the YGS has raised other difficulties, namely competition between training providers (see WP6<sup>4</sup>) and constraints on selection the most suitable candidates.

*[Do you have more demand than you can accept?]*

*Look, it has got smaller, but we have, well. Our theory is that, when we started the TP12 in this city, it was the only training offered to young people of this age. I received 224 applications in the selection process [for 20 places]. Imagine! And it was the same in 2013. Then we started to offer hotel and catering courses too. When the Youth Guarantee Programme came in 2014, more profit-making and non-profit making organizations started to provide the YGS courses. And so, selection became a challenge. Since all providers were selecting, many thought: "I'll keep this youngster". Competition between this city and the one next door was reckless [E\_SP\_G\_11].*

Additionally, the arrival of the YGS increased the administrative work load of both street-level professionals and managers. They had to justify almost any small task as well as provide evidence for evaluating the results of the measure. They do not approve of this approach to monitoring at all. The official evaluation controls the activities of the employees and expects many beneficiaries to get a job. However, in their view the actual impact of TP12 on the mid-term trajectory of its beneficiaries is downplayed.

*There are some administrative tasks that make you say, "Do I really need to do that?" For instance, one of the things that the TP12 requires is that street-level workers fill in a daily timesheet, then a weekly one and then a monthly one. Well, I have to sign their timesheet every day (...), and you say, "Is it really necessary?" [E\_SP\_G\_11].*

According to the officials, there are no political conflicts with the higher administrative levels due to their different approach. However, they stress difficulties in the implementation of the programme related to both the duration and the extent of the official admission period as issued by the Catalan Public Employment Service (SOC). On the one hand, the European Union, the Government of Spain, and the Government of Catalonia focus on short-term actions (even when they can last 12-15 months). However,

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<sup>4</sup> Briefly, the arrival of the YGS has implied an important increase of the funds available for training activities supplied by different public and private agents. It has increased competition between them, as the funds are allocated according to the number of beneficiaries they are able to recruit.

is the local government wants to provide long-term guidance, regardless of the training and apprenticeship activities conducted within the programme. In this regard, local employees maintain a face-to-face, phone and whatsapp relationship with the beneficiaries of previous editions, thus increasing the volume of young people they actually receive. Confidence in the local employees is one of the most salient aspects of the interaction, according to many of the young people interviewed, as well as employees interviewed and our field observations. When asked how often he visited the TP12 facilities, a participant in the 2014 edition said:

*I come a lot. The contacts I have, even the mobile phone numbers, when I'm missing for some days, they want to know how I am. [Y\_SP\_G\_9].*

This also reflects the importance that the local implementation of the programme confers to all the dimensions of the life-course, and not only those directly related with the labour market and the employability of its beneficiaries.

The differences between the requirements of the funding body and the aims of the local authority have other practical impacts at the local level. As mentioned, the diverse demands in terms of monitoring and evaluation sometimes entail work overload for street-level employees and managers. Likewise, local stakeholders cannot distribute the funds they receive for training according to the variable costs of the different courses they offer. The SOC determines the expenditure per pupil, regardless of the training s/he is enrolled in. In short, even when there do not seem to be heavy formal restrictions on the approach developed at the local level, the possibility for local adjustments is in practice constrained by the funding conditions.

From the point of view of the young people, this work overload seems not to be perceived as harming the quality of the service they receive, and they give a positive assessment of the attention they receive and the confidence they feel with the employees. However, they do commonly criticise the short duration and the depth of their training and in-work training experiences. Additionally, they consider that the programme should cater for many more people in their same situation. They seem to be more concerned about the scale of the programme in terms of both the number of beneficiaries and the length of the training, than they are about the specific content of the courses.

The maximum number of beneficiaries for each training course (20) is established in the announcement for applications by the SOC, and no more than 100 young people can be included in the TP12 per year and entity. This maximum may be reduced according to a number of factors, namely the local youth unemployment rate, the diversity of local stakeholders, the specificity of local needs and the previous record of the training provider (Catalunya. DOGC, 2016). In particular, if the SOC considers that the indicators of inclusion in the labour market of the previous edition have not been as good as expected, it can reduce the number of beneficiaries that the promoting entity is able to enrol. Thus, between 2012-13 and 2013-14 the SOC reduced the allocation of funds from 20 to 15 young people per course, meaning that the programme enrolled not 40 but 30 pupils. This led to unease among street-level professionals and managers of the programme in the city, as they were highly concerned about the living conditions of the local young people. They considered that the indicators used by the SOC to justify this decision were not a faithful reflection of the policy's impacts.

Apparently, the critiques raised by local implementers in this regard have led to more nuanced evaluations of the impact of the measure. At least, more indicators besides the immediate incorporation to the labour market of the participants have been taken into account. In fact, except for 2013-14, the local TP12 has received funds to include the maximum number of beneficiaries per course (see table 1 for a summary of the courses offered, the beneficiaries assisted and providers or courses)<sup>5</sup>. If the programme is formally expected to increase the employability of its participants, measured by contracts generated immediately after their participation, it additionally collects information regarding the situation of the beneficiaries in relation to the education system. Beneficiaries lacking the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate are obligated to enrol in adult education in order to obtain it.

Although TP12 induces beneficiaries to obtain Professional Certificates<sup>6</sup> through the training courses, in this city most courses cannot issue such certificates. These courses only provide some similar, but not fully valid credentials issued by the SOC. As stated by a street-level employee, the facilities of most training providers do not meet the standards for issuing professional certificates.

Table 1: TP12 2012-2017

	Number of participants	Courses offered	Course provider
TP12 2012-13	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic operations of restaurant and bar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood home</li> </ul>
TP12 2013-14	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic operations of restaurant and bar</li> <li>• Cooking operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood home</li> <li>• Hospitality School of Girona</li> </ul>
TP12 2014-15	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic operations of restaurant and bar</li> <li>• Basic operations in accommodation apartments</li> <li>• Cooking operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oscope Foundation</li> <li>• Hospitality School of Girona</li> </ul>
TP12 2015-16	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooking operations</li> <li>• Basic operations in accommodation apartments</li> <li>• Sound operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitality School of Girona</li> <li>• Show Technical School - House of Music (ETECAM)</li> </ul>
TP12 2016-17	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooking operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostelry School of Girona</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> In 2016 the budget for the programme was €231,402.55, which amounted for about 40% of the total budget of the municipality's Youth Section.

<sup>6</sup> Professional Certificates are professional skills accreditations regulated through the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications and fall under the European Qualifications Framework. See WP6 for more details.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic operations in accommodation apartments</li> <li>• Sound operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical School of the Spectacle - House of Music (ETECAM)</li> </ul>
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Source: prepared by the authors based on data provided by the TP12 in the city

Despite this situation, both workers and young people share a good opinion of the objectives and effectiveness of the programme. They consider that, in spite of the differences in the short-term leverage depending on the particular situation of each beneficiary, the programme has a positive impact on its participants both in terms of employability and attitude. The beneficiaries seem to be deeply influenced by the discourses of the local employees. On the one hand, they consider that they are lacking some professional skills. In fact, they are aware of their need for training and they really appreciate the opportunity that the programme brings to them. On the other, some of them have also stressed their strengths regarding their adaptability, capacity to dialogue, experience in coexistence, etc. All these skills are also highlighted by the local employees and managers.

*For someone who really wants to work and has no basics and no studies, it is very useful, because they put you into contact with the labour market and you start to know how to make a CV (...) [because] for young people [like me] who live without information because of the lack of education or whatever, something that simple as making a CV is hard for you, and you don't know where to start, and doing a course like this is spectacular. [Y\_SP\_G\_10].*

*For example, when we were told that we were going to train for that, for this long, one month of apprenticeship and some months of contract, for example, this is ok, but what was missing was the contract, and this is what I thought, and there is no contract. What I have found more is the coexistence, which I didn't see, the coexistence, talking with the people and the people's behaviour. [Y\_SP\_G\_9].*

This last quotation reflects one of the problems detected by the young people – most of them miss real workplace experiences. Both beneficiaries and professionals agree that this is a greater weakness than job placement. Professionals lack resources to prospect the labour market as much as they would like to and they cannot address employers in order to challenge their stigmatised image of the city's young people (see WP5).

This situation points out a poignant issue. Regardless of their contrasting approaches, the international, the regional and the local authorities place the individual responsibility of the young people above structural constraints. In other words, these young people's explanations of the situation are much more focused on their own deficits in vocation and attitude, than on a context deficient in providing them with opportunities. Consequently, the measures taken to address the situation are constantly pushing the young people to do their best and to take advantage of the opportunities that the programme brings them, but broader measures affecting other agents and structural conditions are hardly ever implemented.

Structural constraints or personal difficulties are not relevant elements for selection of beneficiaries. Formally, all the candidates between the ages of 16 and 24 have registered with the YGS and have a level of qualification below ISCED-3 (i.e. at most, secondary

compulsory education). Out of all the candidates, local employees select those who best fit with the orientation of the programme. As to the pool of candidates, it is remarkable that a decreasing number of young people apply for TP12 since the local supply expanded.<sup>7</sup> Since level 3 courses have not been offered for the last two editions, apparently self-targeting is enacted somehow. Probably, candidates with a higher educational status draw on other types of training:

*Around 20% of the unemployed young people have a good [qualification] profile, but we cannot access them by any means (...). We think that they belong to families, well, where the parents say “Well, now you are going to study abroad, well, now I’ll pay for you...”, they don’t have the need, and these young people don’t reach us. [E\_SP\_G\_9].*

Professionals state they select their beneficiaries according to their level of motivation. They draw on this criterion to define the individualised strategies including guidance and peer-to-peer mentoring. Moreover, in the last two editions they have given publicity to the admission periods and defined the pool of candidates through their personal contacts with the candidates to the previous editions. They consider that this procedure allows them to guarantee a higher level of commitment and motivation of the beneficiaries. In this way, they expect to strengthen the quality of targeting by reaching some young people who are easily disconnected from public policies.

The local professionals of TP12 also asked the SOC to change a requirement of the official admission period. In their opinion, the minimum age of candidates should be raised from 16 to 18 in order to better meet the goals. They underpinned this recommendation with two substantial arguments. First, 16 to 18 year-olds are too immature to grasp how the labour market works. Second, if trainees are to enter some apprenticeships, some of them are not open to underage candidates<sup>8</sup>.

Once the beneficiaries are selected to participate in some of the offered courses, they start a process of individually guiding and defining their personal and professional itineraries with the assistance of a tutor of the programme. These coaching activities will be conducted throughout the whole programme. The training courses start approximately a month after the definitive selection of candidates. They last for three months (i.e. about 240h). External providers conduct the specific training (see Table 1). After that, the beneficiaries are placed in a job position for one month. During these four months, the participants receive an incentive of 150 Euros per month dependent on them attending at least 75% of the training time. They can also receive a transport grant if courses are located outside their city. After the training period finishes, the beneficiaries are expected to continue linked to the programme through guiding and coaching meetings with their tutor. In these meetings, each young person works on different transversal skills with the help of their mentor, prepares a personal curriculum, receives assistance to look for a job, etc.

In addition, the programme negotiates subsidised contracts for its participants with a number of local companies. Despite some previously mentioned difficulties, both

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<sup>7</sup> The two last editions included level 2 qualification courses but no level 3 course is offered.

<sup>8</sup> Although the minimum age for employment is 16 in Spain, there are some restrictions on the activities people under the age of 18 can carry out.



employees and young people consider that this is one of the most fruitful parts of the programme. These contracts provide some real job experience to the beneficiaries as well as the opportunity to showcase their skills. However, according to the participants' opinions, this is too short a period and it is difficult for them to find a placement with any other professional experience. Moreover, it is a very intensive period of time in which beneficiaries have to be available at least 4 hours per day. Sometimes it is hard for them to meet both this requirement and their personal responsibilities. This is especially relevant for young mothers. In addition, professionals struggle to maintain the involvement of the beneficiaries for the 8 to 10 months of guidance which are officially scheduled after these short experiences.

The practical difficulties faced by the local service as well as their broader understanding of how a programme of these characteristics should be designed and function are an example of the possibilities and restrictions for adaptation of policies designed at higher administrative levels. The bottom line is that competition between providers to enrol as many people as possible has relegated the central role of young people to second place behind the economic survival of the training providers (WP6). Moreover, the expansion of the YGS has suffered from important overlaps and gaps, with cheaper offers being the most accepted. Certain unpredictability in the launching calendar of TP12 and the slowness of the process of selecting candidates has led to an important drop in the final number of applicants to choose from. Some strategies have been developed by the local implementers to deal with this situation. First, they have modified their offer of courses (see Table 1) in order to avoid overlaps and to increase the range of opportunities from which young people can choose. Second, they have worked on their personal relationships with the beneficiaries. Finally, they have strongly worked for the improvement of coordination between public and private agents in the area, and not only in their city. In this regard, they maintain regular contacts with other administrations in order to improve the training offer in the area and design more wide-ranging actions with the aim of providing the young people with more opportunities.

As a result of their own work and of the interaction with other agents, they have suggested to the SOC some improvements for future editions of TP12. According to the local workers and managers interviewed, the SOC seems to be taking into account and incorporating many of the local agents' suggestions. Albeit slowly, some elements of the announcement for courses have gradually changed for the better. For instance, the interviewees highlight the greater ease in registering with the YGS, both in terms of procedure and requirements. They also stress the receptivity of the SOC regarding their periodic feedback. In this sense, it is noticeable that the SOC is currently facing a process of re-shaping of the announcements for courses in which the TP12 is framed. Briefly, that implies a reduction of programmes and a promotion of local initiatives. This shift will reduce the number of programmes and concentrate funding on larger initiatives agreed with local stakeholders.

*The law passed in 2015 goes in this direction, trying out these strategies that started in some territories, strategies that state there is an agreement between local administration, social agents, the different entities of the productive level, trade unions, whatever, well, they have to agree and say "in this territory we need this, this and this," "well, if you tell us we can also adapt these policies in the same direction". The law also wants to start a*

*degree of decentralisation of these attributions, which are very concentrated on the Generalitat [Catalan Government], to decentralise them to the territories will probably adapt them better to their needs. (...) this is also the way the European Union talks, referring to proximity, about making the policies fit the territories as closely as possible. [E\_SP\_G\_5].*

However, it is not yet possible to assess whether this change will have any impact beyond organisational and managerial issues.

### 2.3. Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives

#### *Analysis of the case from the CPE perspective*

TP12 has the explicit aim of improving the employability of unemployed young people by providing them with qualifications and professional skills to allow them to reformulate their career path and to enter to the labour market with guarantees of stability. Moreover, it can also be useful for those who want to return to the education system. This particular orientation therefore attempts to address unemployment by improving the individual ability of the targeted young people to deal with their context.

These objectives are currently framed under the formulation of the Youth Guarantee Scheme, although TP12 was in operation before this European policy was launched. Indeed, the approach seems not to have changed much since then, particularly regarding the importance conferred to individual “activation” actions as mechanisms to address the economic crisis. Its diagnoses include the macroeconomic problems associated with the economic crisis. Cuts in public expenditure have conditioned its response. However, TP12 measures are focused on intervening on young adults’ qualifications and training, and there is no consideration of the impact of the reforms that have relaxed and liberalised the labour market and young workers’ conditions in Catalonia (Lopez-Andreu & Verd, 2016). In fact, lack of qualifications and the rigidity of the labour market are the central arguments used to explain high youth unemployment rates. Moreover, the three main branches of the YGS (good quality employment, continued education and apprenticeship/traineeship offers for NEET young people) throughout Catalonia have been translated into specific actions in employment, training and entrepreneurship, where the second of these is the most highly developed. In fact, the offer of job positions has hardly developed at all throughout the period, while emphasis has been placed on the training aspect (30% of the offers are for jobs while 53.2% are for courses or training, according to EAPN, 2017).

TP12 selects young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither studying nor working. It is addressed to young people with a “low level of qualification” (Catalunya. DOGC, 2016) – mostly early school leavers who at most achieved their Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate. In fact, the deployment of the YGS in Catalonia has prioritized those actions specially addressed to young people with a level of qualification below ISCED-3. The selection of candidates is conducted by the street-level employees of the programme.

In general, no matter the programme or institutional affiliation or administrative level, the different interviewees agreed in considering the policies developed under the YGS as

strongly addressed to vulnerable young adults. Actually, some of them highlighted in particular the lack of opportunities and offers addressed to improve both the qualification and the labour market experiences for those young people with a higher education level. In this regard, they commented that it is hard for the public administration to access this group of young people, as they do not usually contact employment and social services to look for alternatives. Additionally, some interviewees stressed that for these young people the most common alternatives are emigrating or accepting placements below their qualification level.

Our case study addresses a particularly complex situation (see previous section) that tries to place the focus more on the beneficiaries' condition as young people, rather than on the fact that they are unemployed. This adds interest to analysing this particular implementation as it implies noticeable variations in the understandings of the causes of the situation of vulnerability of these young adults, and in the solutions proposed in comparison to other levels of administration. With this in mind, the TP12 team in this city seeks to broaden the approach by attempting to involve a number of public and private agents in the development of the programme. They also make reference to social cohesion and personal well-being more often than the discourses of the regional and national authorities. In this sense, the programme employees and managers consider the programme useful, although they state that it is insufficient to cover all the demand and all the needs of its beneficiaries. The beneficiaries agree with these statements. Both professionals and young adults state that the locality and the region have to align counselling and training more systematically.

In addition to these limitations, the employees interviewed are very critical of the disorganised increase in local training courses since the inception of the YGS. They consider the YGS boosted competition among providers, which harmed the quality of the services to young adults. In this regard, they seem to identify the coexistence of existing LLL market competition and an emerging organised LLL market. The former, even if it existed before the deployment of the YGS, has been exacerbated by the arrival of an important amount of funds to private and public training suppliers, which compete to enrol as many young people as possible in order to receive funding. The latter can be identified by some changes both at the local and the Catalan level. On the one hand, and as mentioned above, some local agents have recently started to improve their coordination practices with the aim of not overlapping actions and training offers and also with the objective of broadening the coverage they all provide. On the other hand, the SOC is shifting its political approach regarding the methods for allocating their funds. This shift implies encouraging joint subsidy applications from local actors. As stated by a high-ranking SOC official interviewed for WP6, this change responds to both a demand of local agents and a suggestion by the EU (see WP6 for more in-depth analysis).

Regarding the characterisation of the beneficiaries, it is interesting to stress that, while the mainstream approach is based on the deficits of the young people, the local approach tries to take into account not only their shortcomings but also their virtues. In this sense, the local TP12 employees characterise the beneficiaries as being vulnerable, with no solid social networks, underskilled and undertrained. But they also consider them as adaptable, versatile, with high social values related to cohesion and cohabitation skills. The beneficiaries themselves share this characterisation. In addition, since the TP12



employees are aware of the difficulties faced by the participants, they consider that their involvement in the programme can help them to build some social networks.

*Analysis of the case from the GOV perspective*

TP12 is funded by the SOC and the European Social Fund (ESF) (50% each for most of the expenditure). For 2017, its budget in Catalonia was €13,552,970. As broadly developed in WP6, these two bodies have different funding, regulation and evaluation mechanisms. Briefly, the ESF, as stated by interviewees at all levels of the administration, imposes several bureaucratic measures that are highly time-consuming and are not perceived as effective for tailoring the programme to the local needs. The ESF transfers its funds to the Government of Spain, which distributes them among the regional governments according to its own set of indicators. These indicators adjust the amount of funds available to the rate of employment, which varies according to the economic cycle. The SOC then uses its own set of indicators to assess the programme and to establish the amount that the local providers will receive in the next edition of the programme. These indicators are strongly focused on labour market insertion. Although returning to the education system is an aim of the programme, according to the local level interviewees there is no indicator for this circumstance. In addition, the SOC needs to account for its results to the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security, which uses a different set of indicators to rank the Autonomous Communities' administrations in order to distribute the funds (see WP6).

Important local LLL policies such as adult education depend on the Catalan Department of Education. This Department runs the policy according to the calendar of the school system from September to July. In contrast, the SOC formally operates on the basis of a calendar year (January to December), but programmes often have to be adapted to the effective reception of funds (which sometimes does not occur until spring). These different sources of funding and calendars hinder both the coordination between Education and Employment policies and the ability to harmonically coordinate many different public and private suppliers.

At the local level, TP12 is placed in a broader framework developed by the Youth Section of the city. However, the “skills ecology system” does not function harmoniously for various reasons, broadly developed in WP6, although here we just refer to some of them briefly. On the one hand, despite the endeavours of the TP12 programme and the Youth Section of the city, there is a lack of coordination between the different public authorities operating in the region. This is exacerbated by a lack of effective and collective mechanisms to detect matches and mismatches between education/training and labour market needs. On the other hand, and more saliently, there is competition between course providers, with no regard for young adults' interests, as their funding depends on the volume of young people they are able to enrol. This shows a prevalence of fund-hoarding mechanisms and bureaucratic and organisational survival over coordination between public and private actors. This competition is expected to be counterbalanced by the shift in SOC strategy for allocation of funds, which would presumably force an increase of coordination and collaboration practices among local public and private actors, regardless of the particular city to which they belong.

At the organisational level, TP12 has been forced to strategically adapt its operation to the overlaps and gaps created by YGS. The programme has therefore changed some courses to avoid overlapping, as well as to cover some training areas not on offer. It has also adapted the recruiting mechanisms by broadly using an informal network of previous beneficiaries or candidates from other editions who were not selected, rather than the official channels. The latter involve other public services such as the Local Employment Service which directly depends on the SOC's register of candidates. In the opinion of the programme employees, this register is not really reliable because it is not updated regularly. They also receive many registered candidates who do not have the desirable characteristics.

This adaptation has not hindered the willingness to make the programme more of a service than a set of one-off actions. Although the lists of candidates are nominal and the time horizon for actions is short, the possibility to maintain the same employees in different editions and the renewal of the programme since 2012 have significantly contributed to achieve these goals. In fact, most interviewees noted that the SOC has actively favoured this possibility. In this sense, the relative flexibility of the measure, as well as the absence of some restrictions present in other SOC's programmes, leaves some space for TP12 in the city to adapt its implementation to their own interests and approach, assuming the increase in costs that this may entail.

This process responds both to the possibilities and constraints of the policy and the context. The Local Youth Plan (2016-19) set the priorities of the city. When it was designed, some 35-40 local young people voluntarily attended a participatory session publicly promoted through social networks and posters throughout the city. A number of round-tables collected the views of policy-makers, street-level workers, local non-profit organizations and other relevant persons. Although the participation of young people was not very high and they are not necessarily involved in TP12, some of the opinions of the potential candidates have been taken into account to guide the programme, mostly with the demand that both TP12 and municipal youth policies provide more psychological support.

However, the offer of courses provided through TP12 doesn't seem to be influenced by the young adults' interests, according to the opinions of the interviewees. Since many of them are looking for opportunities locally, they are likely to respond to the competitive strategies of many private providers of short-term training programmes. However, they are also explicit about their frustrations. Therefore, local governments risk creating a void if they do not provide any meaningful alternative.

#### *Analysis of the case from the LCR perspective*

As already discussed in the previous section and throughout WP4, early school leaving and youth unemployment are extremely high in Spain, in Catalonia and in the city where the study took place. Young adults with migrant status are significantly more exposed to this risk. For a long time, policies have basically subsidised firms to contract some young employees through short-term or apprenticeship contracts, which have not improved their situation in the labour market in terms of stability. For local authorities, short-term training has become almost the only instrument to tackle this problem. The adaptation of the YGS by the Spanish Government has followed the same lines, by prioritising training

measures over labour market insertion initiatives. Moreover, the evaluation of these measures has considered mainly indicators on insertion rather than education or training data.

Both the Government of Spain and the Government of Catalonia divide the measures designed to tackle youth unemployment and early school leaving between the Education and Employment authorities. The former is broadly structured according to standard life-courses in which the different education stages are closely linked to pre-established age ranges and alternative trajectories are exceptional. However, the higher the qualification level (higher education), the less the impact of the age ranges. But the schemes which are related to employment are not as linear as education institutions. These other schemes include different training measures aimed at both employed and unemployed workers regardless of their age. Regarding young adults, it is also important to take into account the National Plan for Youth 2010-2020 launched by the Catalan Government, which attempts to frame all political actions within an array of dimensions including education, employment, healthcare, leisure, housing and so on. What is interesting here is to point out that education and employment seem to be increasingly subordinated to the actions developed under the YGS. These measures somehow set the “standard” time-span within which it is correct, accepted or normal to perform certain training activities (up to the age of 29).

At the local level there is also a Local Plan for Youth (2016-2019), which develops the National Plan for Youth and sets specific priorities and evaluation mechanisms for all of its dimensions. TP12 courses constitute one of the main municipal initiatives regarding employment and training programmes. Across all its activities, the Youth Section of the city emphasises the importance of developing WHO’s Life Skills such as assertiveness, empathy and problem solving. This is an important difference in their approach, since both the Catalan and the Spanish administrations are more centred on instrumental skills such as employability and adaptation.

TP12 employees and managers express their concern with the image that the local companies have on their young people. They are also aware of the potential role of these companies in improving the situation of local young adults. In this sense, constructing the target group also implies for them the deconstruction of some of the stigmatising features attached to them. Employers and managers of some other programmes analysed (see WP5 and WP6) consider that local young people lack commitment, discipline and other attitudinal skills. In contrast, the municipal team of TP12 employees normally state that their beneficiaries are mainly motivated and committed. In their view, in the city many young people lack professional skills and education certification and mostly strong social networks. Since the professionals are aware of the strategic importance of personal relationships to find a job in the local context, they seek to become this network for the beneficiaries of TP12. Paradoxically, professional skills, which are the most missing according to the young people and employees interviewed, are inadequately provided by TP12, in its beneficiaries’ opinion. On the contrary, the young people spend much more time in guidance activities involving attitudinal skills, which they consider they already have.

While the TP12 street-level professionals keep fluent communication and contacts with some employers, their relationship with schools is weak. They are in contact with adult schools as one of the aims of the programme is guaranteeing that all the beneficiaries get their Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate, but the two both institutions work independently. In this sense, the interviewees who attended these schools assessed as insufficient the number of courses they can enrol in each year. They therefore spend much more time than they think they should in obtaining the Certificate and being able to move forward in the education system. In addition, they regret that the system for recognising their foreign education certificates is not satisfying at all. In this regard, the case of a Senegalese youngster (Y\_SP\_G\_7), who arrived to the city at the age of 17, is noteworthy. He had almost finished the equivalent to Baccalaureat in his native country, but this certificate is not recognised by the Spanish education system. Likewise, as he was above the age of compulsory education (16 years old), he could not enrol in the ordinary compulsory school in order to reach the Compulsory Secondary Education Certificate, although he was very interested in continuing his studies and entering the University. The adult school where he is enrolled does not allow students to devote themselves to full-time study and, thus, they take over two years to complete the courses they need to reach the certificate.

The municipal professionals attempt to adapt the actions of TP12 to the young people's trajectories and interests as much as possible. However, this attempt is limited by various factors. Firstly, they can only offer a few courses which are set before they select the candidates. In these sense, although the applicants to a course know what is available locally, the supply of training is independent of the young people's interests. Secondly, they emphasise the importance of the participants being realistic in their choices. This "cooling-out" (Walther, 2006) of the expectations of the beneficiaries stresses how limited TP12 is with regard to the real opportunities available. Due to the absence of a wide range of training options and job offers, the municipal street-level professionals eventually recommend a number of young people who have already experienced difficult situations to make choices based on realistic expectations.

As the WP5 report concluded, the participants are told that for some reason such as bad luck, wrong choices or an adverse context they have not thus far been able to succeed. However, they are supposed to realise that, if they are responsible and motivated, their individual effort in addition to the stimulus of the programme will lead them to re-join a standard life course. Such approach is shared by many of the young people interviewed and poses a relevant tension between their current opportunities and their future expectations. On the one hand, local workers try not to generate frustration and, thus, they cool-out their expectations. Moreover, they have experienced difficult situations and are aware of the barriers they can find in all the dimensions of their lives. However, on the other hand, they are told, and many times they believe, that their personal effort, motivation and work within the frame of the programme, will represent a shift to their lives. In this regard, it is interesting to highlight how their expectations are in many cases linked to traditional images of middle-class life-styles related to stable job position, traditional family structure and property ownership.

What is common to many of their generation (unemployment, lack of opportunities, difficulties accessing housing) is seen as a personal failure. In spite of being aware and

recognising their personal and social difficulties, the solutions proposed allow us to state that the individualisation of vulnerability is the most powerful explanation for political action. Even though it is nuanced at the local level, the strong emphasis placed on motivation and individual effort to overcome young people's situation reveals the prevalence of a discourse of individual responsibility that underlies the management of the trajectories.

### **3. Workshop Schools. A Case Study in the Malaga Functional Region**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The case study chosen in the Malaga Functional Region is a programme carried out in the Municipal Institute of Training and Employment (MITE), as in other important parts of Functional Region. The MITE stands out because is an organism for information and advice on the promotion of employment and self-employment in the municipality of Malaga, which acts as promoter and coordinator of all the resources available to boost the city's economic, entrepreneurial and training activities in order to achieve the ultimate goal of full employment<sup>9</sup>. In the framework of the broad plan of action for LLL policies, Workshop Schools stand out among other programmes of training and promotion of youth employment<sup>10</sup>. In this respect, it is also important to emphasize the work of Malaga City Hall for its trajectory in the training policies for employment, especially for young people through Workshop Schools. The biographies of young adults attending the Workshop Schools described in WP5 showed their satisfaction with this training model.

This programme is not exclusive to the municipal organism or the functional region, but it is a programme of regional scope so it exceeds the limits of the functional region itself. It is co-financed by the Department of Employment, Enterprise and Commerce of the Andalusian Regional Government, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and by the European Social Fund, which combines training and employment initiatives<sup>11</sup>. The Workshop Schools are a result of the policies of the European Strategy for Employment, financed by the European Social Fund, but with a strong regional or autonomous component, as they form part of the work-linked training policies, i.e., alternating periods of training in school and in work, which is one of the features most highly valued by the different actors involved.

The appointment of different entities for the development of the Workshop school programme is carried out on a competitive basis. The different local organizations, the organisms that depend on them (MITE), associations, foundations and other non-profit-making institutions participate in this competition. The Andalusian Autonomous Government establishes and decides which professional qualifications will be granted taking into account the criteria set by the Estrategia de Innovación de Andalucía 2020 (Andalusian Strategy for Innovation 2020) and the Estrategia Española de Activación para el Empleo 2014 – 2016 (Spanish Strategy for the Activation of Employment 2014 – 2016), analyzing the jobs with the best future. In the functional region of Malaga, through

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<sup>9</sup><http://imfe.malaga.eu/>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.empleo.gob.es/es/estrategia-empleo-joven/logos/planes/Plan\\_Actuacion\\_IMFE.pdf](http://www.empleo.gob.es/es/estrategia-empleo-joven/logos/planes/Plan_Actuacion_IMFE.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/empleoempresaycomercio/areas/empleo/formacion/paginas/escuelas-taller.html>



a current resolution (November 2017)<sup>12</sup>, the Regional Department for Employment, Business and Trade of the Andalusian Autonomous Government, has granted only seven Workshop Schools to local governments and dependent organizations, such as the IMFE and the OAL for Promotion and Development (Local Autonomous Institution).

The strategy and initiatives for encouragement and promotion of employment of this body dependent on Malaga City Hall have as their goal the improvement of the social and economic situation of the municipality's socio-geographic context. The programme seeks to make an integral intervention on training and employment, complemented by other activities carried out in coordination with different units and agents involved. The 2015 joint report<sup>13</sup> by the Council and the European Commission on the design of ET2020 establishes six priority areas for the 2016-2020 period, determining specific questions to be dealt with in each area. All these areas are strongly focused on training and education in young people. Special reference is made to the Riga conclusions of June 22, 2015, where one of the main aims in the area of education and vocational training for the period 2015-2020 is: "To promote work-based learning in all its forms, with special attention to apprenticeships, by involving social partners, companies, chambers and VET providers, as well as by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship." (p.C417/35).

The aims of the Workshop Schools, including the five dependent on the Malaga MITE, had a very specific particularity in the first stage, which was the development and promotion of activities related to the recovery of the artistic, historic, cultural or natural heritage. Rehabilitation of urban areas and the environment was also considered, as well as the recovery and conditioning of publicly owned infrastructures to serve as the basis for centres of entrepreneurial initiative, and any other public or social activity leading to insertion of the young participants through professionalization and acquiring experience (García Valverde and Serrano, 2009).

The Workshop Schools, as part of the policies for work training, aim to grant a remunerated and productive job to unemployed young people, between the ages of 16 and 25. However, although this was an exclusive aspect before, the new regulations of 2016 include a 60% fee for unemployed young adults belonging to priority groups. Likewise, the selection proceedings have changed from being carried out by the institution promoting the Workshop Schools, to being undertaken by the Andalusian Employment Office.

The young people undergo a training plan with the aim of their acquiring and improving professional competences and qualifications by obtaining professional certificates. Its objective is the combination of qualification and work training, in order to develop useful public or social services which grant these young people the possibility to carry out an

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<sup>12</sup> Publication of the new resolution for the Workshop Schools on 08/11/2017. In section "D.T. de Economía, Innovación, Ciencia y Empleo de Málaga" appear the schools corresponding to Málaga: <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/empleoempresaycomercio/areas/formacion-empleo/becas-fpe/paginas/resolucion-provisional-talleres.html>

<sup>13</sup> Joint Report (2015) of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). New priorities for European cooperation in education and training. [[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215\(02\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(02)&from=EN)].

effective job, which, together with the professional training they undergo, help them to get professional qualification and a future job.

Young participants and those responsible for the Workshop Schools in the Malaga functional region confirmed the importance of this training programme for the employment of large numbers of young people, pointing out that these projects have been particularly successful in the labour insertion of young people whether they have completed compulsory education or not. Aside from the new regulation (April, 2011 and July, 2016), Workshop School training was transversal, also focusing on personal trajectories, taking into account personal development and the strengthening of social and personal abilities. Apart from specialized training aimed at employability, modules were available on the prevention of occupational risks, job placement, computer training, environmental awareness, and even gender equality. As a result of the new regulation in 2016 and the reduction of the training period from 24 to 12 months, these modules of basic complementary training will not be taught except for certain justifiable projects.

The latest announcement of these programmes by the Andalusian Regional Government in 2016<sup>14</sup> requires the collaborating bodies, including the MITE of Malaga, to fulfil the prescriptions of the training personnel and the minimum requirements of space, installations and equipment established for all the modules constituting the corresponding certificates of professionalism (levels 1 and 2) to be provided, as well as other specifications. The goal is the same as that described in the national Law of Qualifications and Vocational Training, consisting in providing an integral system of vocational training, qualifications and accreditation to respond openly and efficiently to social and economic demands by way of the various training modalities.

In Malaga, as in the entire Autonomous Community of Andalusia, as a result of administrative dependence, all training courses for employment including the Workshop Schools have been suspended since 2011, because of irregularities detected in their execution. Some of the court cases concerning Vocational Training for Employment (VTE) have been dropped because the employment technicians were not involved in the supposed irregularities. In all these years, Andalusia, with a mean unemployment rate of 34.3%, has not had training for employment in accordance with the needs of the region. These anomalies in policies of training for employment have meant the loss of European Union grants, with the ensuing suspension of different programmes and projects for training for employment, including the Workshop Schools. For these reasons, new regulations have been passed for the Workshop Schools and other programmes and recently put into practice. We can, therefore, speak of a before and after in the policies of training for employment and the subsidies for their promotion and development. In this new stage, the province of Malaga receives 8.6 million euros out of a total of 49 million destined by the Andalusian Regional Government for Workshop School and Employment Workshop projects, taking into account the unemployment rate.

### 3.1. Telling the story of case study 2

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/boja/2016/107/1>  
<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/empleoempresaycomercio/areas/formacion-empleo/becas-fpe/paginas/subvenciones-escuelas-taller.html>

The Workshop School programme has, in fact, been in operation for over thirty years, having first started in 1985, together with Trade Schools, under the motto “to learn working and to work learning”, and later extended to Employment Workshops in 1999. It represents a response to the interrelation existing between training and work in a dynamic economy (Amor Bravo, 2008; García Valverde y Serrano, 2009; Muñoz, 2013; Pérez González, Blanco y Sánchez López, 2016). The programme was created in response to high rates of unemployment (47% in 1985) among young people with low educational standards and severe problems of job placement and social integration.<sup>15</sup> The initiative by the Ministry of Work, which promoted the programme with the assistance of the European Social Fund, was taken up by town councils in the modality of training and employment. We should, however, emphasize the fact that the Workshop School projects could initially only be promoted by autonomous entities and public bodies dependent on the State and Autonomous Communities, or their local agencies, consortiums, corporations, associations, foundations and other non-profit making organizations (García Valverde and Serrano, 2009, p. 861). According to the new regulation, there is not much difference from the stage prior to 2011, although the controls are much more demanding and strict.

At first, the Workshop School programme (WS) had national scope with local organization by town halls and corporations. In 2003, central government transferred its powers in the fields of work, employment and training, until then managed by the National Institute of Employment (INEM)<sup>16</sup> to the Autonomous Community of Andalusia for the management and control at regional level of the national programmes of Workshop Schools and Trade Schools (WS/TS). Andalusia assumed the programming, organization and management of activities related to Vocational Training for Employment (VTE), as well as the homologation of the Workshop Schools and Trade Schools, and the issue of the corresponding professional certificates.

This model of work-linked training falls within the framework of what was formerly known as Occupational Vocational Training, which became Vocational Training for Employment in 2007<sup>17</sup> and was again regulated in 2015.<sup>18</sup> In 2009 the Andalusian Department of Employment implemented the Workshop Schools Programme, together with Employment Workshops and Trade Schools. Also in 2009, town halls, non-profit making bodies and public agencies presented 369 projects, of which 57 were for Workshop Schools, 20 for Trade Schools open to those seeking employment under the age of 25, and 285 were Employment Workshops for those over 25, while 7 projects were for promotion and development units. In 2006, the General Directorate for Employment

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<sup>15</sup> It is significant that one of the people involved in its creation was José María Pérez González (better known throughout Spain as Peridis, author of intelligent, satirical daily cartoons in the important newspaper *El País*), who also took part in another initiative to promote employment, known as the *Lanzaderas de Empleo* (Launchers of Employment).

<sup>16</sup> Royal Decree 467/2003, (25 April), on the transfer to the Autonomous Community of Andalusia of the management carried out by the National Institute of Employment, in the field of work, employment and training.

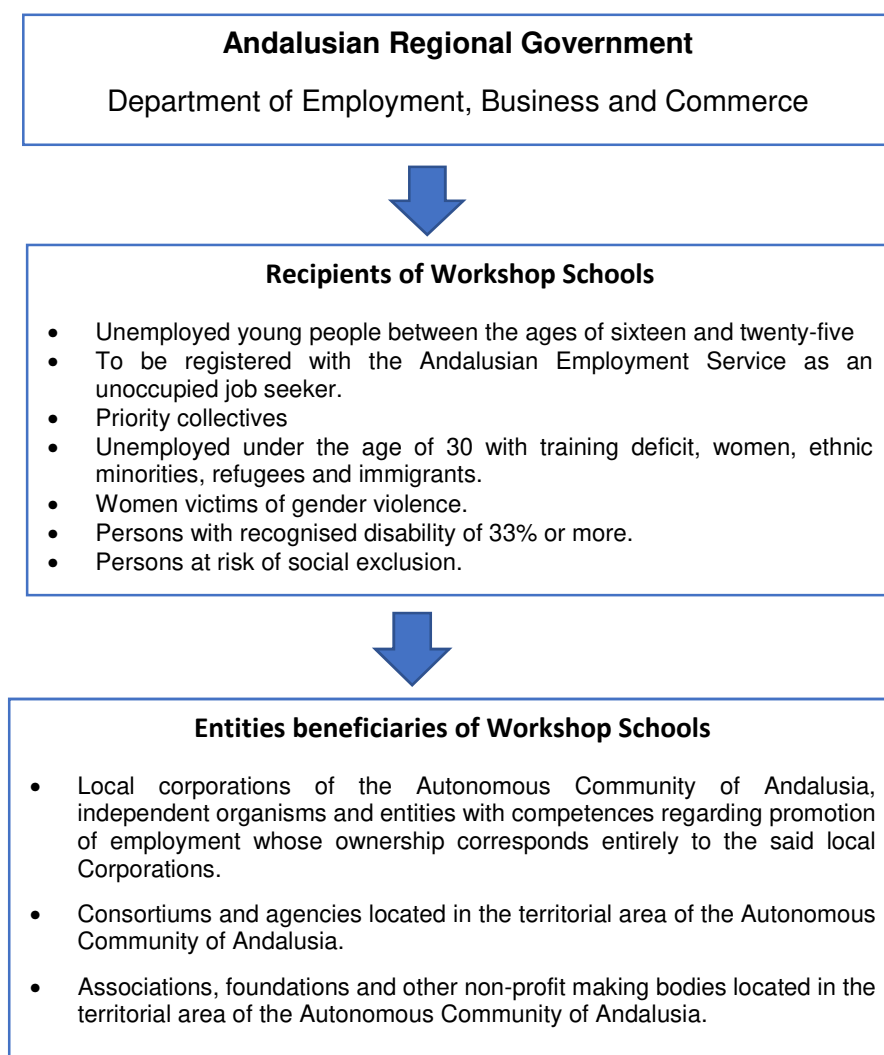
<sup>17</sup> Royal Decree 395/2007 (23 March), regulating the subsystem of vocational training for employment (BOE, nº 87, 11/4/2007)

<sup>18</sup> Law 30/2015, (9th September, 2015), which regulates the Vocational Training System for Employment in the workplace.



and Social Affairs of the European Commission classified the Workshop Schools Programme as one of Good Practice, as it was considered to be one of the best programmes aimed at disadvantaged young people (Caraballo, 2014). In the province of Malaga between the years 2004 and 2011, 69 Workshop Schools and Employment Workshops have been in operation, with a total attendance of 1920 young job seekers. Specifically, five Workshop Schools were in operation in the Malaga MITE<sup>19</sup>, with an average of 40 young people per school, with ages ranging from 16 to 25 and very diverse activities.

Figure 1.- New Regulation Workshop Schools Programme



Nowadays, under the new regulations of 2016, which are stricter and more centralizing, the number of Workshop School projects for young adults under 25 has been reduced by 75% (17 WS) and Professional Workshops for those over 25 have been prioritized. These 17 new programmes for Workshop Schools are to receive over 6 million euros for their implementation in 2018 in the province of Malaga.

<sup>19</sup> .<http://imfe.malaga.eu/es/formacion/escuelas-taller/relacion-de-escuelas/index.html#.WfmKb2jWy70>

### *Reasoning on correspondences*

It is interesting to analyze the profile of the young people for whom the Workshop School programme is designed in the broad context of the Functional Region. It falls within the framework of the active employment policies and Training for Employment in the functional region and goals established for the Workshop Schools Programme. During the first period, which covers from 2004 to 2014, the aims of the Workshop Schools, including the one studied here, have been adapted to training especially aimed at young people under 25 years of age, unemployed with deficits in basic education, or especially vulnerable collectives or at risk of exclusion.

Workshop Schools projects developed throughout the Functional Region during this first period (until 2014) have been programmes combining professional training with professional practice in activities related to the recovery of artistic, historic, cultural or natural heritage, the rehabilitation of urban areas or environment, the improvement of living conditions in cities, as well as any other useful public or social activity. These have been social initiatives with a high level of involvement from professionals and institutions and have provided a service to the community. This regional contextualization of the activities developed by the workshop schools in general, and the ones in Malaga in particular, has generated personal and social empowerment, with a sustainable and innovative potential.

For one of the Workshop School teachers interviewed, these are programmes with high social content, as they have considerable impact and significance for the lives of the young people:

*Workshop schools have been programmes for training young people. Most of these people had had problems in the regular educational system, while others had finished their Compulsory Secondary Education studies, as they consider it necessary for their training. Mostly, I have worked with traditional jobs, such as construction work, plumbing, electricity, woodworking, metalworking and gardening. Those were the jobs for which we trained students in the Workshop School. Those were our main plans (...). Those young people did not like to study in regular secondary schools and were attracted by a practical training. (E\_SP\_M\_3).*

Regarding the degree of social empowerment, the Workshop School programme meant an important improvement in terms of promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment among young adults in a vulnerable situation.

*In fact, [in this town in Malaga], where we are, there are many young entrepreneurs who have studied in one of the Workshop Schools and today have their own business because they have acquired that knowledge and after that they have worked for a company, until finally setting up their own. (E\_SP\_M\_3).*

For these young adults, these projects are also a great social, educational and confidence-boosting opportunity.

*Actually, I felt useless, I felt I was good for nothing. When I tried to find a job, they requested my Secondary Education Certificate, and I had nothing... Now, I love my life. Maybe it has made it up to me for the bad times with this great moment (...) [Y\_SP\_M\_6].*

Under the new regulation approved in 2016, training can take the form of a speciality leading to level 1 and 2 professional certificates. Training itineraries are considered with the aim of guaranteeing that the young and people with learning deficits can eventually earn their professional certificate for job placement. However, since VTE only recommenced in 2016, we as yet have no evidence of the new regulation's adequacy.

From the point of view of governance, the conflict, for want of a better word, may be due to the change in regulation of the VTE policies affecting the Workshop Schools projects. For five years, many young people in Malaga who find themselves in situations of vulnerability and at risk of exclusion have not, as priority collectives, been able to enter this type of programmes because of the judicialization of VTE in the Andalusian Regional Government, with direct consequences for the Workshop Schools programmes.

*The Andalusian government plays a major role in these projects, (...), and then, city councils. [E\_SP\_M\_4].*

*In my experience, they are happy that their town offers a project like this, because it helps many young people to earn a living. E\_SP\_M\_4].*

Despite the success of these programmes with professional training and with young adults, the professionals insist that the main problem is their permanence. They wonder why these projects depend on the decisions of the city councils and the approval and funding of the Andalusian Government.

*"The main problem is their permanence, not mine, but that of the project" (Workshop School). [E\_SP\_M\_4].*

*"and we have discovered that we had to fight for the permanence of the programmes: demonstrate, meet with politicians, meet with politicians again... (...)"[E\_SP\_M\_3].*

We can also state that the new regulations reduce flexibility and the power of decision in local entities and non-profit making collaborating bodies, and concentrate it in the regional government administration (Department of Employment, Business and Commerce). We do not yet know the consequences and implementation of this new regulation, as the new grants for new programmes have not yet been made public. Another concern can be the uncertainty of local bodies faced with an unknown future, where rigidity and control of the process are clear, given the cases of judicialization already under way, although none of them are related to the Workshop Schools. Those responsible for Workshop School teams state that the new regulations aim to favour local corporations with larger budgets, rather than projects judged by their merits, which is a question on which we cannot yet make a pronouncement.

*We have to qualify ourselves to teach new programmes and we cannot do it now because, of course, apart from the fact that it means a lot of money for the City Council... because... there is a lot of equipment: disabled facilities; the elevator, we built an elevator, but it was not possible; fireproof paint in the work rooms... So many things were changed. Then, it turned out that those jobs were not taught anymore. Before the crisis started, when it was just starting, we had to change the jobs, because there was a time when construction working training was useless". [E\_SP\_M\_3].*

Concerning the *Life Course* focus, the MITE Workshop School projects together with those of other town halls in the Malaga functional region are directly related to specific initiatives aimed at promoting non-formal learning among young people. Indeed, one of the strengths of these programmes resides in the participation of vulnerable young people in activities linked to the workplace through sandwich courses.

*“With the new regulations, as I said, there are no cross-discipline subjects. Until last year, according to the regulations, it was necessary to offer an employability subject and an insertion subject, which lasted 10 hours”. [E\_SP\_M\_4].*

*“The students from the Workshop School are focused on training in order to get a job, because that is the only thing they have. They are not going to go to university, they are not going to study pre-university courses. Some students, we also try, right? One of the aims is professional integration, but also to help them to enrol in official education again. Some of them study official vocational courses again, but most of them are focused on learning a profession in order to get a job as soon as they finish and leave the workshop school”. [E\_SP\_M\_3].*

Another of the Workshop School programmes' aims is their relation with problems close to young people and their community, which encourages participation and the notion of enabling, in the sense of feeling useful by being of service to the community, but at the same time supplying both individual and social synergy.

Relating the perspective of Life Course and Governance, with the changes in new regulations, when basic training is reduced, young people are at risk of being prevented from studying previous programmes, whether they be cross-discipline or courses for the preparation of specific tests aimed at obtaining the Secondary Education certificate. Thus, the Workshop School may lose its potential for integrating these young people into the educational system. This reduction in the length of the programme may also imply a shortage of time to establish an affective bond between the young participants and the professionals, as well as between the former and the training itself, which is considered a very relevant aspect by the people interviewed.

When relating the perspectives of *Cultural Political Economy* (CPE) and *Governance*, (GOV), it is important to highlight the existence of a discourse common to all experts, professionals and young students – the relevance of *soft skills* for the professional insertion of the young people. In this sense, some of those interviewed stated it was necessary to train young people in several cross-discipline skills before they were prepared to work. It is important to ask whether the changes in the regulations may lead to a shortage of time for training young people in the development of those skills and whether this would have consequences for their performance and professional insertion. As was the case with the facts mentioned in the preceding paragraph, there is no data about the possible risks, other than the discourse of the actors, as the new programmes established by the 2016 regulations have not yet been implemented.

#### *Reasoning in implementation*

From the viewpoint of cultural political economy (CPE), the Workshop Schools fulfil a fundamental role. They are conceived as a mixed programme of employment and training to improve the employment capacity of unemployed young people up to the age of 25, with the goal of facilitating their job placement. They are part of the high youth

unemployment rate in Andalusia (46.5%), with special emphasis on young people with educational deficits and in a situation of social risk. Most of the pupils have not successfully completed obligatory education, or have not continued their studies.

One aspect which appears in the interviewed people's discourse, and which is outstanding, is that of the "maturing process". At times, the interviewees state that during training or after it, young-adult students mature and this helps them make the best of the training they have undergone, extend it or continue with their studies. Moreover, they emphasize the fact that they just ask them to be "good people" and behave. One of the conclusions that can be drawn from these statements is that these young people, who are vulnerable to social exclusion, may fall (and some of them do) into risky behaviour (for instance, abuse of toxic substances) or criminal activity.

Regarding the perspective of Governance, the five-year suspension of these programmes throughout Andalusia has dealt a severe blow to the future of many excluded young people, who saw in the Workshop Schools a viable alternative through which to obtain job-linked training that would allow them to find a job. There was even some doubt about the future of the Workshop Schools, and the teachers themselves were active in ensuring their continuance. It is surprising that the local entities and collaborating organizations took a secondary role in this process of calling for the maintenance of the Workshop Schools and their social importance in local development.

*City councils should have fought, but the city council has their own problems, as their municipal problems kill you, starting a project, financing, which... for this kind is great, but if it is not... it is okay.*

*There has been no change. One of the problems is related to the fact that in most of the cases, it is us, the professionals, the ones that work creating the project. I mean, in a city council, maybe in a very big one, there are workers appointed for the projects, but in my case, and in many others, before finishing a project in the Workshop School, we leave a project already created for future professionals... [E\_SP\_M\_4].*

Furthermore, we must emphasize the high degree of involvement and participation of municipal corporations and collaborating entities until 2011. The Workshop School projects, together with others such as the Trade Schools and Employment Workshops, represent an experience of local development and regional cohesion for local agents. The work done by the five Workshop Schools in Malaga, together with the other two in the functional region, is well known. Table 2 summarizes the specialities of these projects according to the goals of the announcement for these programmes, but with the decision of the respective benefitting entities and not the young people themselves.

After the new regulations in 2016, the regional administration established several criteria for a competition in order to assess the projects created by their promoting entities, such as City Councils, regional organizations and dependent institutions for the promotion of employment. Other bodies such as consortiums, associations, foundations and other non-profit making parties located in Andalusia can also take part. There is greater control and monitoring of expenses, as well as the type and character of the associations and non-profit making collaborating entities. Under the new regulations, priority is given to projects in harmony with the Spanish Strategy of Activation for Employment 2014-2016 (Andalusian Employment Service, AES).

*City Halls or non-profit organizations, present the project and... And they establish... And decide a series of courses to be approved. And then the regional government, who approve... The final projects. They tell you which courses you may or may not have or if there are some necessary changes or requirements... [E\_SP\_M\_4].*

Training needs are identified using the analysis of occupations with best prospects and information provided by experts of the regional administration, determining different areas and specialities relevant for regional development. Apart from the traditional specialities of the previous stage such as the catering industry and tourism (Table 2), we can also mention renewable energy, new technology and the agro-food industry, among others. Nevertheless, some of those responsible in the promoting institutions consider that new requirements for the standardization of the institutions for teaching some of the professional courses are leading them to request those certificates which mean lower expenses (for instance, those related to administrative works), instead of those that, maybe, are more adequate to the demands of the area but more expensive (for instance, courses for which they would need great machinery).

Besides, the actors interviewed criticize the changes that had been made in relation to the professional insertion of the young adults who participated in those programmes. Although there were two phases of assessment in the past, one after the first 6 months and the other after the first 12, in recent years only the first of these was carried out. This is relevant for the promoting institutions, as the level of integration achieved will help them to obtain higher marks in the above-mentioned competition. They do not believe that a period of six months is enough to assess an effective integration of the users, especially due to the economic situation.

We should also add that the discourses do not mention the institutions designed for the efficient participation of young adults, which may be important for the design and implementation of the programme. However, if this happens in a more casual scenario, for instance, times when there is a more direct and intimate interaction between young people and professionals, like the individual assessments consisting of a dialogue where they reflect about the development of the users of the programme.

Concerning the *Life Course* focus, according to the testimony of the same young people who attend the Workshop Schools programmes, it is confirmed that these programmes provide skills aimed at rapid job placement for young people that do not manage to conclude obligatory education, drop out prematurely, or are at risk of social exclusion.

*"I had problems with my studies, so I used to resit. (...) I came home and I did not feel like studying. (...) Yes, I repeated the first year of Bachillerato twice and then I spent a year doing nothing and then I started in the Workshop School". [Y\_SP\_M\_7]*

The teaching professionals also confirm that the students who attend this type of programmes have significant training gaps.

*The profile of the student of the Workshop School is not that one. They are boys and girls who feel that they are good for nothing and... Well, that they are useless. And they are on the defensive, because when you are teaching them and you say something, they react on*

*the defensive, until they relax and realize that you are there to help them. A lot of them do not have a job... related to what they have studied, but they end up being great professionals, and that is the important thing.* [E\_SP\_M\_3]

One of the most important aspects is the association with the territory, providing a service to the community as local development, as well as job placement, relevant in these cases. Despite the educational deficits of the young people attending the Workshop Schools, they appreciate the value of the training and are aware of its importance, so that their integration into the programmes represents a rethinking for the future training of these young people.

*"I don't know. I wanted to study an official higher degree of vocational training, maybe. But now I prefer this because, well, I did not know a lot about the issue before but now I do after the course in the Workshop School".* [Y\_SP\_M\_7]

*"They learn a job. They learn how to be good professionals, good people, and that is why, in the Workshop School, we insist: 'It does not matter what you do... but it matters that you are good people.'" But these young people come to the Workshop School without any self-esteem, because they have been told they are bad students at school.* [E\_SP\_M\_3]

The experts and teachers confirm what the pupils attending Workshop Schools have training deficiencies, come from broken homes or low socio-economic level, and some have even slight disabilities, so that these programmes also have a compensatory function. The interviewees stated that the training provided had to go beyond the optimization of their technical or professional skills to include other elements such as personal and social development, so that they would gain confidence and self-assurance.

*They acquired those skills in the Workshop School. The first six months, which consist of training in the Workshop School were more difficult [the students were uneasy] because they mainly consisted of theoretical lessons, they had practical hours but... the next six months when they were hired".* [E\_SP\_M\_4].

Another aspect the interviewees emphasized in the dynamics of these programmes was the promotion of being team-players rather than individual enabling. Participation, collaboration, independence in decision making, and cooperation are values found in the training activities of the Workshop Schools in Malaga, all of Andalusia and even at a national level. In this sense, the discourses include references to *soft skills*:

*I-I-I... Progress (laughs). I would say there was progress, because I was not able to talk at first, and now I can't stop talking, but... (laughs). Amazing team spirit and then the-e-e... the teachers were really close. This is not like a secondary school. There were not a lot of people on the courses, because there were about ten of us, so they are closer to you, they help you more... They reinforce you... I don't know, it is like... You learn more, okay? I believe.* [Y\_SP\_M\_7]

The degree of job placement is the unresolved question. The new regulation aims to help them become self-employed individuals on concluding their training in the Workshop Schools and the award of their professional certificate. However, the coordinators and director of the Schools are sceptical due to the reduction in the training period from two years to one. We should also mention the high number of women in these programmes,

as well as young people from vulnerable collectives. The new regulation gives priority to the integration of young people with important social deficits and in situations of special vulnerability.

*They have created a competition now, they take into account the amount of employment we have achieved, but... in the last Workshop School they have just asked for the number of jobs in the first six months... they haven't asked for it... I have discussed this with the specialist, because they are restricting it. Six months is not enough time, especially in these years of economic crisis. It's not enough time. If we had sent it after a year, there would probably be more people working. So, that is the reason we have less points for the competition. [E\_SP\_M\_3].*

For the personnel responsible for the training of young people in these programmes, the intention is that the work done should respond to the needs and interests of the young people, which goes beyond the very structure and configuration of the programme. As already noted, it is striking that there are no institutionalized spaces for the participation of young people in the design and implementation of the programme.

#### *Reasoning on originalities*

Under the new regulations, all the young people in the scheme must acquire a professional certification to improve their job placement possibilities. A common feature for all vocational training systems for employment in Spain is that skills may be obtained through different non-official programmes and, in some way, this helps young people to join the official educational system.

This programme of Workshop Schools is ground-breaking as regards active employment policies, because it provides a job placement response to a socially underprivileged sector of the population such as young people with a high unemployment rate. By way of the corresponding contracts and remuneration, this somehow poses a solution that also focuses on the structural dimension of employment and the employability (although it belongs to a specific action for a specific amount of time) and not only on what is related to the employability issues associated with the training of the person. It is likewise especially suitable for young people with educational deficiencies and in a situation of social vulnerability.

The effects of the application of these programmes linked to training policies such as VTE are job placement on a local scale for many unemployed young people outside the educational system. Apart from providing a response to this young collective's educational needs, they also help the overall promotion of the individual, contributing to their wellbeing in the context of their community. Social rootlessness is eliminated as they seek to become integrated with their surroundings and contribute to local development, with positive results.

*In the town where I have worked, they have... The local nursery school was created by the Workshop School; in the graveyard there is a chapel for the deceased, for the burials and everything, and it was also built by the Workshop School; an occupational centre for disabled people was also built by the School; a sports hall... [E\_SP\_M\_3].*

From the viewpoint of governance, the Workshop School programmes help integration as suggested by their very configuration of mixed training and work programmes. As



well, we can estimate the structuring although it has been present of the Workshop Schools with the development of the communities where they are set, as activities developed by these programmes are based under the old regulations of 2004, as clear in the MITE Workshop Schools in Malaga. The Workshop Schools are temporary projects in which training and qualification alternate with productive work in activities related to the recovery of the artistic, historic, cultural or natural heritage, the rehabilitation of urban areas or the environment, the recovery or creation of public infrastructure, and any other activity of public usefulness or general social interest leading to social insertion of the young participants through professionalization and the acquisition of experience.

The new regulations extend the training content to activities more related to the activation of a wider range of employment, projects designed to obtain professional certification to improve the job placement of these young people. It is not yet possible to know the number of projects assigned to the MITE and the Malaga functional region, but there remains the intention to continue with some of those that were already successfully under way and fall within the new classification of activities. Examples of the effects on local development are the recovery of the heritage of Malaga Cathedral, and the maintenance and potentiality of *La Concepción* botanic gardens, officially declared an asset of cultural interest.

From the *Life Course* viewpoint, the MITE programme of Workshop Schools in Malaga functional region has fulfilled its expectations, at least in the period up to 2011. As stated in this report, this training modality has fulfilled its compensatory character for those young adults with very particular personal characteristics. The cross-discipline contents aimed at completing their basic training to allow them to take part in active employment or continue their studies in formal education have been especially important, above all given the difficulty of programming for such a wide diversity of young people in the groups and the specificity of the projects.

*I finished the year and... I found... Well, I found a job... Sometimes they called me for... For entertaining activities, I mean, it wasn't much, just some days; and, sometimes, I looked for it myself. [Y\_SP\_M\_7]*

*Now with the new regulations there are no subjects which are common for several courses, but until last year, in workshop school, apart from the specialized training of a subject you had to teach safety at workplace, professional integration, computer language, environmental awareness. All those common subjects were the ones I used to teach. And gender equality, yeah... There was a gender equality subject. [E\_SP\_M\_4]*

This has lead to the design of innovative contextualized projects with answers to the individual and collective needs of the groups.

### **3.3 Analysis of the case according to the different perspectives**

*Workshop Schools, a programme of youth work promotion with emphasis on local development (from the CPE perspective)*

These and other initiatives with strong local content are related to one of the main questions of the report, which is promotion by the EU countries of monitoring policies

and creating reforms, promoting innovative ways of guaranteeing sustainable investment in education and training, as well as exploring the potential of the Investment Plan for Europe in the field of education and training. After the recent state and regional regulation of the new Vocational Training Employment (VTE) policies of the Workshop Schools and Trade Schools that are approved will be able to receive financing from the Youth Employment Initiative via Strand 5 of the Operational Programme for Youth Employment of the European Social Fund, according to the decision adopted by the European Commission on 12 December 2014.

The budget provision of the Workshop Schools is mainly from the regional government, not forgetting that its origin is the European Social Fund and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, and it pertains to the promotion of the employment policies undertaken by the Department of Employment, Business and Commerce of the local government of Andalusia. Among others, the priority aim of the local government of Andalusia is the Law of Urgent Measures to encourage job creation (Emple@Joven programmes). Nonetheless, the MITE, like other entities, can provide its own financing depending on the projects.

Similarly to other programmes promoting youth employability, the Workshop Schools are based on the training policy for the unemployed originating in the crisis of the salary society in the 1980s (Moral, 2007). These are territorial training programmes (Carvajal, 2015) within the framework of active employment policies, where the potentialities of a region are used to improve the quality of life of its population in the broad sense, either by restoring the historic and natural heritage, or by attending to the needs of the population. In fact, the policies that prioritize the participation of non-profit making, public or private local agents and entities in the implementation of these training activities aimed at very heterogeneous collective of unemployed have been promoted not only by the European Union, but also by the OECD, given that the decentralization of employment policies has been shown to be the most efficient organization in the implementation of actions to combat unemployment in many countries. These training policies, such as VTE, and is the case of the Workshop Schools, combine the relevance of job placement at a local level, promoted by these training programmes, together with the need for training to act as integral promotion of the individual, contributing to their wellbeing within the community (Carvajal, 2015). In fact, these and other similar programmes are also known as “social services programmes for employment” because of their high contingency depending on local job markets and the capacity of social agents and contact networks to offer satisfactory results.

Malaga is the province which, until 2011, had presented most Workshop School projects in all of Andalusia, with 49% of the total, the majority being presented by local entities of the Malaga Functional Region. Of the 26 projects spread throughout the province, 9 belonged to the Functional Region, whereas the MITE of Malaga City Hall had five Workshop School projects, with 190 pupils and a budget of €4,290,351.

Table 2. Projects for Workshop Schools, Trade Schools and Employment Workshops approved in 2011

Type of project	Nº of projects	Pupils	Budget (Euros)
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Workshop Schools	26	884	42,696,532.30
Trade Schools	2	56	
Employment Workshops	40	1004	

Source: Activities memoir of the Andalusian Employment Service, 2011

The training activities range from maintenance and conservation, refurbishment of accesses and footpaths, park infrastructure, signposting, reforestation, irrigation installation, illumination (2013-2014), biodiversity and town planning, as well as new technologies and hardware maintenance, with the aim of acquiring the skills set out in the professional certificate of operations of assembly and maintenance of microcomputer systems, providing cover and service to the different programmes and services of the MITE.

Lastly, the economic crisis caused a remarkable turning point caused in the discourse of some of the people interviewed with regard to the business sector in the area. Before the crisis, they felt that business used to try to recruit young adults who participated in their programme, even before they finished it, as they needed new workers. After the crisis, they believe recruitment occurred because they need cheaper workforce

Table 3. Projects of Workshop Schools in the Malaga MITE approved in 2011 and 2017\*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Speciality</i>	<i>Pupils</i>	<i>Budget (euros)</i>
E.T. Eficiencia Energética Málaga	Renewable energy Plumbing and electricity	15 15	858,070.20
ET Casco Antiguo	Ironwork (12 pupils) Painting (12) Plumbing and electricity (12) Renewable energy (12)	48	1,372,912.32
ET La Concepción	Information and citizens' services Gardening Maintenance of nurseries and plants	12 12 12	1,029,684.24
ET Palma-Palmilla	Socio-educational assistant for underage children Plumbing and electricity Socio-occupational activation	12 12 12	1,029,684.24
ET Servicio de Hardware y TIC's	Maintenance of IT equipment	40	
City Hall (others)			
ET "El Portón"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carpentry</li> <li>• Plumbing and electricity</li> <li>• painting - soldering / tiling</li> </ul>	44	1,193.117.64
ET "El Portón" (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auxiliary activities in forest nurseries, gardens and garden centers</li> <li>• Installation and maintenance of gardens and green areas</li> <li>• Coatings and construction</li> </ul>		216,124.42

Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of data from SAE, 2010 and 2017

\* No more announcements were made until December 2016, concluded in November 2017.

*More centralized and less flexible regulation (from the GOV perspective)*

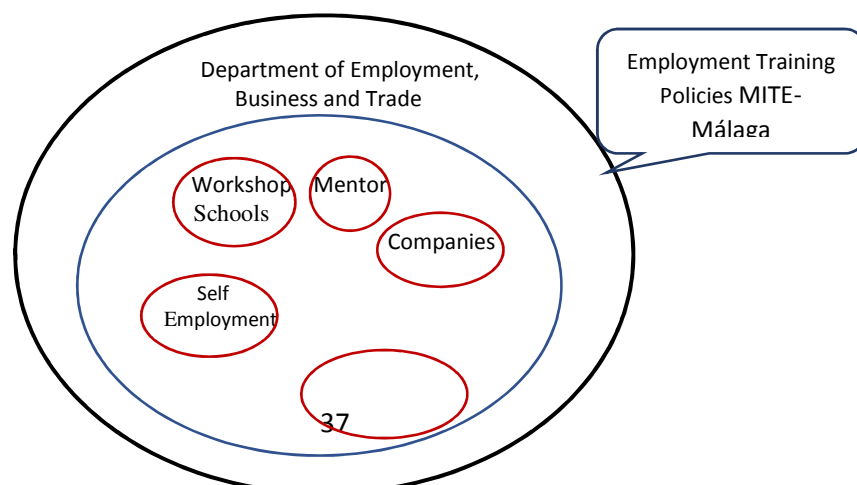
As explained in the introduction, the regulation of Workshop Schools has undergone a number of important structural changes. Beginning with a more centralized structure at their inception by the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs in the 1980s, with implementation at a more local level, in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the respective Autonomous Communities – in our case Andalusia – have been made responsible for their administration, in connection with the Andalusian Employment Service as part of the active employment policies.

Following this idea, Workshop Schools are funded mainly by the autonomous government, but also by the European Social Fund and the National Department of Employment of Social Security and they are included in the promotion of employment policies carried out by the Department of Employment, Business and Trade of the Autonomous Government of Andalusia. The main objective of the Autonomous Government of Andalusia, among others, is the Urgent Measures Act, in order to help to create employment (Emple@Joven programmes). In addition the IMFE, as well as other entities, may contribute to the budget, depending on the project.

Malaga is the province with the most Workshop Schools in all Andalusia. Until 2011 the MITE of Malaga managed five Workshop Schools, financed by the Andalusian Regional Government and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, with the support of the European Social Fund (ESF). This initiative, extended by municipalities throughout the Functional Region, aims to provide assistance to young people, especially since 2010, as a result of the economic crisis and the significant increase in youth unemployment throughout the EU. Over 20 million people under the age of 25 have received support from the ESF, representing almost 30% of all its beneficiaries up to the end of 2012. In fact, over the period 2007-2013, ESF assistance was over 10,000 million Euros per year, with approximately 68% of the ESF budget destined to projects with the aim of training and employability of young people.

Therefore, the projects financed by the ESF, including the MITE and its Workshop Schools, are pragmatic in nature, given that they respond to the needs of the different authorized centres. In general, they are guided by the principle of enabling both the young people and the organizations to efficiently achieve their proposed aims, as reflected in the VTE policies for individual qualification with commitment to the community (Caraballo, 2014; Carvajal, 2015).

Figure 2. Different Programmes of Employment



The management assigned to local corporations and collaborating bodies with some flexibility since 2003, following the example of the central administration, has undergone a significant change as a result of the judicialization process of the grants and subsidies to VTE from the Department of Employment of the Andalusian Regional Government. This brought about a five-year suspension of all VTE and confusion as to which administration was responsible. The Department of Employment was temporarily relieved of these responsibilities in 2013, being replaced by the Department of Education, thus incorporating VTE into Initial or formal Vocational Training. Two years later, VTE was again passed to the Department of Employment, but not to the Andalusian Service of Employment, but the General Directorate of VTE, with the aim of better coordinating responsibilities in the educational and professional fields for the issue of professional certificates.

*The policies for professional training courses are decided mainly by the Autonomous Government...* [E\_SP\_M\_4]

Since 2015 when the Workshop School started working in the town until November 2017 when the resolution for the announcement of 11<sup>th</sup> April of the same year was made for the new projects of the Workshop School, Professional Houses and Employment Workshops, according to the new regulations for those programmes in 2016 of the Professional Training for Employment system (FPE) in the employment area, we cannot know the opinion the local agents have about it. New regulations include comprehensive changes of the training system and establish new legal reforms for the different offers from companies and public organisms to the working, employed and unemployed people. Every entity which participates in the new announcement does so on a competitive basis under a series of objective criteria for the assessment of the projects, which guarantees all have the same opportunities to access the funds. For the policy makers, the regulation introduced in the new system improves the process for selecting students and teachers. On the other hand, there is more control over the funds received, as, in the case of local institutions, it is carried out through a certificate from the supervisor from that public administration.

In this respect, the new regulation is perceived as more strict, less flexible and more centralized, especially concerning justification of expenses and assignment of projects. It is now the Department of Employment that decides which projects should be financed at the proposal of local bodies and other entities fulfilling the conditions of the announcement. Those responsible for Workshop Schools consider this to be a regressive measure inasmuch as it favours large municipalities and collaborating entities, as against smaller ones with less resources.

*Of that kind of programmes. Not only the one that... The person learning or that has obtained a professional certificate, but even, the social impact that it has for the town itself, as people can see work carried out by those young men and women who belong to that workshop school, and they feel proud about it, both the town and the students and*

*their families. Well, you can ask whatever you want, but you don't get the points later. If you ask for the ones you are qualified, those are the ones you have possibilities to get.*  
[E\_SP\_M\_3]

*It is very... very sad, because the regulations for the qualifications too... We were qualified for teaching several specializations of professional training, but now they have changed the regulations and we do not meet the requirements.*  
[E\_SP\_M\_4]

In addition, the training activities must be included in the list of specialities of Vocational Training for Employment (VTE), thus opening up the possibility of obtaining a professional certificate valid throughout the European Union. This could lead to an imbalance between the bodies authorized to train and those required in the functional region, given that authorization is usually given to entities with lower administrative and other costs.

#### *A new mechanism for individual enabling of young people (from the LCR perspective)*

Like other municipalities in the Malaga functional region, the Workshop School projects carried out by the MITE are directly related to specific initiatives aimed at young people to promote their non-formal learning (EU Youth Strategy<sup>20</sup>) and sandwich courses. The link between these projects and problems close to young people and their community promotes participation and the notion of enabling, in the sense of feeling oneself useful by offering a service to the community, but at the same time it provides both individual and social synergy. In the specific case of the Workshop Schools in the MITE of Malaga, they are related to activities of recovery or promotion of the artistic, historic, cultural or natural heritage, as well as the rehabilitation of urban areas or the environment, or the recovery or creation of public infrastructures.

The pupils of Workshop Schools and other similar programmes can be typified as young unemployed people, most of whom are at risk of social exclusion (Carvajal, 2015). According to the reports of Training for Employment (2009) and the Activities Memoir (2011), and the Argos Observatory provided by the Andalusian Employment Service, and WP4, 66% of the courses carried out in Andalusia were directed at the unemployed in general, with women making up 52.7% of the total. Only 2.5% of the courses were directed at disabled pupils, and 1.5% to ethnic minorities and disadvantaged collectives. These are reference data taken from other related research studies (Muñoz, 2013; Carvajal, 2015; Blanco, 2016), together with in-depth interviews conducted with young people and those responsible for Workshop Schools in the functional region. All agree that these territorial policies based on sandwich courses are of benefit to different collectives, including young unemployed, women, immigrants, ethnic minorities, and young disabled. In general, these are young people with biographies fractured because of family breakdown, or school failure or drop out, and frequent feelings of uselessness and frustration on confronting the commitments of life.

When such subjects are faced with a training responsibility linked to a job, even though this is only temporary, their world changes and they think that they are being compensated

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<sup>20</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/youth/youth-strategy-2016\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/youth/youth-strategy-2016_en.pdf)

(Young\_SP\_M\_ 6). This is Marinetto's view (2003) regarding training policies, which involve a particular type of personal morality and a positive way of life for the community. In this case, young people, and in other cases, people in general, recognise that the training received favours the integral promotion of the person and contributes to their wellbeing in the community. In the case of the young people in the Workshop Schools this recognition exists regarding the opportunity they are offered by the training they receive. This gives them confidence for the future to take on new responsibilities both at work and to overcome situations of especial difficulty. Somehow, the programme is established as a turning point as it helps those young people to get better stability in their lives.

It has been established (Muñoz, 2013, Carvajal, 2015, Y\_SP\_M\_ 6, Y\_SP\_M\_7) that the policies of training for employment, including Workshop Schools, combine the values of the salaried society, focused on job placement, with the need for training for personal promotion. For many young people this experience has become an opportunity to get their first paid job, albeit for a short time, and the work is attractive, free and creative in some cases, which leads to the creation of future expectations in training and the acquisition of skills in a professional field.

*I was in the workshop school, and I have such a great time, because I loved it, in fact... I took more courses after it... [Y\_SP\_M\_6]*

*Especially EXPERIENCE, also the training, but at least the basic... The experience is what employers are asking for. I... I send my CV to many places and I have been interviewed and as I did not have the experience, they have not recruited me. [Y\_SP\_M\_7]*

Moreover, this type of training has a compensatory character for the young participants in a Workshop School, Trade School or Employment Workshop. Specific programmes can be organized with the aim of providing them with basic, professional training that allows them to find a job or to continue their studies in formal education under the present regulations. In the view of those responsible for the Workshop Schools, the heterogeneity of the young people in the groups and the specificity of the projects linked to the context in which they are carried out make up innovative, contextualized projects with answers to the individual and collective similar needs.

*And those young people come from having nothing to... to obtain the Secondary School Certificate. That means a great change; their self-esteem was like: "but, how was I able to get the Certificate?" And then... seeing that they were able to carry out a job, that they were good at it, because some of them were really good at what they were doing. Well, there was a change there.... In fact, they love us, most of the students do. [E\_SP\_M\_3]*

*The students who had failed in the official educational system, well... they need another kind of training and they need individual practical training (...) In the Workshop Schools, we specially work the individual potential of each student, the... The acquisition of values by the students, punctuality, cleanliness, order, fellowship, solidarity ...[E\_SP\_M\_4]*

The young people in the Workshop Schools of Malaga and its functional region show a high degree of satisfaction with the training received, but they also state their concern for the degree of job placement after conclusion of the training period. Indeed, studies such as those by Suárez (2004), Muñoz (2013) and Caraballo (2014) have recognized the same



concern. Self-employment is one of the measures contemplated as a way out of this individual preoccupation.

In short, as shown by WP5, the young adults interviewed have a positive evaluation of their participation in these training programmes, because they allow them to improve their professional competence and skills, as well as obtaining a basic certification to continue in the job market or the educational system. Moreover, these young people have had failures in their previous experiences in the job market, so that this precarious transition and their participation in this programme becomes a turning point.

Likewise, the young people express that these benefits are not limited to the job aspect, but also impinge on their social and personal lives, including an improvement in their self-esteem or the building of better expectations for the course of their lives. In this case, the activities of orientation, support and accompaniment have been fundamental.

#### **4. Emerging Issues**

Both the case studies analyzed are similar, but there are some important differences. They belong to the active policies for employment for helping unemployed young adults with no qualification between the ages of 16 and 25. These are programmes developed through time in order to promote young employment, both in Andalusia and Catalonia. Although the Workshop School programme is a national programme, since 2003 it has been managed by the autonomous governments. This professional training model belongs to what used to be known as Occupational Vocational Training, which became Professional Training for Employment in 2007. Although both case studies are related to LLL policies adapted to the local conditions of the region in which they are implemented, since 2015 Workshop Schools are less autonomous, as they have become projects that have to compete for being chosen by the regional administration. Unlike the Training Programme (TP12) in the Girona Functional Region, which belongs to the Youth Guarantee Scheme, (YGS), Workshop Schools belong to those programmes, although they have a similar founding system. Both programmes are funded by the European Social Fund, Regional Employment Offices and, in the case of Workshop Schools, also by the Spanish Employment Department, but all these funds are managed by both regional governments.

The contribution of local institutions is collateral, but the significance differs. In the case of Training Programme TP12, we are reaching a progressive decentralization from the Catalan Office for Employment (SOC, in Catalan), which aims to offer a better response for the local needs. In the case of the Workshop Schools in Andalusia, there is a local initiative for the Project which has local benefits, but the projects are allocated by the regional administration according to the employment strategies in the whole Autonomous Community. On the other hand, it is important to highlight the role of the young people in the case of Girona through the City Council. However, in the Workshop School, young people are not taken into account for the management of the programme.

Another important aspect to be emphasized is the training. In both cases, the paths of the young adults are not restricted to employment objectives, and that is why the different dimensions of their personal development are taken into account and not only those related to employability. However, in the case of Workshop Schools, after the 2015 regulations, this training dimension is more integrating, it is not specific and takes into



account the young students' skills, focusing on the job market, through the acquisition of the professional certificates. It is important to highlight the public effort for the improvement of the coordination between public and private actors, and between the different administration levels, in the case of Girona, while for the case of the Workshop Schools, it was the specialists and the teachers who created an association for protecting the public interests of these programmes, and the regional administration is responsible for their development.

In both cases, we can see that the young people do not participate in the design of the programme and their voice is therefore not taken into consideration, despite the fact that their participation in both programmes has had a positive impact on the construction of expectations concerning their return to the educational system or the start of better chances of self-employment.

In this sense, there is a relation between the expectation of the professionals in this programmes and the young adults participating in them. As indicated in WP5, the former believe that the young people need to compensate some of their poor performance in the school system or the job market, and the latter present these needs as a result of some of the decisions they took earlier in their lives. Likewise, in their discourse the young people express their own responsibility for the shape their lives have taken, as they recognise that success or lack of it mainly depends on their personal efforts and commitment (within the programme too), rather than on the structural limitations of the context in which they find themselves.

The situation of those young adults is more focused on their own vocational and attitude deficits than on a context which does not grant them any opportunity. Thus, the measures taken for facing unemployment and lack of qualification continuously presses on these young people so they take advantage of the opportunities granted by the corresponding programmes in both regions, although it is also important to take into account the structural conditions, which rarely happens.

Both cases agree, from the point of view of CPE, that the most important objective is the improvement of employability for unemployed young people, granting them qualifications and professional competences which are necessary to steadily enter the working market. On the other hand, it may be also useful for those young people who want to start in the formal educational system again. Those training policies, such as Professional Training for Employment, to which Workshop School belongs, combine the relevance of professional integration on a local scale, promoted by those training programmes, together with the needs for the training to be useful for a comprehensive promotion of the people, which improves their wellbeing within the community. That is why decentralizing policies are relevant in this sense, not only for the European Union, but also for the OECD.

Despite the organizational differences for both cases, from the GOV point of view, there are some common points, as the training offers for the courses that belong to both programmes do not seem to be influenced by the interests of the young students. In Girona, most of the courses aimed for seeking opportunities on a local scale, usually respond to the competitive strategies of many private suppliers of qualification programmes in the short run. Nonetheless, they are also explicit about their frustrations

and, in this case, local governments may create a void if they do not offer any significant choice. Regarding Workshop Schools, new stricter, less flexible and more centralizing regulations are regressive and endanger their innovative spirit and the training of young people in the programme.

From the LCR point of view, in both cases the future of the young people seems to be restricted after finishing those training courses (TP12 y WS), but they feel that they will encounter new chances to conform their life course thanks to the training and support that they have received through their participation in these policies. For instance, for the young adults in Workshop Schools in the functional region of Malaga, they seem to contribute to develop their self-esteem, self-employment possibilities and their reintegration in the educational system, to the extent that some of them wonder about being enrolled in upper secondary education with the aim of improve those skills that they have acquired through these training programmes.

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