



## **INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON INNOVATION IN PUBLIC POLICY**

### **"ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING AS A LEVER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES INITIATIVE, PORTUGAL"**

15<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, Brussels

#### **GENERAL CONTEXT**

The Seminar is the first of a series of yearly events organised by the MENON Network in collaboration with key stakeholders, with the aim to reflect on innovation processes in Lifelong Learning public policy in Europe and on the role of these policies in building a real "Europe of Innovation". Each seminar will focus on a particularly innovative policy which has been put in place in a EU Member Country or across Member Countries and will gather policy makers in charge of the policy at stake, European Commission policy makers, representatives from European networks in the LLL field and experts in the specific field tackled by the policy to discuss the impact and potential transferability of the initiative within Europe and to look at the implications of the policy for EU innovation at practice and research level. It is our objective that the discussions are, to the extent possible, evidence-based and illustrated by solid academic research.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

The Seminar, organised in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and with CEPCEP, Universidade Catolica Portuguesa, will focus on the "New Opportunity Initiative - *Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades*" promoted by the Ministries of Labour and Education of Portugal. Policy makers from the institutions in charge of the policy will join a debate with a few MENON experts in the field and will discuss the policy and its possible transferability strategies with European Commission experts and other stakeholders. Participation of representatives from other EU countries at the senior policy making level is sought: according to relevant experiences and studies already done it will be desirable to invite policy agents and experts from Greece, Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom, Italy and Poland. OECD and CEDEFOP should also be represented.

The seminar aims:

- A) to raise awareness on lifelong learning innovation strategies;
- B) to reinforce European benchmarks in the field of Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), informal and lifelong learning by i) addressing key issues in APL through a better understanding of how experiential knowledge is constructed, enhanced and measured and ii) identifying main critical factors influencing the establishment and implementation of lifelong learning policies.



## APPROACH

The seminar will last one day and will gather around 30 experts.

The Seminar will be structured along the following questions:

- How is new knowledge generation and research influencing public policy?
- How useful are public brands in sustaining lifelong learning strategies and policies?
- How can self-regulation and self-assessment help build a new paradigm in educational public services?
- What are the key determinants of adult motivation to engage in further and lifelong education and training?
- Which are the key competences that are expected to undergo both recognition and enhancement in APL processes?

Each discussion panel will be composed by three experts from different backgrounds:

- A member of the *New Opportunity Initiative* External Evaluation Team;
- A European researcher dealing with LLL experience, policy or strategy;
- A representative of an international organisation involved in state of the art LLL policies.

Before the Seminar a publication encompassing seven peer-reviewed articles that have been produced out of an extensive evaluative research undertaken by CEPCEP will be circulated, to serve as a basis for the discussion.

## MAIN OUTPUTS

The seminar results will be published, including papers, presentations and executive summaries as well as its general proceedings and main conclusions.

The seminar will generate or reinforce networks between different countries, international and national organizations, experts and researchers, and shall identify further questions worthy of proper attention by both the academic and the policy communities.

The seminar might be followed-up with a field visit to the country/experience under scrutiny.

## AGENDA

9.30-10.00 Introductory remarks

*Nikitas Kastis - MENON, Arne Carlsen - UNESCO, Roberto Carneiro - CEPCEP*

10.00-11.15 Presentation of Research Papers

- *"New Opportunities and New Government: A Paradigm Change in Policy" and "The New Opportunities Initiative: Understanding Public Policy from a diachronic perspective" – Roberto Carneiro, CEPCEP*
- *"Bringing lifelong learning to low-skilled adults: The New Opportunities Initiative" – Ana Claudia Valente, CEPCEP*
- *"Family: A key variable to explain motivational levels" - Henrique Lopes, CEPCEP*

11.15-11.30 Coffee Break

11.30-13.00 Open discussion

Moderator: Claudio Dondi, MENON

Discussants from European Commission, UNESCO and MENON.

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-15.15 Presentation of Research Papers

- *"Brand modelling: the citizen perception of a public policy" - C. Liz, CEPCEP*
- *"Discussing New Opportunities from a S-D Logic: New Opportunities as a tool for nation value creation" - Henrique Lopes, CEPCEP*
- *"Organisational self-regulation and self-assessment: the case of the New Opportunities Centres" - Rodrigo Queiroz e Melo, CEPCEP*

15.15-15.30 Coffee Break

15.30-17.00 Discussion

Moderator: Walter Kugemann - MENON

Discussants from European Commission, OECD and CEDEFOP.

17.00-17.15 Summary by Joe Cullen - MENON, Rapporteur

17.15-17.30 Closing Remarks by CEPCEP, MENON, UNESCO

## The New Opportunities Initiative in brief

The NOI<sup>1</sup> (New Opportunities Initiative, Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades) is a flagship programme announced by the Portuguese government in 2005, and actually implemented as of 2007, to recognise and accredit prior learning (RPL, APL) and to upgrade low-skilled adults to secondary levels of qualifications. NOI is an innovative approach to motivate the least-skilled adults to embark in a system of informal and non-formal skills recognition, accreditation and certification, with complements of formal learning, in order to achieve 4th, 6th, 9th and 12th grades diplomas or/and a vocational certification. The complements of formal learning can be achieved through one of two paths: enrolling in an adult education programme supplied by regular schools, or undergoing flexible modular training offered through the programme itself.

NOI is a public sponsored program which is funded by POPH (Programa Operacional do Potencial Humano), one of the three key nation-wide operational programmes co-financed by the structural funds under the Community Supported Framework 2007-2013 (QREN). NOI targets the entire Portuguese adult population of low-skilled (estimated at around 72% of the labour force below secondary studies, or circa 3.7 million adults according to the 2001 Population Census). Its strategic objective is to reverse centuries of disinvestment in human capital and to endow the bulk of the Portuguese population with upper secondary qualifications, which is the minimum entry threshold established to operate in the knowledge society and to exercise a full citizenship.

Barely five years after its announcement, about 450 New Opportunity Centres (NOC) were put in place to operationalize the Initiative at field level. These NOC hired over 10,000 adult education experts, register a record 1.6 million enrolments and have topped the impressive figure of 500,000 certifications (9th and 12th grades, equivalent to lower and upper secondary, respectively)<sup>2</sup>.

The Initiative addresses both the initial qualification of youth, curbing the high rates of failure and drop-out from initial education and training systems, and the re-qualification of adults, improving access and encouraging participation of the labour force into training programmes and vocational education. In the latter case, one overall consequence of enhanced qualifications encompassing increased competences is measured by the individual's propensity to undertake lifelong learning activities and strategies. Thus, a first integrated birds' eye view provides evidence on accrued foundation skills for lifelong learning acquired by the average NOI graduate, with particular reference to literacy and e-Skills (reading, writing, speaking, computer use and internet use), learning to learn skills (self-image and self-esteem, critical thinking, motivation for learning, learning strategies and participation in education and training) and improved soft skills – personal and social skills, civic competences, cultural awareness and expression.

During the period 2008-2010, NOI has undergone an extensive evaluative research exercise conducted by a research team of the Portuguese Catholic University.

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<sup>1</sup> Iniciativa Novas Oportunidade: <http://www.en.anq.gov.pt/>; <http://www.novasoportunidades.gov.pt/>

<sup>2</sup> Latest figures available for 30 April 2011.