

***FLLLEX WORK PACKAGE 1:
NATIONAL POLICIES FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF
LIFELONG LEARNING***



Authors: Ann Stokes and Richard Thorn, Institutes of Technology of Ireland

Contact:

Institutes of Technology of Ireland (IOTI)

First Floor

Fumbally Square

Fumbally Lane

Dublin 8

Ireland

Ph: 00353 (1) 7082900

Email: info@ioti.ie



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Introduction

This report forms part of a wider project currently taking place which aims to identify the challenges and implications of lifelong learning incorporation into European higher education institutions (HEIs), with special attention given to the recognition of prior learning and to different aspects within HEIs. The parent project is entitled *The Impact of Lifelong Learning Strategies on Professional Higher Education in Europe*. EU level funding has been received through the European Commission (Education and Culture, DG) to undertake this project under The Lifelong Learning Programme. It is envisaged that the project will run from 2009-2012 and involve a series of Work Packages with a consortium of project partners from a number of European countries. KH Leuven is responsible for the overall project lead.

The structure of the report is as follows:

- Chapter One outlines the aims of the review and the research approach which guided this work package.
- Chapter Two examines and defines the main concepts relevant to lifelong learning
- Chapter Three provides the context for this work package
- Chapter Four presents the main statistics relating to lifelong learning in both the 8 specific countries under review and from a European context.
- Chapter Five gives a detailed overview of the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies at European level
- Chapter Six gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Ireland
- Chapter Seven gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Belgium (Flanders)
- Chapter Eight gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Lithuania
- Chapter Nine gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Scotland
- Chapter Ten gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Turkey
- Chapter Eleven gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Finland
- Chapter Twelve gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in the Netherlands
- Chapter Thirteen gives a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in France
- Chapter Fourteen presents the comparative matrix of lifelong learning across the eight countries. It also links the policy 'hooks' identified in this research to possible individual HEI practice responses.

Section 1

Chapter 1: Aims and Methods of the Review

Aims and Objectives:

Institutes of Technology of Ireland (IOTI) has been assigned lead partner and responsible for the delivery of a report on Work Package 1: *National Policies for the Implementation of Lifelong Learning*. The specific objectives of this work package are as follows:

- Identify the main drivers behind and underpinning successful engagement in lifelong learning at state and sector level
- Attempt to synthesise EU/ international experience in engagement with lifelong learning at a high level. Where possible, the review will identify trends in international policy developments within the EU
- A key output for this project was the development of a comparative matrix showing the progress and implementation of the different policy issues surrounding lifelong learning in the participating countries. This matrix is presented in Chapter 14.
- From an early point in the project it became clear that whilst the high level policy review would be useful to the remainder of the project what could be helpful would be linking the policy ‘hooks’¹ identified in the research to possible individual HEI practise responses. This objective is realised in Chapter 14.

The focus of this review and analysis is the eight countries which form Work Package 6 of the project, namely Ireland, Belgium (Flanders), Lithuania, Scotland (UK), Turkey, Finland, The Netherlands and France. The timeframe for this work package was for a period of six months and ran from January 2010 – June 2010.

Methodology:

Existing data sources were used in the form of a high/ meta level review rather than rely solely on primary research in this work package². ‘Meta analysis can discover new knowledge not inferable from any individual study and can sometimes answer questions that were never addressed in any of the individual studies’ (Hunter and Schmidt, 2004).

Completion of this work package involved a number of key phases:

¹ By ‘hook’ we mean a State or EU policy, directive or piece of legislation that legitimises an action or strategy by an individual HEI

² According to Littell et al (2008) Meta analysis involves the following steps 1. Format topics 2. Locate studies 3. Extract and assess data 4. Pool effect sizes 5. Determine bias 6. Interpret results

1. Collection of EU level information/ material on lifelong learning – an extensive review of existing data sources was first undertaken (for example EUROPA, OECD, EUROSTAT, UNESCO, EURYDICE, InfoNet, AdultEducation, Sage, JSTOR, PsychINFO, Google Scholar etc.). The aim was to gather key policy documents, initiatives, support measures, legislation, and guidelines relevant to lifelong learning at an EU level.
2. Collection of background information/ material on lifelong learning in WP6 countries – contact was established with partners from each of the 8 countries involved; each were requested to provide IOTI with relevant country specific material on lifelong learning. At the same time, IOTI also conducted an extensive review of existing data sources (as in phase 1) in order to gather key country specific lifelong learning material.
3. Meta level review of lifelong learning in Work Package 6 countries – this phase involved an extensive review and analysis of a number of key drivers following the data which was gathered. These included:
 - The existence and level of implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies at a national level
 - The definitions used for lifelong learning, learners etc.
 - The funding policies towards part-time/ lifelong learning students
 - The relationship between the provision of lifelong learning opportunities, the type of institution providing the opportunities and the level of participation
4. Validation of data analysis – following initial analysis of data, project partners from the various European countries were contacted by IOTI and asked to validate the information gathered where appropriate.
5. Internal report on the findings of the review – this document presents the findings of the review and analysis highlighting:
 - the common features of systems within which lifelong learning is well integrated
 - the factors underpinning sectoral differentiation with respect to lifelong learning
 - Chapter Fourteen presents the key findings in a comparative matrix in which the progress and implementation of the different aspects of lifelong learning identified can be monitored across the 8 EU countries.

Chapter 2: Key Concepts in Lifelong Learning

Definitions of lifelong learning vary according to the perspectives and priorities of the policy makers at a given moment (CEC, 2002). Badescu and Saisana (2009) note that lifelong learning should be viewed as an overarching concept covering all contexts (formal, non formal, informal) and levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary and adult, continuing) of education and training. This section of the report will therefore give an overview of the main concepts relevant to lifelong learning.

According to the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) (2006) lifelong learning displaced the earlier term *lifelong education*, first introduced by UNESCO and the associated terms of *recurrent education* developed by the OECD and *education permanente* nurtured by the Council of Europe which was seen to imply being ‘imprisoned in a global classroom’ rather than learning throughout life.

A literal definition of lifelong learning is simply ‘all learning’: everything that people learn across their entire life spans (Ryan, 2003). Therefore, learning is a continuous task of the society and the individual that extends to all areas of life ‘from cradle to grave’. Lifelong learning is about acquiring and updating all kinds of abilities, interests, knowledge and qualifications from the pre-school years to post-retirement (CEC, 2000). However, lifelong learning is not just a simple summing up or integration of traditional education programmes and modern learning opportunities. The lifelong learning approach includes fundamental differences in educational content and perspectives: while traditional educational institutions have been primarily concerned with transmitting knowledge, modern learning opportunities and the lifelong learning approach put emphasis on the development of individual capabilities and personal learning competencies. At the heart of the lifelong learning concept is the idea of enabling and encouraging people ‘to learn how to learn’ (CEC, 2002). Lifelong learning focuses on the development of individual capabilities and the personal capacity to learn; it implies a shift from traditional education institutions to a diverse field of traditional and modern learning opportunities that are more process and outcome oriented and have a modular structure; responsibility for education and learning shifts to the individuals’ themselves (Badescu and Saisana, 2009).

In its final communication on ‘Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality’, the European Commission (2001) defined lifelong learning as: ‘All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.’ The aim of lifelong learning is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high-quality learning experiences throughout Europe (Eurostat, 2009a).

According to the OECD (2004), lifelong learning has four main features:

1. A systemic view – the lifelong learning framework views the demand for a supply of learning opportunities, as part of a connected system covering the whole lifecycle and comprising all forms of formal and informal learning.
2. Centrality of the learner – this requires a shift in attention from a supply side focus (e.g. on formal institutional arrangements for learning), to the demand side of meeting learner needs.
3. Motivation to learn – requires attention to developing the capacity for ‘learning to learn’ through self-paced and self-directed learning.
4. Multiple objectives of education policy – the lifecycle view recognises the multiple goals of education (personal development; knowledge development; economic, social and cultural objectives) and that the priorities among these objectives may change over the course of an individuals’ lifetime (OECD, 2004).

In a systemic strategy, learners at each stage of life need not only to be provided with opportunities for learning, but in a manner that equips and motivates them to undertake further learning, where necessary, self-organised and directed. Each learning setting needs to be *linked* to others, to enable individuals to make transitions and progress through various learning stages (OECD, 2004). In practice, this requires that each citizen has an individual learning pathway, suitable to their own needs and interests at all stages of their lives. The content of learning, the way learning is assessed, and where it takes pace must be tailored to the needs of the learner. Lifelong learning is also about providing ‘second chances’ to update basic skills and offer learning opportunities at more advanced levels (CEC, 2000). No single ministry has a monopoly of interest in lifelong learning. The approach requires a high level of co-ordination for developing and implementing policy (OECD, 2004).

The OECD (2007a) also notes that there are a number of important stakeholders in lifelong learning; these include individuals, employers and the community and/or providers. It is also important that individuals are not treated as a single homogenous group of users (OECD, 2007a).

However, it has been argued that although the term lifelong learning is frequently used in EU (education and training) policy contexts, it is not always clearly defined. A possible reason might be that lifelong learning has become a kind of catchphrase which seems to fit almost perfectly anywhere without further explanation (Dehemel, 2006).

As stated earlier, lifelong learning is comprehensive of all forms of learning and the activities of lifelong learning may take place across formal, non-formal and informal learning settings, it is also important that these and other closely related concepts are now defined:

- Formal learning – formal learning occurs as a result of experiences in an education or training institution, with structured learning objectives, learning time and support which leads to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- Non-formal learning – non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- Informal learning – informal learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (CEC, 2001).
- Qualification – in the context of lifelong learning, a qualification is anything that confers official recognition or value in the labour market and in further education and training, so a qualifications system includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in recognition of learning. Qualification systems could affect lifelong learning by improving the quantity and quality of learning opportunities available, ensuring equity of access to learning, and improving the efficiency of the lifelong learning process (OECD, 2007b).
- Initial education – knowledge acquired at primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions. In a broader sense, initial education could also include early childhood and preschool education or even post-secondary education.
- Continuing education – any form of education, either vocational or general, resumed after an interval following the continuous initial education (CEC, 2001).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the key concepts relevant to lifelong learning. The chapter on lifelong learning in the European Union and the eight country specific chapters will outline how such terms relate to lifelong learning policy development and implementation.

Chapter 3: Background – Setting the Scene

In this section of the report, an explanation is given as to why the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies is given prominence from an international perspective³.

According to the OECD: 'A number of important socio-economic forces are pushing for the lifelong learning approach' (2004:2). Hake (2006) notes that in the period of ongoing global and European transformations, it is impossible to locate a policy document on education and training that makes no reference to lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is used to a) legitimate education and training policies, b) identify groups at risk of exclusion and c) argue the case for specific policy instruments. Lifelong learning has become a key aspect of social policy, linking education, social security and employment (Riddell et al, 2007).

However, lifelong learning as an integrating framework for all forms of education and training is not new (UNESCO, 2009). From the early to mid 1970's, lifelong learning emerged for the first time as an important topic in international debates for intergovernmental bodies such as UNESCO, OECD and the Council of Europe. However, from the mid 1970's until the early 1990's, relatively little was said on the topic by the international and intergovernmental bodies, and the idea of lifelong learning with its humanistic ideals almost disappeared from the policy agendas. Explanations for this disappearance are mostly found in the economic crisis and its consequences at that time. Governments focused on combating the severe economic and social effects of recession and increasing unemployment of that time. Since the early 1990's, there has been an increasingly broad international focus on lifelong learning. However, a general shift away from the mainly humanistic ideals of the 1970's towards essentially more utilitarian, economic objectives can be identified (Dehmel, 2006).

The origins of current EU lifelong learning policy have been located in the *White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness, and Employment: The Challenges and Ways forward into the 21st Century* (CEC, 1993) (in Riddell et al, 2007). The need for continuous upgrading of work and life skills throughout life has been viewed as a key factor in meeting the challenges of globalisation and the emergence of knowledge economies, creating jobs and reducing unemployment, the ageing of populations and securing the social inclusion of groups at risk of exclusion from the learning society from the mid 1990's onwards (Hake, 2006; OECD, 2004). Ultimately, lifelong learning is now seen as a necessary condition for individual success in the labour market and for general social wellbeing (OECD, 2007b). Mc Nair (2009) notes that the underlying principle of lifelong learning is that initial education is no longer enough for a lifetime socio-economic career.

³ A detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies at EU level and the 8 countries from WP 6 is outlined in the following Chapters

According to the OECD (2004) lifelong learning provides long-term benefits for the individual, the enterprise, the economy and society more generally. For the individual, lifelong learning emphasises a number of attributes which contribute to self-fulfilment, higher earnings and employment, and to innovation and productivity. The skills and competences of the workforce are a major factor in economic performance and success at the enterprise level. For the economy, there is a positive relationship between education attainment and economic growth. As a society we need lifelong learning to maintain the skills base of the economy, to secure the transmission of knowledge and skills and to promote citizenship and community (McNair, 2009). Psacharopoulos (2007) believes that the strong European stance on lifelong learning is largely anchored in the results of cost-benefit analysis. In addition to the private and social returns, public expenditure on education generates fiscal returns, in the sense that part of this expenditure is later recouped by the state through higher taxes of the higher educated. Beyond the direct effects of education on employment and earnings, a higher level of education is associated with a series of wider social benefits that accrue to society at large. The two mechanisms by which education affects health outcomes is by changing behaviour (e.g. reducing smoking) and through higher incomes (e.g. affording better health care). Since more education reduces the chance of unemployment, it reduces public outlays for unemployment benefits. There are also education benefits that are difficult to monetise, such as increasing civic participation and social cohesion (Psacharopoulos, 2007).

At the same time, there is a growing emphasis on the importance of higher education at national policy levels. The OECD (2007c) notes that governments are increasingly looking to their higher education systems to help deliver a number of national policy goals. These goals include:

- Up skilling the population and lifelong learning
- Social inclusion, widening participation and citizenship skills
- Economic development
- Regional policy
- Cultural development and regeneration
- Knowledge-based developments
- Research and development.

The lifelong learning framework is based on five key elements according to the OECD (2004):

1. Improving access, quality and equity
2. Ensuring foundation skills for all
3. Recognising all forms of learning; not just formal courses of study
4. Mobilising resources, rethinking resource allocation across all sectors, settings and over the life cycle
5. Ensuring collaboration among a wide range of partners

Conclusion

This chapter has helped to set the scene for the following chapters of this report, in outlining the reasons why development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies are given prominence from an international perspective.

Chapter 4: Key Statistics on Lifelong Learning across the European Union

This chapter will present a number of key statistics relevant to the lifelong learning debate both across the European Union, while also focusing on the eight countries which are the focus of review in the later sections of this report, where possible. While the relationship between population and labour market trends with lifelong learning is not at first glance noticeable; there is an important link and thus the most up to date figures will be provided. In addition, the most up to date figures on patterns of participation in lifelong learning and investment in education will also be outlined.

Population and Labour Market Trends

The population of the EU-27 grew from 403 million in 1960 to just over 494 million in 2007. Latest population projections⁴ estimate that the EU-27's population will rise to a high of 521 million persons in 2035, thereafter falling to about 506 million inhabitants by 2060 (Eurostat, 2008). However, these changes will not be distributed equally across the Member States. The populations of Cyprus, Ireland and Luxembourg are projected to grow by over 50% from 2008 to 2060, while the populations of Belgium, Spain, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom are projected to grow by between 15% and 25% by 2060. In contrast, the populations of Poland, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia and Germany are projected to shrink by between 10% and 20% by 2060, with even stronger declines of between 20% and 30% in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania (Eurostat, 2009a).

One thing is constant across Europe: in general, Europeans are living longer and are expected to gain five years in life expectancy by the year 2050 (CEC, 2006). Three factors underlie Europe's ageing society: high life expectancy, persistently low fertility rates and baby-boom cohorts which are reaching higher ages (Eurostat, 2009). The proportion of the population over the age of 65 will almost double over the next 40 years, from 17% in 2005 to nearly 30% by 2050. The 'very old', i.e. people over 80 years of age in the EU will rise from 4.1% of the population in 2005 to 6.3% in 2025 and 11.4% in 2050 (Eurostat, 2008). More than two thirds (67.2%) of the EU population were of working age (15 to 64 years old) in 2007- EU projections suggest that this relatively large proportion of the population may shrink gradually to about 57% of the total. At the same time, families are having fewer children – an average of only 1.5 children per woman, well below the figure of 2.1 required to maintain population levels. As a consequence, the age profile of EU Member States' population is rising (Eurostat, 2009a). The table below (Table 1) gives a detailed breakdown of the total population and population projections across Europe.

⁴ Population projections provided through EUROPOP2008 convergence scenario, see Eurostat (2008)

Table 1 Total Population and Population Projections

(at January, 2007; million)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2007	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
EU-27 (2)	402.6	435.5	457.1	470.4	482.8	495.1	499.4	513.8	519.9	520.1	515.3	505.7
Euro area (2)	274.1	287.6	295.6	307.3	319.6	322.9	322.9	334.1	339.1	340.4	337.3	330.6
Belgium	9.1	9.7	9.9	9.9	10.2	10.6	10.8	11.3	11.7	12.0	12.2	12.3
Bulgaria	7.8	8.5	8.8	8.8	8.2	7.7	7.6	7.2	6.8	6.3	5.9	5.5
Czech Republic	9.6	9.9	10.3	10.4	10.3	10.3	10.4	10.5	10.4	10.2	9.9	9.5
Denmark	4.6	4.9	5.1	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.7	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.9
Germany	72.5	78.3	78.2	79.1	82.2	82.3	82.1	81.5	80.2	77.8	74.5	70.8
Estonia	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1
Ireland	2.8	2.9	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.3	4.6	5.4	5.9	6.2	6.5	6.8
Greece	8.3	8.8	9.6	10.1	10.9	11.2	11.3	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.4	11.1
Spain	30.3	33.6	37.2	38.8	40.0	44.5	46.7	51.1	52.7	53.3	53.2	51.9
France (3)	45.5	50.5	53.7	56.6	58.8	61.5	62.6	65.6	68.0	69.9	71.0	71.8
Italy	50.0	53.7	56.4	56.7	56.9	59.1	60.0	61.4	61.9	62.0	61.2	59.4
Cyprus	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3
Latvia	2.1	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.7
Lithuania	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.1	2.9	2.7	2.5
Luxembourg	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7
Hungary	10.0	10.3	10.7	10.4	10.2	10.1	10.0	9.9	9.7	9.4	9.1	8.7
Malta	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
Netherlands	11.4	13.0	14.1	14.9	15.9	16.4	16.5	16.9	17.2	17.2	16.9	16.6
Austria	7.0	7.5	7.5	7.6	8.0	8.3	8.4	8.7	9.0	9.1	9.1	9.0
Poland	29.5	32.7	35.4	38.0	38.7	38.1	38.1	38.0	37.0	35.2	33.3	31.1
Portugal	8.8	8.7	9.7	10.0	10.2	10.6	10.7	11.1	11.3	11.5	11.4	11.3
Romania	18.3	20.1	22.1	23.2	22.5	21.6	21.3	20.8	20.0	19.2	18.1	16.9
Slovenia	1.6	1.7	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.8
Slovakia	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.1	4.9	4.5
Finland	4.4	4.6	4.8	5.0	5.2	5.3	5.3	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.4
Sweden	7.5	8.0	8.3	8.5	8.9	9.1	9.3	9.9	10.3	10.5	10.7	10.9
United Kingdom	52.2	55.5	56.3	57.2	58.8	60.9	62.0	65.7	69.2	72.0	74.5	76.7
Croatia	4.1	4.4	4.6	4.8	4.4	4.4	:	:	:	:	:	:
FYR of Macedonia	1.4	1.6	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	:	:	:	:	:	:
Turkey	27.1	34.9	44.0	55.5	66.9	69.7	:	:	:	:	:	:
Iceland	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	:	:	:	:	:	:
Liechtenstein	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	:	:	:	:	:	:
Norway	3.6	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.8	5.2	5.5	5.7	5.9	6.0
Switzerland	5.3	6.2	6.3	6.7	7.2	7.5	7.7	8.2	8.6	8.9	9.1	9.2

(1) From 2010 onwards the data refer to projections (EUROPOP2008 convergence scenario).

(2) Break in series, 1998.

(3) Metropolitan France, excluding the four overseas departments (French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion).

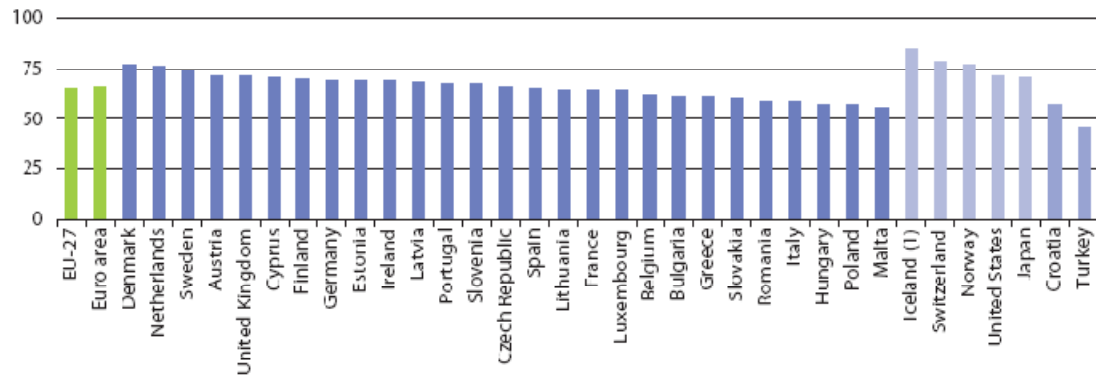
Source: Eurostat (demo_pjan and proj_08c2150p)

Source: Eurostat (2009a)

In relation to labour market trends, the Labour Force Survey produced by Eurostat has become a key tool for observing such developments across Europe. The employment rate among the EU-27's population aged between 15 and 64 years old was 65.4% in 2007. This still remains below the target of 70% that the Lisbon European Council set for 2010. Employment rates above 70% were achieved in seven of the Member states including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Finland. Employment rates in Turkey were the lowest recorded at less than 50% (Eurostat, 2009a). In relation to unemployment, the average rate across the EU-27

in 2007 was 7.1%⁵. Figure 1 below gives an overall breakdown of the Employment rate across Europe in 2007.

Figure 1 Employment Rate, 2007 (%)



(1) Provisional.

Source: Eurostat (2009a)

The Lisbon Council of 2000 also set a target employment rate for women of 60% across the EU. In 2007, the employment rate for women was 58.3% versus a corresponding figure of 72.5% for men in the EU-27. 15 member states recorded employment rates for women above the target of 60% in 2007 including the Netherlands, Finland, UK, France, Lithuania and Ireland. Employment rates for women were the lowest in Turkey in 2007 at 23.8%. In relation to older workers (aged between 55 and 64 years), the employment rate across the EU-27 was 44.7% in 2007, some way short of the 50% target by 2010 set by the Stockholm European Council in 2001. However, the employment rate for older workers was higher than 50% in 12 member states including the Netherlands, UK, Finland, Lithuania and Ireland. This corresponds with figures of 34.4% for Belgium, 38.3% for France and 29.5% for Turkey (Eurostat, 2009a).

Considerable differences between employment rates according to the level of educational attainment were noted. The employment rate of those aged 25-64 who had completed tertiary education was 85.3% across the EU-27 in 2007, much higher than the rate (57.2%) for those who has only attained a low educational level (primary or lower secondary education) (Eurostat, 2009a).

⁵ It must be noted that country specific data on unemployment rates may show a marked increase in percentage points since 2007, as a result of the current recession.

Patterns of Participation in Lifelong Learning

1. Labour Force Survey (LFS)

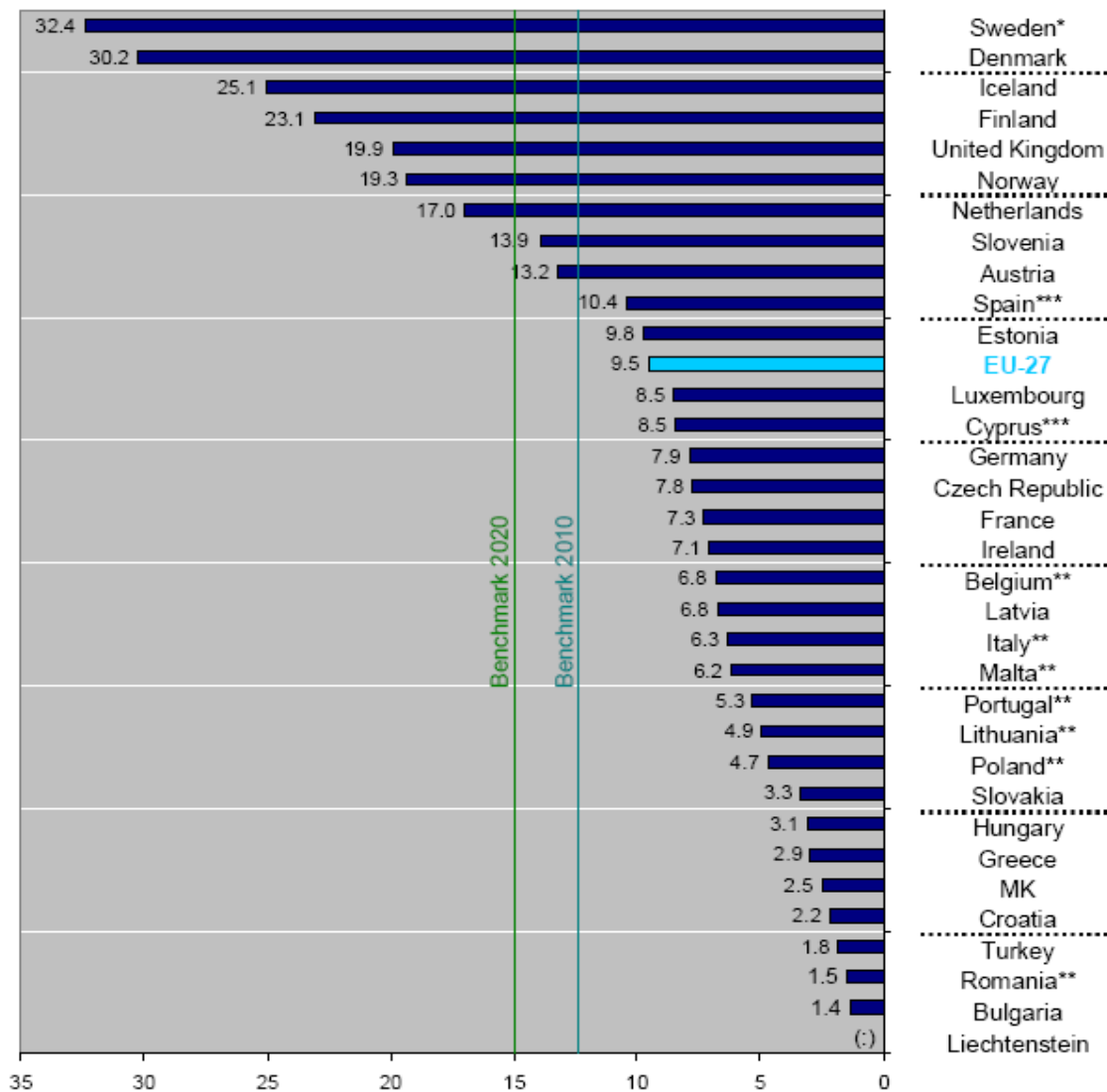
The benchmarks set by the EU in relation to participation rates of adults in lifelong learning are based on figures from the Eurostat/ Labour Force Survey (LFS). In the Labour Force Survey, participation in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25-64 who stated that they received education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer to the question 'participation to education and training'. Both the numerator and the denominator come from the LFS⁶.

Figures from the LFS show that in 2008, 9.5% of European's aged 25-64 participated in education and training in the 4 weeks prior to the survey, with high skilled adults being five times more likely to participate than low-skilled. This shows that while some progress has been made in increasing adult participation in education and training, not enough was made to reach the EU 2010 benchmark of 12.5% to be reached by 2010. New benchmarks were adopted by the European Council in May 2009 as part of the 2020 Education and Training Framework with a target of 15% of the population aged 25-64 to participate in lifelong learning (European Council, 2009). Both European Education and Training Frameworks are discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

Large differences in participation between Member States are noted in the LFS as the figure (Figure 2) below outlines. The UK and Finland are among the best performers reaching participation rates of 20-30% in 2008. The Netherlands is among the next group with a participation rate of 17%. France and Ireland achieved participation rates of 7.3% and 7.1% respectively, whereas Belgium and Lithuania are at 6.8% and 4.9%. Little or no progress was recorded in Turkey with a participation rate of 1.8% in 2008 (CEC, 2009).

⁶ The information collected in the LFS relates to all education or training whether or not relevant to the respondents' current or possible future job.

Figure 2: Percentage of the adult population aged 25-64 participation in education and training (2008)



Data source: Eurostat (LFS database), October 2009

* Evolution 2003-2007 ** Evolution 2004-2008 *** Evolution 2005-2008

Portugal and Sweden: provisional data.

MK= former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Source: CEC 2009

2. The Adult Education Survey (AES)

The new Education and Training 2020 Framework recognises that benefit can also be drawn from the information on adult participation in lifelong learning gathered by the Adult Education Survey (AES) (European Council, 2009). However, the figures from the AES are currently not used to compare the benchmarks set. The AES was developed in co-operation between European countries and Eurostat. The aim of the survey is to gather quality comparable data on adult participation in lifelong learning. The first AES conducted between 2005 and 2007 covered the main structures of lifelong learning such as:

1. Participation in education and training
2. Non-participation
3. Types of activities
4. Reasons for participation
5. Obstacles for participation
6. Providers of education and training

The reference period for participation in learning activities in the AES is 12 months⁷. 29 countries took part in the pilot survey, although results are currently only available for 17 EU countries, plus Norway (Eurostat, 2009b)⁸. Therefore, the following sections will provide a general overview of the results from the AES and do not specifically focus on the 8 countries in this review as the previous sections on the LFS figures did.

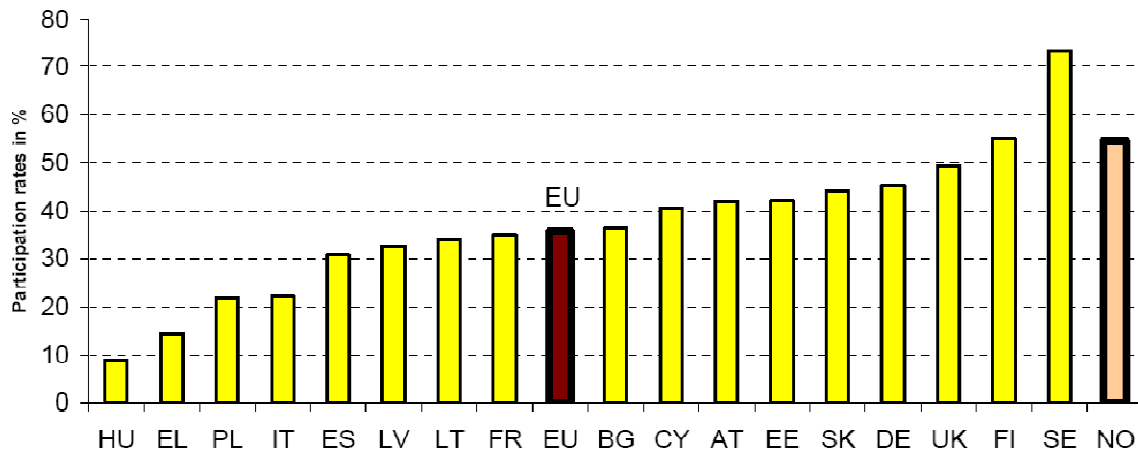
Results from the 2007 AES survey show that more than a third of the EU population between 25-64 years were participating in formal or non-formal education and training. However, there are significant country differences in the participation rates as shown in the figure below (See Figure 3). Total rates of participation vary between countries and the data show the Nordic countries and the UK had high rates of participation. Low rates of participation were found in Hungary and Greece (Eurostat, 2009b).

The European average for the 17 countries represented indicates a slightly higher rate of male (36.1%) participation in education and training than for females (35.7%). However, countries with the highest participation rates such as Sweden, Finland and the UK were found to have a higher proportion of females than males participating in education and training. There is generally a low participation rate in the 55-64 age groups, but a higher proportion of this age group was participating in education and training in countries with overall high rates of participation.

⁷ This is an important point as it gives an explanation as to why figures in the AES appear much higher than those reported in the LFS.

⁸ Data from Ireland and Turkey are absent from the initial results available

Figure 3: Participation in formal or non-formal education and training, age 25-64 (%) 2007



Source: Eurostat 2009b

Across the EU, 64.3% of people aged 25-64 did not participate in education and training in the last 12 months. The 'employed' category was generally found to have lower rates of non-participation. The unemployed and inactive categories account for the largest proportion of non-participation in all of the countries. In addition, the highest level of education attained was found to have an influence on the rate of participation or non-participation in education and training. The weighted average for non-participation in the 17 EU countries is above 40% for the highly educated and more than 80% for the low educated (Eurostat, 2009b).

Several reasons were given for participation in non-formal education and training. The most important reasons cited were 'to do a better job' and 'improve career prospects' (with a weighted average of 43%). Over 30% participated in non-formal education and training to increase knowledge/ skills on a subject of interest to them. 25% selected acquiring knowledge or skills for everyday life; while 20% were obliged to attend, 10% participated to meet new people or just for fun. Less than 3% participated in order to start their own business (Eurostat, 2009b).

Employers were found to be the leading providers of non-formal education and training activities with almost a 40% share. Indeed, over 60% of activities in countries with high rates of participation in non-formal education were either fully or partially sponsored by the employer (Eurostat, 2009b).

The two most frequent reasons cited by respondents for not participating in education and training were work schedule (22.4%) and family responsibilities (22.3%). Cost of participation (15.7%) was another major reason given. Other reasons cited included 'not confident of going back to school' and 'did not have the prerequisites'. 7% of respondents stated lack of employer support as a reason for non-participation, while a similar proportion selected 'no facilities at reachable

distance'. Interestingly, 31.7% of female respondents were prevented from participating due to family responsibilities, while only 12.3% of males selected this reason (Eurostat, 2009b).

3. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics on lifelong learning

The OECD also provides vital information relevant to lifelong learning through its annual review of education: *Education at a Glance*. The most up to date figures available from 2007 (OECD, 2009) show that across OECD countries, 42% of 25-64 year olds with less than an upper secondary qualification are not in employment. In most countries, over half of low qualified unemployed 25-34 years are long-term unemployed. In contrast with much higher levels of educational participation among those in their twenties, less than 6% (5.9%) of the 30-39 year old population across OECD countries are enrolled in full or part-time education. However, in some countries (including Finland) this figure is significantly higher at more than 1 in 10. In other countries such as France, the Netherlands and Turkey participation is less than 3% for 30-39 year olds. Even lower levels than 1% have been reported for over 40's in countries including France, Ireland, the Netherlands and Turkey (OECD, 2009).

The OECD warns 'if the demand for education and qualifications continues to rise as labour market prospects weaken, the gaps in educational attainment between the younger and older adults to chronic long-term economic inactivity may thus become more acute' (2009:5).

4. Eurydice Data on Education

Eurydice provides key information on education systems and policies across Europe on an annual basis. The latest report by Eurydice on key data in education (2009) notes that the participation rate in tertiary education strongly depends on the age group of the population concerned, and reaches its peak for the population aged 20-22. In the EU-27 approximately one third of the population aged 20-22 is enrolled in tertiary education. This rate drops quickly after the age of 24. The rate of participation in education still exceeds 10% of the population aged 28 in the Nordic countries and Germany. In Latvia, Finland, Sweden and Iceland, more than 5% of the population aged 35-39 still participates in tertiary education while the EU-27 average is 2%. In countries including Belgium, Ireland, France, the UK and Turkey, the participation rate drops off sharply after age 22 and does not amount to more than 15% of the population aged 24. In Denmark, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and to a lesser extent Iceland and Norway, more than 30% of the population aged 24 is still enrolled in tertiary education (Eurydice, 2009).

5. Current developments in lifelong learning statistics

No country in Europe currently has a means of gauging the *full* extent of lifelong learning within its population. The Composite Learning Index (CLI) developed by the Canadian Council on Learning is the first attempt that may show how this gap might be filled (See www.ccl-cca.ca for further details). The CLI aims to assist regional authorities and policy makers in assessing the performance of Canadian communities in lifelong learning, identifying weaknesses and spotlighting areas where remedial actions are needed (ELLI, 2008). Inspired by the Canadian approach, the Bertelsmann Stiftung in Germany has set up a new project, which is currently trying to develop a similar index for the European Union and its member states: The European Lifelong Learning Indicators (ELLLI). Monitoring learning not only at the national but also at the regional and local levels, both the family of European Lifelong Learning Indicators and the resulting summary index will represent a first attempt within the EU to measure lifelong learning and its multiple economic and social benefits (Saisana et al, 2008) (See www.bertelsmann.de for further details).

Investment in Education

The most up to date data provided through the joint UNESCO –OECD–Eurostat (UOE) data collection shows that the average level of public investment on all levels of education as a percentage of GDP across the EU-27 in 2006 was 5.05%. Five countries in this review were above this average figure – with Finland at 6.14%, Belgium at 6%, France at 5.58%, the UK at 5.48% and the Netherlands at 5.46%. Ireland, Lithuania and Turkey were among the countries that were placed below the EU-27 average – at 4.86%, 4.84% and 2.06% respectively (CEC, 2009).

The European Commission has proposed the goal of investing 2% of GDP in higher education from a mix of public and private sources combined. The most recent UOE data from 2006 shows that the current level in the EU is 1.2% of which public investment accounts for about 1.3% of GDP. In Finland, total public investments in higher education alone are very close to surpassing the 2% figure at 1.94%. The Netherlands and Belgium while not reaching the EU goal do surpass the EU average at 1.5% and 1.32% respectively. Ireland, France, Lithuania and the UK have total public investments in higher education of between 1.2-1%. No data were available on the current situation in Turkey (CEC, 2009).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a number of key statistics relevant to the lifelong learning debate, both from across the EU and also focusing on the eight countries that form the basis of this review, where possible.

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Section 2

Chapter 5: Lifelong Learning and the European Union

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed overview of the development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies at European level. It is envisaged that in so doing, it will provide an important backdrop to the focus of the following chapters on the specific lifelong learning experience in 8 European countries.

Lifelong Learning in the 1990's

There has been a growing interest in lifelong learning at EU level since the early 1990's. The central role of lifelong learning was first expressed in 1994 in the White Paper of the European Commission on *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* which proposed for the first time that: 'Lifelong learning is therefore, the overall objective to which the national educational communities can make their own contributions' (CEC, 1994). The legitimacy for lifelong learning in this document was consistent with the rationale for EU education policy provided by the Maastricht Treaty. An overarching concern of this document was meeting the challenges of globalisation, information and communication technology, and the competitive threat posed by Asia and the USA. However, a key theme was also the threat of unemployment which would arise if these challenges were not met (Holford, 2007).

The 1995 White Paper on *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* began from this same point and developed the idea of lifelong learning within the Maastricht framework (CEC, 1995). Despite the various criticisms of the White Paper, its crucial role in establishing lifelong learning as a guiding strategy in EU policies cannot be neglected (Dehemel, 2006). The White Paper also proclaimed that economic competitiveness and social cohesion would be achieved by increasing and creating new jobs and by raising levels of education (Brine, 2006). Within the framework offered by the White Paper, Community Action Programmes such as SOCRATES (which covered general and higher education) and LEONARDO DA VINCI (which covered vocational education and training (VET) were launched at EU level for a 5 year period. As framework programmes, SOCRATES and LEONARDO DA VINCI replaced all previous programmes developed from 1985 onwards, aiming amongst other things, explicitly at the promotion of lifelong learning (Dehemel, 2006). Community Action Programmes can be regarded as one of the EU's main instruments in encouraging the implementation of EU policies at national level. It will become clear at later in this chapter to what extent such instruments have been further developed up to the present day.

Following a proposition in the White Paper, 1996 was designated European Year on Lifelong Learning (EYLLL) with the aim of raising public consciousness concerning the importance of lifelong learning (CEC, 1995). However, it has been recognised

that both the 1995 White Paper and the 1996 EYLLL focused on learners under the age of 25 (Brine, 2006). Dehemel (2006) notes that the 1996 EYLLL signalled the starting point for the EU's active promotion of lifelong learning, comprising of a large variety of activities throughout the EU, and it contributed to a growing awareness of need in this area on national levels as well as on a supranational basis. In addition, at this stage the 'primarily utilitarian economic objectives' which had brought lifelong learning to centre-stage began to be complemented by more integrated policies involving both social and cultural objectives (Dehemel, 2006).

The EU officially adopted lifelong learning as the basic principle for its education and training policies in the 1997 Amsterdam revision of the Maastricht Treaty. The subsequent policy paper *Towards a Europe of Knowledge* developed the principles of lifelong learning in order 'to promote the highest level of knowledge for its people through broad access to education and its permanent updating' (CEC, 1997). This confirmed the emergence of lifelong learning as the core policy strategy of the EU for the 21st century. Recognition of lifelong learning was expressed in the creation of the lifelong learning policy unit within Directorate XXII in Brussels (Hake, 2006).

Brine (2006) believes that from the 1995 White Paper until 1999, EU lifelong learning policy was exclusively located in the post-compulsory sector of vocational education and training (and to some extent, in higher education). Two types of learner are visible over this period: the 'high knowledge-skilled' and the 'low knowledge-skilled'; those that know and those that do not know. During the later 1990's, two discursive shifts can be identified according to Brine (2006). Firstly, a change in the way central aspects of language was used: where 'disadvantage' was initially associated with social exclusion, multiple deprivation and particular social groups; increasingly disadvantage became framed in terms of 'individual needs and responsibilities'. Secondly, a shift from a structural to an individual explanation of disadvantage took place. At the same time, a 'discursive shift' also occurred: from the White Paper on Growth's aim of employment to a new one of *employability*: the ability to become employed, rather than necessarily the state of employment itself (in Holford, 2007).

Lifelong Learning in the 21st Century

By the turn of the century, lifelong learning had become an organising theme at EU level by which a significant range of education policy was linked with other policy areas such as economic policy and social exclusion. Lifelong learning was also the 'umbrella' term under which a number of programmes designed to strengthen Europeans' identification within the EU were located (Holford, 2007). In 2000, the second generation of Community Action Programmes, SOCRATES II and LEONARDO DA VINCI II, were launched for a seven year period. Together with the programme YOUTH, they 'share(d) the same preamble, which places them under a common umbrella of promoting lifelong learning' (CEDEFOP, 2004:5).

The new period of the 21st century in the development of EU lifelong began with the Lisbon Strategy and included three lifelong learning papers: Memorandum, Communication and Resolution (CEC, 2000, 2001, EU Council, 2002). Each will now be discussed in turn.

The Lisbon Strategy

A core priority for EU policies as proposed at the Lisbon Economic Council meeting in 2000 was the integration of lifelong learning within the broader economic and social policies of the EU. The Lisbon Strategy and agenda developed was viewed as an investment in human capital and staged: 'The Union must 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' (EU Council, 2000:3). The concept of 'knowledge society' also formed part of the Lisbon Agenda set, whereby lifelong learning became 'necessary for transition to a knowledge based economy and society (p.3). The Lisbon agenda marked the start of a new era of enhanced collaboration in education and training among member states; committing them to a consistent strategy and concrete objectives (Pantisidou, 2009). The importance of the Lisbon Strategy for lifelong learning is not, however, related only to its policies on lifelong learning and education. A key feature was the strong role given to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), which had evolved during the 1990's but was now given a clear and approved role in policy development. The OMC had two elements which are essential for lifelong learning policy: there was a restatement of the subsidiary; but more important, the Strategy emphasised the importance of agreed timetables and goals, indicators and benchmarks, and 'monitoring and peer review' (EU Council, 2000). While the monitoring was part of the European Commission's activities, it can also be viewed as part of the EU progress according to Holford (2007): and this implied – despite the emphasis on subsidiary – an increasing level of intervention in the policy and performance of member states. European guidelines were to be 'translated' into national and regional policies 'by setting specific targets and adopting measures', and by ensuring that monitoring, evaluation and peer review were 'organised as mutual learning processes' (EU Council, 2000).

The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning

Following on from the domination of the Lisbon Strategy, a 'lifelong learning trilogy of documents' took place, whereby the development of the concept of lifelong learning not only continued but the learner was constructed in relation to the knowledge economy/ society (Brine, 2006). In 2000, a major policy document was published by the European Commission – *The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (CEC, 2000). Lifelong learning was defined in terms of the following: 'all learning activities that are undertaken throughout life, with the aims of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a social, civic and/ or employment related perspective'. This 'working' definition was established by the Commission in the context of the 1997

European Employment Strategy. The primary focus of the Memorandum was on the employment and labour market dimensions of lifelong learning. Aspects of social participation were only treated as marginal points and the realisation of personal aims and potentials was neglected to a large degree (Dehemel, 2006). The Memorandum also contained six key ‘messages’ which formed the basis of a structured framework for the implementation of lifelong learning across the European Union. The six key messages were: new basic skills for all; more investment in human resources; innovation in teaching and learning; valuing learning; rethinking guidance and counselling and bringing learning closer to home (CEC, 2000).

Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality

Following national responses, the Memorandum was reworked by the European Commission and a revised policy paper was published in 2001 entitled: *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (CEC, 2001). The original priorities were changed in this document and emphasis was laid on personal development and active citizenship, together with a more integrated approach (EAEA, 2006). This new document also responded to the concerns expressed that the employment and labour market dimensions of lifelong learning were too dominant (Holford, 2007). As a result, the definition of lifelong learning was broadened to include: ‘all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective’ (CEC, 2001:9). The key contribution of this document was in the development of mechanisms or policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in the spirit of the OMC. It contained proposals for spreading best practice and achieving greater convergence towards the main goals. It also began the process of establishing indicators and benchmarks as a means of comparing best practice and proposed that European guidelines should be carried through into national and regional policies. Periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review were also suggested (Holford, 2007). Brine (2006) notes that *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* emphasised the need for recognition and transfer of qualifications, and not only in respect of high-level qualifications. It also laid emphasis on quality assurance, and counselling and guidance.

Education and Training Work Programme 2010

In March 2002, a 10-year work programme on education and training was adopted jointly by the Education Council and Commission and approved at the European Council Meeting in Barcelona⁹. The guiding principle of this work programme (also known as ‘Education and Training 2010’) was lifelong learning. It built on three strategic objectives of quality/ effectiveness, access and openness and 13 specific, subdivided targets, covering the various types and levels of education and training.

⁹ This work programme was now been replaced by a new 10 year programme covering the period over the next time years – 2010 -2020. ‘Education and Training 2020’ is discussed later in this chapter in relation to current EU developments.

It also called for further action to introduce instruments to ensure the transparency of diplomas and qualifications (cf. e.g. CEC, 2003).

In June 2002, the European Council of Heads of State and Governments adopted the *Resolution on Lifelong Learning*. This saw lifelong learning as 'cover(ing) learning from the pre-school age to that of post retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning'. It also agreed that '...the actions and policies developed within the framework of the European employment strategy, the action plans for skills and mobility, the Socrates, Leonardo and Youth programmes, the e-Learning initiative, and in the research and innovation actions among others (European Council, 2002).

A principle theme of the period since 2002 has been the development and elucidation of 'benchmarks' and indicators' which permit the EU to measure and assess progress in lifelong learning (and education and training) on a consistent and fair basis across the EU's member states (Holford, 2007). In 2003, the European Council adopted five reference levels for European average performance in education in training (i.e. benchmarks) (CEC, 2003). According to CEDEFOP (2004:6): these benchmarks 'include important markers for the progress to be made in implementing lifelong learning'. More specifically, the following targets were set to be achieved by 2010:

- The share of low achieving 15 year olds in reading should decrease by at least 20%
- The average rate of early school leavers should be no more than 10%
- At least 85% of 22 year olds should complete upper secondary education
- The total number of graduates in maths, science and technology should increase by at least 15%, while the gender imbalance in these subjects should be reduced
- The average participation of working adults, population in LLL (age group 25-64) should reach at least 12.5% (CEC, 2003).

Education and Training 2010 Progress Reports

In light of the follow up on the effective implementation of the detailed work programme 2010, the Council and Commission have published a joint report on the overall progress made towards the common objectives every 2 years. The annual progress report of the Commission on progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training also gives a detailed analysis of progress on the indicators and benchmarks set. The first Joint Interim Report *Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training* was endorsed in 2004 (EU Council, 2004). The Report called for enhanced collaboration among member states and coherent national lifelong strategies to develop flexible and effective education and training systems, pointing out the existence of deficits in some areas which had to be addressed if the common objectives were to be attained. For instance, it urged for higher and more efficient

investment in human resources, development of more effective partnerships between key actors, validation of prior learning and creation of learning environments that are open, attractive and accessible to everyone, especially to disadvantaged people (Panitsidou, 2009).

Findings from the 2004 Joint Progress Report show that serious reservations were being expressed at EU level as to whether member states were making adequate progress towards the targets established in Lisbon as the base-line for the reform of education and training systems (Hake, 2006). As a consequence of the serious shortcoming and delays in progress made by member states towards the Lisbon goals, the European Council re-launched the Lisbon Strategy in March 2005, refocusing on growth and employment and calling for urgent action on the basis of competitiveness, productivity and social cohesion, placing the main emphasis on knowledge, innovation and optimisation of human capital, 'Europe's most important asset' (European Council, 2005).

In 2006, the European Parliament and Council jointly decided on the establishment of a programme for Community action in the field of lifelong learning entitled 'The Lifelong Learning Programme'. This new Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 replaced the existing programmes which were due to expire at the end of 2006. The aim of the new programme was to contribute, by emphasising the need for lifelong learning, to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. It aims to foster interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community, so that they become a world quality reference. It comprises of four specific, sectoral programmes COMENIUS (school education), ERASMUS (higher education), LEONARDO DA VINCI (vocational education and training) and GRUNDTVIG (adult education), and is completed by two horizontal programmes, the Transversal Programme (four key activities: policy development, language learning, ICT, dissemination) and the Jean Monnet Programme (European Integration) (European Commission (Education and Culture) website, 2010a).

The EU Commission asserted in 2005 that the objective of 12.5% rate of adult participation by 2010 would require 'member states to step up efforts and to develop an integrated, coherent and inclusive lifelong learning strategy' (CEC, 2005:5). It was recognised that progress had been made towards the goal of having lifelong learning strategies in place in all member states by 2006. However, many – but by no means all – countries had yet developed lifelong learning policy statements; while others had put in place framework legislation (CEC, 2005). In addition, many strategies remained imbalanced, with a tendency either to focus on employability or on re-engaging those who had become alienated from systems. Both peer-learning activities and the use of research results were viewed as having an important contribution to make in this respect. While some progress was reported in relation to participation rates of adults in lifelong learning (in 2006 this figure was at 9.6%), the

need to further increase participation rates and thus achieve the 2010 target (of 12.5%) was still a major challenge, particularly in the southern European countries and new Member States. It was also noted that insufficient priority and funding was being dedicated to increasing access to adult learning opportunities, especially for older workers and for the low skilled (CEC, 2005).

In 2006, the European Parliament and Council adopted a European Framework for *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (EU Council, 2006). It identified and defined eight key competences necessary for personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability in a knowledge society: 1. Communication in the mother tongue 2. Communication in foreign languages 3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology 4. Digital competence 5. Learning to learn 6. Social and civic competences 7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and 8. Cultural awareness and expression. Member States were advised to develop the provision of key competences for all as part of their national lifelong learning strategies, in order to offer all young people the means to develop such competences to a level which forms a sufficient basis for further learning and working life. The framework also noted that adult education and training provision should give real opportunities to all adults to develop and update their key competences throughout life (EU Council, 2006).

In 2007, the European Commission produced a Communication proposing the development of a coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks to monitor the Lisbon objectives in education and training, thus replacing the 2004-2006 framework of 29 indicators and 5 benchmarks which were in place (CEC, 2007). This new framework consisted of 16 core indicators, which are of a general nature and context indicators, which allow for a greater degree of precision. The Communication noted that periodic monitoring of performance and progress across Member States through this new framework would allow for strengths and weaknesses to be identified with a view to providing strategic guidance to the 'Education and Training 2010'. Conclusions also reaffirm that at the same time there is a need to continue to improve the quality of data produced by the European Statistical System (CEC, 2007).

By 2008, the EU Council and Commission recognised that progress in lifelong learning had been made in a number of key areas (EU Council, 2008). For instance, explicit lifelong learning strategies had been developed by the majority of countries. Most of these incorporated a comprehensive vision of lifelong learning, covering all types and levels of education and training. Some, however, focused on formal education and training systems or on developing specific stages of the lifelong learning continuum. There were signs that the evidence base of education and training policies was being strengthened. This is necessary for the overall coherence of systems and for an optimal allocation of resources. Priority given to the promotion of flexible learning pathways and transition between different parts of the system in some countries also strengthens coherence. In addition, National Qualifications

Frameworks linked to the establishments of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning were also being developed in most countries. While at a slower pace, systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning were also visible¹⁰ (EU Council, 2008).

At the same time, a number of areas were identified in the report where progress was insufficient. Implementation was seen as the greatest challenge for lifelong learning strategies. 'The credibility of the strategies depends on linking them to policy measures. It depends on the capacity of the authorities to target resources. It depends on their capacity to mobilise national institutions and stakeholders at all levels, through learning partnerships' (EU Council, 2008:14). Sustained effort together with appropriate dissemination arrangements and improved investment were seen as vital and can help translation intentions into policies, which, in turn, deliver results. Particular attention must also be given to lifelong guidance (EU Council, 2008). The Council and Commission also recognised that adult participation in lifelong learning was no longer on track to achieve the EU benchmark set for 2010. Indeed, low participation in lifelong learning was seen as being a particular issue for certain groups such as older workers and the low skilled, specifically among migrants. At the same time, adults with a high level of education were more than six times as likely to participate in lifelong learning as the low skilled (EU Council, 2008). Areas of future focus cited included peer learning and exchanges of experiences between policy makers and stakeholders. This was seen as an important source of 'know-how' and should be supported. The report recommended that policy and practice at national level should be informed by this use of knowledge and evaluation and Member States should therefore take into account European objectives and benchmarks in the design of their own national reforms (EU Council, 2008).

Finally, the 2008 Progress Report highlighted that preparations for an updated strategic framework for European cooperation and training post 2010 should begin immediately. The updated programme for education and training must also be linked to the EU Strategy for Jobs and Growth (EU Council, 2008).

The 2010 Joint Report was the fourth and final document to outline progress in the Education and Training 2010 (CEC, 2009a). This report focused on progress towards agreed education and training objectives during the period 2007-2009. In addition, the main focus was on implementation of the 2006 recommendation on Key Competences at national level while also recognising the challenges identified in the 'New Skills for New Jobs' Initiative¹¹ (CEC, 2009a). The dramatic change in the EU economic climate (which stills continues today) was seen as putting the challenges of education and training more into the spotlight. While public and private budgets

¹⁰ The European Qualifications Framework and validation of non-formal and informal learning are discussed in further detail in a later section of this chapter in relation to examples of lifelong learning instruments established at EU level

¹¹ The Commission Communication 'New Skills for New Jobs' (2008) will be outlined in a later section of this chapter in relation to lifelong learning and its association with wider EU Employment policies.

are under strong pressure, existing jobs are disappearing and new ones often require different and higher level skills. Education and training systems must therefore become much more open and relevant to the needs of citizens, and to those of the labour market and society at large. The 2010 Progress Report notes that progress in implementing a competence based approach, and the modernisation of VET and higher education – are key to Europe's successful emergence from this crisis (CEC, 2009a). Three main trends emerge from the analysis of the period of 2007-2009:

1. Despite a general improvement in education and training performance in the EU, the majority of the benchmarks set for 2010 would not be reached – In 2008, 9.5% of Europeans aged 25-64 participated in lifelong learning, with high skilled adults being five times more likely to participate than low-skilled (CEC, 2009a)
2. A large number of countries were introducing reforms that explicitly use the Key Competences framework as a reference point. However, there is much room for improvement. More efforts are needed to support acquisition of key competences for those at risk of educational underachievement. This requires comprehensive action at both national and European levels covering all levels of learning from per-primary through to VET and adult education. More action is also necessary in the development of teaching and assessment methods in line with the competence approach. Learning must equip learners not only with knowledge but also with relevant skills and attitudes. There is also a need to strengthen those competences required to engage in the interrelated areas of further learning and the labour market. This means further developing the key competences approach beyond the school sector, in VET and adult learning, and ensuring that higher education outcomes are more relevant to the needs of the labour market (CEC, 2009a).
3. Implementing lifelong learning through formal, non-formal and informal learning and increasing mobility remains a challenge. The 2010 Report notes that 'To be effective, strategies need to cover sufficiently long time periods, provide opportunities at all age levels and to be subject to revision and further development. To enhance their relevance and impact, and to motivate individuals to participate in learning, a greater involvement of stakeholders and better cooperation with policy sectors beyond education and training is needed' (CEC, 2009: 7). The level of investment from both public and private resources is another challenge highlighted as having an impact on the delivery of lifelong learning. Structural and cultural inflexibilities are recognised as the most significant barriers in the role out of lifelong learning in higher education. As a consequence, the Report recommends that higher education institutions should receive incentives to develop flexible curricula and attendance modes and to expand the validation of prior learning.

Higher education must also be firmly embedded in the development of overarching national qualifications frameworks. The 2010 Report follows points made in the previous 2008 Report by stressing the importance of the 'partnership' approach in lifelong learning. 'The development and implementation of lifelong learning strategies should involve stakeholders and providers and include cooperation with policy sectors beyond education and training' (CEC, 2009a:10).

Education and Training Work Programme 2020

As can be seen from the latest progress report (CEC, 2009a), many of the benchmarks set under the Education and Training 2010 Programme were not achieved. The common challenge to all Member States in the development and implementation of lifelong learning is not going away and the challenges of ever ageing societies, skills deficits of the workforce and global competition require a continued joint response at EU level to education and training in the years ahead. Thus, the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (Education and Training 2020) was endorsed by the Council in May 2009 (EU Council, 2009a). It is proposed that this new Work Programme will guide the development and implementation of education and training policies over the 10 year period of 2010-2020. The period up to 2020 is divided into a series of cycles, with the first cycle covering the 3 years from 2009 to 2011. Each work cycle will see its policy priorities adopted by the Council on the basis of a proposal by the European Commission. This new and more 'flexible' way of organising work leaves room for an updated and relevant focus of the policy priorities regarding cooperation in education and training at EU level (ETUCE, 2009). The new strategic framework identifies four long term strategic objectives and associated priority areas:

1. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality – further work on the implementation of coherent and comprehensive national lifelong learning strategies is necessary.
2. Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training – acquisition of key competences remains a major challenge. Professional development of teachers and trainers remains a challenge.
3. Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship – prevention of early leavers from education and training, pre-primary education, quality insurance and teacher support are all key areas for future development.
4. Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training – strengthening partnerships between education institutions and employers has been underlined as a new area where cooperation should be developed.

Based on these 4 strategic objectives, a number of priority areas have been identified for concrete follow-up activities, for example expanding opportunities for learning mobility and enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and the broader society (EU Council, 2009a).

The benchmarks to be achieved by 2020 are:

- At least 95% of children between the age of 4 and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education
- The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%
- The share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%
- An average of at least 15% of adults (age group 25-64) should participate in LLL (EU Council, 2009a).

ETUCE (2009) raises an important point in relation to the new work programme in that it is explicitly mentioned that the benchmarks are not to be considered as targets for member states. EU countries are rather invited to contribute to the collective achievement of the benchmarks at EU level, according to their specific needs and priorities at national level.

The EU initiative of strengthening partnerships between education institutions and employers can clearly be seen as a key area of action under the New Education and Training 2020 Work Programme. Its importance in relation to the successful implementation of lifelong learning was also voiced in the Joint Progress Reports covering the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme. As a consequence, in May 2009 EU Education Ministers adopted their conclusions following meeting on enhancing partnerships between education and training institutions and social partners, in particular employers, in the context of lifelong learning (EU Council, 2009b). This initiative is broadly based on proposals from the recently published 'New Skills for New Jobs'¹². Its main aims appear to be the development by Member States of 'platforms for mutual dialogue between education and training institutions and employers' at national and regional levels. Education institutions from all levels are concerned. The platforms are aimed at helping to better match skill supply and skill demand of the labour market. It also aims to encourage employers and professionals to contribute to the development and delivery of education and training programmes and to provide more opportunities for students and teaching staff to make workplace visits and placements (ETUCE, 2009).

¹² The Commission Communication 'New Skills for New Jobs' (2008) will be outlined in a later section of this chapter in relation to lifelong learning and its association with wider EU Employment policies.

EU Employment Strategy and lifelong learning

As previously stated, the importance of lifelong learning can increasingly be found in areas of social policy other than education. In recent years a close association can be found in wider EU employment policies. Indeed, the new Education and Training 2020 Work Programme and the 2008 EU Employment Strategy are closely linked as the following section will detail. In 2008, the European Commission proposed a strategy to help ensure a better match within the knowledge society between skills and labour market needs and to organise the assessment of the EU's future skills and jobs requirements on a permanent basis, thus preventing potential gaps (CEC, 2008). *New Skills for New Jobs* is the strategy proposed alongside the updated strategic framework for European Cooperation in education and training to support Member States in raising skills through lifelong learning from 2010-2020 (i.e. Education and Training 2020). It is the policy initiative developed at EU level to build stronger bridges between the world of education and training and the world of work (Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs, 2010). According to the strategy: 'While upgrading skills implies immediate costs and must be seen in a context of financial sustainability, medium and long-term private, fiscal and social returns should out-weigh initial costs. A qualified labour force not only contributes to productivity: investment in well-designed lifelong learning systems can largely offset the economic cost of skills shortages and gaps' (CEC, 2008:4).

According to the Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs (2010) under this new strategy: 'Education and training' and 'work' will no longer be two separate worlds, but will be much more integrated into a single lifelong learning process, open to innovation and open to all' (p5). The Expert Group (2010) believes that this can be achieved through making education and training more flexible and open and through the development of more effective relationships between providers, employers and guidance and placement services. More interaction will in turn promote more skills-based qualifications and ensure continuing and lifelong education and training for all. Key actions recommended in relation to the individual include:

- Development and implementation of cost-efficient approaches to identify and validate prior learning and practical experience, and make this enforceable element of collective agreements and work contract
- Greater use and evaluation of the impact of learning accounts or learning vouchers, especially for low-skilled workers, based on the principle of 'co-investment' by government, individuals and employers, as appropriate
- Prioritise guidance and counselling services and motivational support for individuals, improvement in the quality of these services and an assurance that they tackle stereotypes

The Expert Group also notes the importance of establishing skills-based qualifications. The current development of the European Qualifications Framework

(EQF) and other European tools such as the ECTS, ECVTS and Europass¹³ are welcomed. Such developments allow qualifications to be defined in terms of learning outcomes and facilitation of further development should be encouraged (Expert Group, 2010). Similarly, PASCAL (2009) acknowledges that learning to learn is no longer sufficient: individuals need to be sure that the new skills they acquire are also reflected in the qualifications systems that give them credit for the experience and knowledge they gain, whether in the classroom, workplace or elsewhere. Thus, this is viewed as an essential mechanism in the establishment of successful national strategies for implementing lifelong learning.

The most recent *Draft Joint Employment Report 2009/2010* by the European Commission (CEC, 2009b) also makes reference to the importance of increasing investment in lifelong learning through up-skilling of the workforce and ensuring a better match between education, skills and labour market needs. Short-term measures which have been developed and implemented at various levels across the EU include skills upgrading strategies, and on-the-job training. The crucial role EQF will play in promoting a greater transparency of qualifications based on learning outcomes is also noted. While the efforts of some Member States to facilitate the validation of non-formal and informal learning is welcomed in the report. Finally, funding of lifelong learning is viewed as a crucial aspect, particularly in the context of current constraints on both public and private budgets (CEC, 2009b).

EU Lifelong learning Instruments

A number of lifelong learning instruments have been established/ are currently being developed at EU level in the context of the Education and Training Work Programme 2010. Member States are encouraged to incorporate these instruments into their own national lifelong learning strategies and policies¹⁴. Further development of these instruments will continue in the years ahead as part of the new Education and Training Work Programme 2020. Each will now be outlined in turn:

- A. *The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)* – acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning. The EQF will relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. Individuals and employers will be able to use the EQF to better understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems. The EQF encourages countries to relate their qualifications systems or frameworks to the EQF by 2010 and to ensure that all new qualifications

¹³ Lifelong learning instruments established at EU level in the context of lifelong learning are outlined in the section below

¹⁴ The extent to which such EU lifelong learning instruments are implemented at national level will be examined in 8 European countries in the following chapters

issued from 2012 carry a reference to the appropriate EQF level. The EQF was adopted by the European Parliament and Council on 23 April 2008 (European Commission (Education and Culture) website, 2010b).

The core of the EQF are eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do – ‘learning outcomes’. Levels of national qualifications will be placed at one of the central reference levels, ranging from basic (Level 1) to advanced (Level 8). It will therefore enable much easier comparison between national qualifications and should also mean that people do not have to repeat learning if they move to another country. This system shifts the focus from the traditional approach which emphasises ‘learning inputs’ such as the length of a learning experience, or type of institution. It also encourages lifelong learning by promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission (Education and Culture) website, 2010b).

- B. *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)* – makes teaching and learning more transparent and facilitates the recognition of studies (formal, non-formal and informal). The system is used across Europe for credit transfer (student mobility) and credit accumulation (learning paths towards a degree). It also informs curriculum design and quality assurance. Credit transfer and accumulation are helped by the use of the ECTS key documents (course catalogue, learning agreement, and the transcript of record) as well as the Diploma Supplement. Institutions which apply ECTS or the Diploma Supplement in an exemplary manner can apply for the ECTS or DS Label (European Commission (Education and Culture) website, 2010b).
- C. *EUROPASS* – a new initiative which aims to help people make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe, thus facilitating the mobility of both learners and workers. The Europass documents have been designed in such a way as to help people chronicle their skills and competences in a coherent manner, whether they are planning to enrol in an education or training programme, looking for a job, or getting experience abroad. Europass consists of a portfolio of 5 documents: two documents which individuals can complete independently: Europass CV and Europass Language Passport; three documents which are completed by the competent organisation on behalf of the individual: Europass Mobility, Europass Certificate Supplement and Europass Diploma Supplement.
- The *Europass Mobility* is a record of any organised period of time (called Europass Mobility experience) that a person spends in another European country for the purpose of learning or training.
 - The *Europass Certificate Supplement* is delivered to people who hold a vocational education and training certificate; it adds information to that

which is already included in the official certificate, making it more easily understood, especially by employers or institutions outside the issuing country. The information in the Europass Certificate Supplement is provided by the relevant certifying authorities.

- The *Europass Diploma Supplement* is issued to graduates of higher education institutions along with their degree or diploma. It helps to ensure that higher education qualifications are more easily understood, especially outside the country where they were awarded. The Europass Diploma Supplement was developed jointly with UNESCO and the Council of Europe (European Commission (Education and Culture) website, 2010b).

D. *The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)*

– EU member states and the Commission are developing a system to facilitate the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained by individuals in different learning environments or through periods of vocational education and training abroad. The ECVET will give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and make it more attractive to move between different countries and different learning environments. ECVET belongs to a series of European initiatives to recognise learning experiences across different countries and different types of institutions, including the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) in higher education, Europass, the European Quality Charter for Mobility (EQCM), the European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning and the European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF).

The ECVET system should be implemented by Member States by 2012; it is a voluntary framework to describe qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes. Each of these units will be associated with a certain number of ECVET points developed on the basis of common European standards. 60 points should correspond to the learning outcomes achieved in a year of full time VET. An individual's learning outcomes are assessed and validated in order to transfer credits from one qualifications system to another, or from one learning 'pathway' to another. This approach supports individual learning pathways, where learners can accumulate required units of learning outcomes for a given qualification over time, in different countries, and in different learning situations. The flexibility of the system facilitates mobility experiences for VET learners, while preserving the overall coherence and integrity of each qualification and avoiding common references for VET qualifications and is fully compatible with ECTS. The development of ECVET began in 2002 after the Copenhagen Process emphasised the need for a credit transfer system for VET (European Commission (Education and Culture) website, 2010b).

E. *European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF)* – The Member States and the Commission are establishing a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF) to serve as a reference instrument to help member states to promote and monitor continuous improvement of their Vocational Education and Training (VET) Systems, based on common European references. Each member state is recommended to devise within 2 years from the adoption of the recommendation an approach aimed at improving quality assurance systems at national level and making best use of EQARF involving the social partners, regional and local authorities and every other relevant stakeholder. This approach includes the establishment where this does not already exist of a quality assurance national reference point, as well as an active participation in the European quality assurance reference framework network. Member states will monitor the implementation of the Framework with a view to conducting a review of the Recommendation, if appropriate, four years after its adoption European Commission (Education and Culture) website, 2010b).

Bologna Process and Lifelong Learning

The Bologna Process began with the *Sorbonne Joint Declaration* on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System signed in May 1998 by Ministers of Education of 4 countries (France, Germany, Italy, UK, followed in 1999 by the *Bologna Declaration* signed by 29 Ministers responsible for Higher Education (Bologna Secretariat website, 2010).

The Bologna Process aims to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010, in which students can choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures. The Bologna Declaration put in motion a series of reforms needed to make European Higher Education more compatible and comparable, more competitive and more attractive for Europeans and for students and scholars from other countries. The Bologna Declaration suggests actions to establish a common framework for national educational systems under three main priorities:

- Introduction of comparable academic grading and a diploma supplement (which will be part of EUROPASS in 2005) to facilitate academic and professional recognition of qualifications and support mobility
- A common accumulation and credit transfer system such as ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)
- A common structure based on three levels: BMD (Bachelor, Master and Doctorate) (Bologna Secretariat website, 2010).

The Bologna Process now extends beyond the Member States: 46 countries have now joined and more have expressed an interest. Every second year, Ministers responsible for higher education in the 46 Bologna countries meet to measure progress and set priorities for action. After Bologna (1999) they met in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007) and Leuven (2009). For the EU, the Bologna Process is part of a broader effort in the drive for a Europe of knowledge which includes:

- Lifelong learning and development
- The Lisbon Agenda for Growth and Jobs and Social Inclusion
- The Copenhagen Process for enhanced European co-operation in Vocational Education and Training (Bologna Secretariat website, 2010).

Since the signing of the 1999 Bologna Declaration, 10 main action lines have been developed which steer the Bologna Process reforms:

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles (extended to 3 cycles at Berlin summit 2003)
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility
5. Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher Education
7. Lifelong Learning
8. HEIs and students to be fully involved in the Process
9. Promoting the attractiveness of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area)
10. Doctoral studies and the synergy between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA) (Bologna Secretariat website, 2010).

Increasingly, lifelong learning is seen as a cross cutting issue, inherent in all aspects of the Bologna Process. In a national context, Ministers' goals for lifelong learning will be substantially realised by:

- Improving the recognition of prior learning, including non formal and informal learning
- Creating more flexible, student-oriented modes of delivery
- And widening access to higher education
- National qualifications frameworks are also an important tool in supporting lifelong learning (Bologna Secretariat website, 2010).

As a consequence, The EUA (European Universities Association) presented the new *European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning* in 2008. The Charter, developed at the request of the French Prime Minister is based around a series of 10 commitments made by universities in addressing the development and

implementation of lifelong learning strategies, with a set of matching commitments proposed for governments and regional partners (EUA, 2008).

Following an evaluation of legislative instruments and policy positions of different stakeholders in Germany, France, Italy and the UK, Jakobi and Rusconi (2009) note that the impact of the Bologna Process on lifelong learning has been modest. The process has mainly had an impact on the discussion regarding lifelong learning, not necessarily whether and how such policies and programmes are implemented.

Copenhagen Process and Lifelong Learning

The Lisbon Council in March 2009 recognised the important role of education as an instrument for strengthening Europe's competitive power worldwide ('to become the world's most dynamic knowledge based economy'). The development of high quality vocational education and training was a crucial and integral part of this strategy. The Copenhagen Process was developed within the wider perspective of lifelong learning, and aims to encourage individuals to make use of the wide range of vocational learning opportunities available, for example, at school, in higher education, at the workplace, or through private courses. The lifelong learning tools should enable users to link and build on learning acquired at various times, and in both formal and non-formal contexts. The process aims to enhance cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) in Europe. The declaration signed in 2002 was to work towards creating a knowledge-based Europe and ensure that the European labour market is open to everyone. There is a review of the process every two years (European Commission (Education and Culture), 2010c).

To establish synergies between the Bologna process and the Copenhagen Process, in co-operation with Member States, the Commission established a *European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning* (EQF) (as outlined above). The EQF is linked to and supported by other initiatives in the fields of transparency of qualifications (Europass), credit transfer (the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System for higher education) – ECTS – and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and quality assurance (European association for quality assurance in higher education – ENQA – and the European Network of Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training – ENQA-AVET).

In relation to the 'success' of the Copenhagen Process and lifelong learning, the Education and Training 2010 Progress Report (CEC, 2009a) notes that the core aim of the Process – to improve the attractiveness and quality of VET systems is being addressed, notably through the implementation of quality assurance systems in line with the recently adopted European Quality Assurance Reference Framework in VET (2009) and this is recognised as a priority in most Member States. A particular focus is also being placed on the professionalization of VET teachers and trainers.

Countries are increasingly using modularisation to make VET provision more flexible and responsive to the needs of learners. However, major challenges still remain according to the Progress Report. For instance, mismatches between skills levels and job requirements are likely to grow until 2020 if VET systems cannot respond more rapidly to the expected increase in qualification and skills needs. Faster progress is also needed in opening up learning pathways from VET to higher education (CEC, 2009a).

Where does EU policy on Lifelong Learning Stand?

As can be seen from the outline above, lifelong learning is accepted in policy terms by the European Union and its central role in both education and training and employment cannot be questioned. However, Bengsston (2009) notes that implementation is weak, uneven and without strong commitment. The reasons for this slow pace of implementation of lifelong learning are many and varied from country to country, but Bengsston (2009) points to three main reasons:

1. Lack of workable and agreed strategies for implementation – the agreed definition of lifelong learning as learning from the cradle to grave is far too vague and not very useful in concrete policy action.
2. Lack of a coherent and equitable system for financing lifelong learning for all – existing systems tend to contribute to further inequalities in access to learning and education.
3. The underestimated resistance to change among the main stakeholders in the traditional system of education. Lifelong learning still represents a radical change from existing norms and patterns of learning when compared with traditional front-end education. Therefore, there is an urgent need to reform teacher training in favour of a greater emphasis on how to teach students 'to learn to learn'.

Indeed, the Council of the European Union (2010) recognises that three key challenges still prevail at EU level:

1. Attaining EU benchmarks requires more effective national initiatives. The economic downturn, combined with the demographic challenges serve to underlie the urgency of reforming while continuing to invest in education and training
2. While a large number of countries are introducing reforms that are using the key competences framework as a reference point, there is a major challenge to ensure that *all* learners benefit from innovative methodologies
3. Implementing lifelong learning through formal, non-formal and informal learning, and increasing mobility remain a challenge. Education and training institutions need to become more relevant to the needs of the labour market and society at large and establish partnerships where relevant.

While EU policy in the area of lifelong learning has developed intensively over the last several years and its potential in influencing national policies has grown, it must be noted that EU policy initiatives in the area of lifelong learning can only ever go so far. It is still up to individual national governments to translate EU initiatives on a national and sub-national level. The best way to convince Member States is to provide tangible evidence of the benefits of reforms enjoyed by other countries. The OMC process cannot force change upon national institutions, but Brozaitis et al (2010) notes that it provides a channel of peer expertise for those willing to reform and who are looking for evidence about similar reforms in other Member States.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that the development of lifelong learning at an EU level has come a long way since the early 1990's. It is evident that while some success has been reached, for example in the establishment of specific education and training tools; major gaps still exist in ensuring that current EU policy is developed and implemented at a national level and thus achieving the benchmarks set. The present downturn makes the mismatch between skills levels and jobs requirements and the opening up of flexible learning pathways an even more crucial requirement for the new Education and Training 2020 programme. The remaining chapters will review and analyse the development and implementation of lifelong learning across 8 specific countries.

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Section 3

Chapter 6: Lifelong learning and Ireland

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in Ireland. A background to the specific situation in Ireland will first be outlined. Following this, details on the key statistics and performance levels will be given. The next step will be to provide an overview of the main policy measures taken in Ireland with the goal of the promoting lifelong learning as key. Finally, the gaps and weaknesses evident in Ireland's promotion of lifelong learning will be discussed.

Background

Higher education in Ireland is provided in a number of institutions. In addition to seven traditional universities, there are also 14 institutes of technology (IoTs), 5 colleges of education and some privately owned colleges. The higher education system in Ireland currently relies disproportionately on the Exchequer as its principal source of revenue (CEC, 2009a). The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) is the awarding body for the non-university sectors (with the exception of Dublin Institute of Technology) and private colleges in Ireland. Universities also grant their own awards. In relation to Further Education and Training, providers in Ireland include Vocational Educational Committees (VECs), secondary schools, the workplace, community and voluntary bodies, comprehensive schools and community schools/ colleges and a variety of adult learning and community education centres. The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) is the statutory body responsible for making all Further Education and Training awards in Ireland.

Serious progress has been made in recent years in the development and implementation of national lifelong learning policies in parallel with the EU agenda on lifelong learning. Several government White Papers on education as well as a range of other national policy documents, legislation and funding programmes have underpinned the objective of tackling social inclusion through education as well as the wider goal of supporting lifelong learning in Ireland according to the Bologna Progress Report (2008). According to the Department of Education and Science (D/ES) (1995) lifelong learning is seen as key to personal development and social inclusion as '...education empowers individuals to participate fully and creatively in their communities.' The Irish government also has designated a Minister for State, located within the D/ES, with special responsibility for Adult Education, Youth Affairs and Educational Disadvantage (Mansuett et al, 2008). Lifelong learning policy in Ireland has developed in collaboration between the D/ES and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (D/ETE), in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. Both social and economic forces have played a role in the promotion

of the lifelong learning agenda in Ireland. For instance, the Social Partnership process in Ireland has had an important role to play. As a consequence of the commitments made in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (D/T, 2000), a Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was established in 2002. The most recent agreement covering the period 2000-2016 is *Towards 2016* (D/T, 2006) and reference is made to lifelong learning under the long-term goals for working age and older people (D/T, 2006).

Statistics and Performance

The table below outlines key statistics in relation to education and training in Ireland:

	Ireland		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	14.6% ¹⁵	11.3%	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)	27.5%	46.1%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)	5.9% ¹⁶	7.1%	8.5% ¹⁷	9.5%	12.5%	15%
Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)	4.28%	4.86% ¹⁸	4.91%	5.05% ¹⁹	-	-

Source: CEC, 2009b

In addition to increased participation rates in higher education in Ireland, there are also significant changes to the nature of participation, an increasing number of students are undertaking as part-time/ flexible courses, with 7% of provision in higher education in 2006 (Bologna Progress Report on Ireland, 2008). Mature students have also increased their participation in higher education in recent years. Research in Ireland indicates that the share of new entrants who are mature (aged 23 and over) increased from 1.6% in 1986 to 12.8% by 2006. Over the three academic years from 2004-05 to 2006-07, there was a 29% increase in the number of mature students taking up places in higher education institutions. In addition, it is estimated that non-standard entry-routes to higher education accounted for 24% of all entrants in 2006 (www.heai.ie)²⁰. However, the Bologna Progress Report for Ireland (2008) recognises that there still remain challenges ahead in relation to the participation of some groups in higher education in Ireland. Such groups include mature students, people with disabilities and those from socio-economic disadvantaged groups²¹.

¹⁵ = 2002

¹⁶ = 2003

¹⁷ = 2003

¹⁸ = 2006

¹⁹ = 2006

²⁰ Please see the Higher Education Authority (HEA) website for a full breakdown of statistics

²¹ The experiences of such groups in relation to lifelong learning in Ireland will be discussed under a later section in this chapter

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

In Ireland, a number of key policy documents and legislation have been developed with relevance to lifelong learning. Such publications will first be summarised. Following this, an outline of the key lifelong learning actions which have been implemented in the areas of Higher Education and Further Education in Ireland will be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning: In 1995 the government published a White Paper on Education (*Charting our Education Future*) (D/ES, 1995). This document recommended the importance of lifelong learning and continuous training for updating of skills but was limited in its focus on school-based education. The Green Paper *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* in 1998 (D/ES, 1998) emphasised the need for Ireland to shape a national lifelong learning agenda in combating disadvantage; in breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, in personal and cultural development and in enhancing national competitiveness. The White Paper on Adult Education *Learning for Life* (D/ES, 2000) represents Ireland's most significant policy development in adult education and lifelong learning to date. Lifelong learning was adopted as the 'governing principle' of education policy in Ireland. It proposed that the development of lifelong learning in an Irish context needs to be underpinned by three core principles: a systematic approach to educational policies; equality in terms of access, participation and outcome and recognition of inter-culturalism. In addition, six priority areas were identified as underpinning the overall framework of lifelong learning: Consciousness; Citizenship; Cohesion; Competitiveness; Cultural development and Community development. It also outlined three fundamental attributes which the lifelong learning agenda in Ireland has now come to be based on:

- It is *lifelong* and therefore concerns everything from the cradle to the grave
- It is *life-wide* recognising that learning occurs in many different settings
- It focuses on *learning* rather than limits itself to education (D/ES, 2000).

The Expert Group on Future Skills (EGFSN) published Ireland's National Skills Strategy, *Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy* in 2007 (EGFSN, 2007). The vision laid out is that by 2020 achievement of a well-educated and highly skilled population which contributes to a competitive, innovation-driven, knowledge-based, participative and inclusive economy. Key to achieving this are a number of factors: up skill the existing resident population, increase participation in the workforce and attract highly skilled immigrants.²² (OECD, 2007). Lifelong learning is also given a central role in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013 (Government of Ireland, 2007) and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPSinl) (Office for Social Inclusion, 2007).

²² See www.skillsireland.ie for details on the specific targets and actions set out in the National Skills Strategy

In 2008, the National Access Office²³ published a new *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013* (HEA, 2008). One of the key objectives of the plan is to progress the lifelong learning agenda. The key targets of the plan state that by 2013: mature students will comprise at least 20% of total full-time entrants and 27% of all entrants to higher education; flexible/part-time provision will increase to 17%; non-standard entry routes to higher education to be developed so they account for 30% of all entrants and Ireland will move towards the top quartile of EU countries for adult participation rates in lifelong learning, with the aim of reaching EU average levels by 2010²⁴ (CEC, 2009a).

In 2009 the Minister for Education and Science launched a process to develop a new National Strategy for Higher Education in Ireland. Issues under current consideration include the introduction of a form of student contribution as a means of generating income for the higher education sector, in addition to sourcing other revenue sources. Lifelong learning issues including measures to increase access and participation levels are also being examined. The process is being led by a high level Steering Group and it is expected that they will complete their work shortly (CEC, 2009a). At the same time, an updated national lifelong learning strategy is also currently being finalised. Key features of the overall approach being considered include: removal of barriers to access; provision of a continuum of education, from pre-school right through to enabling older people to continue to engage in education and training and seamless transfer and progression for all learners, with accreditation through the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)²⁵ (CEC, 2009a).

In addition to the key policy developments, a number of national legislative provisions made have relevance to lifelong learning in Ireland, they are as follows: The Universities Act (1997); The Education Act (1998); The National Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) and The Education Welfare Act (2000)²⁶. Mansuett et al (2008) summarised the main legislative steps taken in their report on lifelong learning in Ireland.

Key Actions in Higher Education: The National Access Office, within the Higher Education Authority (HEA), facilitates education access and opportunity in higher education in Ireland. It promotes a number of key measures for groups who are under-represented in higher education viz those who are disadvantaged socially, economically and/or culturally, those with a disability and mature learners. It also encourages flexible delivery opportunities²⁷ (CEC, 2009a). The Universities and IoTs

²³ The National Access Office, within the Higher Education Authority (HEA), facilitates educational access and opportunity for groups who are under-represented in higher education. It's specific roles are outlined in a further section of this chapter

²⁴ This was not achieved

²⁵ The NFQ will be discussed in a later section of this chapter

²⁶ See Mansuett et al (2008) for a summary of the main legislative steps taken on lifelong learning in Ireland

²⁷ The National Access Office was also responsible for the publication of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013

in Ireland also have a number of programmes in place to encourage and facilitate access to higher education from these target groups, including a direct access scheme for socio-economically disadvantaged school-leavers to gain access to high-demand subject areas where there is significant competition among school leavers (CEC, 2009a).

The D/ES is also working with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to support the expansion of opportunities for flexible learning in higher education. In 2006, the Government introduced a multi-annual Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) for higher education, which has an overarching objective of stimulating innovation and creativity in addressing a number of identified challenges within the higher education system. The fund also stresses the importance of collaboration. One strand of the Fund is focused on Improving Access, Lifelong Learning and up skilling, and includes projects aimed at improving access and retention in areas with traditionally low participation rates and projects which provide innovative methods of delivering education to part-time or distance learning students. With support from the SIF, higher education institutions across Ireland are developing a number of programmes to enhance flexible and lifelong learning and to strengthen links with industry²⁸ (CEC, 2009a).

The Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) was introduced in 1990 and acts as an important source of support for progression to full-time further or higher education for particular groups of students in Ireland. Unemployed persons, single parents or people with disabilities, aged 21 or over, who have been in receipt of social welfare payments for 12 months or more can apply for funding which is not means-tested and is not affected by maintenance grants (Mansuelli et al, 2008).

Key Actions in Further Education: Over the last number of years, the Irish government has prioritised a major expansion of opportunities in adult and further education. Between 2004 and 2008, expenditure on these areas increased by 60%. In terms of extending opportunity, in 2008 over 49,000 places were provided in further education courses compared with almost 43,000 places in 2002 (CEC, 2009a). Two key initiatives within Further Education in Ireland can be identified as having the promotion of lifelong learning as a core objective:

- Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs) are developed at local level based on a labour market needs analysis. PLCs are geared to improving the employment prospects of participants and/or enabling progression to other studies. Providers maintain the highest level of co-operation and contact with state agencies in the labour market area, local employers, higher education providers and training agencies. Latest data available show that 50% of those completing PLCs progress to employment (CEC, 2009a)

²⁸ Further details on the Flexible Learning projects being coordinated by the Institutes of Technology of Ireland (IOTI) is available from www.ioti.ie

- The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides flexible part-time options across further education and is aimed at adults with less than upper-second level education, including unemployed adults, who wish to combine their return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Since 2007, any adult with less than an upper second-level education is entitled to free tuition in Ireland. The programme had 26,500 participants in 2008 compared with 22,000 in 2005 (CEC, 2009a).

National Framework for Qualifications in Ireland: The National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ) was introduced in Ireland in 2003 and aims to bring greater coherence to the national qualifications system in Ireland. The NFQ can be viewed as a key mechanism in the promotion of lifelong learning. It facilitates and encourages recognition of prior learning (RPL) by establishing a national point of reference or basis for RPL – learning outcomes; promoting alternative pathways to qualifications and promoting a more flexible and integrated system of qualifications. It is divided into a 10-level framework providing for all education and training awards in Ireland, from basic education and literacy to post doctoral level (OECD, 2008). The establishment of the NFQ is an important step in meeting the needs of a lifelong learning community with more diverse learners who have different learning needs (CEC, 2009b).

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in Ireland can be identified. Such weaknesses will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/ headings:

Funding – There has been a substantial increase in Government funding towards education and training in Ireland in recent years. Figures from the D/ETE show that in 2007, €495m was invested by the Irish government in all forms of training. The HEA note that in 2006, a total of €1.799m public funding was made available to the higher education and training sector (in OECD, 2008). In 2000, the National Training Fund was established under the National Training Fund Act, as a dedicated fund to finance a range of schemes aimed at providing assistance in the up skilling of those in employment (OECD, 2008). Despite such investment, levels of funding are still inadequate and thus hinder the progress of recent lifelong learning initiatives and policy developments in Ireland. The OECD (2006:15) recognised that ‘Ireland’s education budget must compete with many other demands on the public purse’. Failure to invest further in the tertiary education system will put at risk its contribution to strengthening the knowledge economy.

Participation Levels - The Bologna Progress Report (2008) notes that while Ireland has made substantial progress in increasing the numbers of students participating in higher education, there remain serious challenges in relation to the participation of some groups, in particular: students from lower socio-economic backgrounds; mature students; students with a disability and students from ethnic minorities.

Obstacles experienced by these groups in Ireland include: additional costs faced by students such as those with children, those on specialised courses and people with disabilities; access is still not fully part of the mainstream activities and strategies of higher education institutions and failure to adequately support the educational needs of those already in the workforce (Bologna Progress Report on Ireland, 2008).

Flexibility – There is an urgent need for more flexible access and forms of learning in Ireland. The OECD (2008) found both in further and in higher education and training, a substantial number of programmes cannot be followed part-time. For many targeted groups (workers, people performing care tasks) this is a substantial obstacle to participation in education in Ireland. Research undertaken by Darmody and Fleming (2009) notes a general absence of proactive policies in terms of financial assistance, general support and flexible delivery for part-time students in Ireland. The fees issue for part-time students is a significant barrier to participation in higher education in Ireland. Currently, students entering ‘conventional courses’ within third level education via the CAO do not pay fees, while part-time courses including modular degree courses and distance learning courses incur *full* fees. This therefore acts as a significant hurdle in the provision of flexible learning for mature students in particular (Mansuelli et al, 2008).

Progression in NFQ – Barriers to progression and mobility from further education to higher education at level 6 or from level 6 to 7 have been viewed as an area of challenge and potential blockage in Ireland. Linked to this is the lack of information provided to learners on available progression routes (OECD, 2008).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – The OECD (2008) is critical of RPL in Ireland and does not see it as a mainstream phenomenon. Instead, it sees knowledge and experience with RPL as limited to a small number of professionals with the majority of professionals working in further education and higher education unfamiliar with RPL. This is therefore a major blockage in the successful development and implementation of lifelong learning as RPL can play an essential role in the opening up of opportunities for education and training, which is needed to meet the country’s future skills needs.

Legislation – Mansuelli et al (2008) refer to The Statutory Committee on Educational Disadvantage (2005) that notes ‘Ireland lags behind other industrialised countries in having no legislative basis for paid educational leave to enable people to gain qualifications later in life, having been educationally disadvantaged in their earlier years’.

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Ireland. It is clear that Ireland has made substantial progress in the development of a lifelong learning framework through various policy documents and initiatives at both Higher and Further Education which promote lifelong learning

as a core objective. However, despite Government commitment, Ireland still lags behind many other EU member states in terms of participation levels. This review has shown that there still exists a number of significant barriers to participation in and successful implementation of lifelong learning in Ireland – namely issues surrounding funding, participation of specific groups, flexibility, progression in NFQ, RPL and legislative provisions. The removal of such obstacles is required in order to ensure an equitable education and training system in Ireland with the promotion of lifelong learning as a realistic and achievable goal.

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Chapter 7: Lifelong learning and Belgium (Flanders)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in Belgium (Flanders region)²⁹. It will follow with the same layout as the previous chapter on the Irish context.

Background

The Flemish Higher Education system consists of two types of institutions: Universities and *Hogescholen* or Higher Education Colleges (HECs), offering three types of degrees: Academic Bachelor degrees (universities and HECs), Master degrees (universities and HECs) and Professional Bachelor degrees (HECs only). Timofei (2009) notes that Flemish Universities are higher education institutions of the traditional academic type, oriented exclusively towards professional higher education, while Flemish HECs offer a mixture of degrees, both academically and professionally oriented in a variety of fields (they are limited in their focus on EQF 5,6-7 and do not offer EQF 8). Adult education in Flanders consists of adult basic education (organised by Centres for Adult Basic Education – CBEs), secondary adult education and higher vocational education (organised by Centres for Adult Education – CVOs). Continuing non-degree education programmes are offered by both CVOs and HECs and are delivered in a variety of formats: part-time, evening or online learning. They are also offered by re-employment agencies sponsored by the Government (e.g. VDAB) and even private partners. Intermediate degree programmes are not normally offered within HECs as yet but are delivered by CVOs. (Timofei, 2009). However, the programmes offered by CVOs became part of the EQF 5 IN 2009. The actual implementation will lead to a closer relationship between CVOs and HECs as well as to the organisation of EQF 5 programmes at the HECs. In addition, non-formal training courses are available in Flanders through socio-cultural associations. The importance of non-formal and informal learning is embodied in the Recognition of acquired competences in the Socio-Cultural Education Strategy (OECD, 2008).

The Higher Education Policy Unit belongs to the Department of Education and Training of the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training and is responsible for policy development and evaluation of higher education. In cooperation with higher education institutions and other organisations, the Higher Education Policy Unit improves, develops and stimulates proactive initiatives regarding higher education and research (Ministry of Education and Training, 2008a). Since 2005, the *Project Strategic Education and Training Policy* – situated in the Flemish Ministry of

²⁹ Belgium is a federal state of three communities (Flemish, French and German-speaking) and three regions (Flemish, Walloon and Brussels-Capital). Since 1989, Belgium's three communities have acquired full authority and competency for education, thus the Flemish community (Flanders) is responsible for all Flemish institutions, including those within the territory of the Brussels-Capital region (Ministry of Education and Training, 2008a).

Education and Training – constitutes the interface between education, employment and culture policy (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a). It is therefore in charge of developing and planning an integrated policy which can realise the objectives of encouraging lifelong learning and strengthening the link between education, training and non-formal education on the one hand, and the labour market on the other hand (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009b).

The Flemish understanding and operationalisation of lifelong learning is based on international understandings. Lifelong learning in Flanders includes all possible learning activities, whether formal, non-formal or informal, whatever the aim (professional integration, personal development, social integration, active citizenship, to be independent, leisure, volunteer work etc). ‘Lifelong’ refers to the fact that learning should start at the beginning of one’s life and can never be seen as finished. Beside lifelong, ‘lifewide’ learning is an important concept in Flanders. ‘Lifewide’ is used to emphasise that learning serves more than only utilitarian aims, or aims set for economical reasons (De Rick, 2007).

The current political interest in lifelong learning in Flanders was stimulated in the 1990’s due to a number of interconnecting factors including the challenges of globalisation, the greying population and specific issues faced through immigration and by minority groups (De Rick, 2007). According to Weedon et al (2008) the two main goals of participation in lifelong learning in Flanders are to increase employability and personal development, though the strongest emphasis is on employability.

Statistics and Performance

The table below outlines key statistics in relation to education and training in Belgium³⁰:

	Belgium		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	13.8%	12.0%	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)	35.2%	42.9%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)	8.6% ³¹	6.8%	8.5%	9.5%	12.5%	15%
Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)	6.0% ³²	6.0%	4.91%	5.05% ³³	-	-

³⁰ Please note that levels of Participation in Lifelong Learning are measured at European level through the Labour Force Survey (See Chapter 4 for further details) and breakdown of performance among the three communities in Belgium is not given.

³¹ = 2004

³² = 2001

³³ = 2006

Source: CEC, 2009b

As can be seen in the table above, Belgium is one of the few countries in the European Union where participation rates in lifelong learning have declined significantly in the last few years. To some extent, this may reflect the general 'drying up of the population' with a continued decrease in persons aged 15-65 years particularly in Flanders, which is likely to accelerate over the coming years. The Research Centre of the Flemish Government (2009) notes that while a highly educated workforce is a feature of the Flemish economy, Flemish workers are still insufficiently participating in lifelong learning, thus the position of Flanders in the innovative process is mixed. Research by the OECD (2008) notes that in 2004, barely 3.9% of low-skilled people took part in training in the Flemish region; while mid-skilled had a participation rate of 8.6%. The high skilled in Flanders had a participation rate of 18% in permanent education and training. The issue of differing participation rates among various groups in Flemish society will be discussed further under the section which outlines the gaps in lifelong learning in Flanders.

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

The Flemish Government has produced a number of important decrees and action plans relating to lifelong learning. A summary of the main policy documents which have helped drive the lifelong learning agenda in Flanders in recent years will now be given. Following this, an outline of the key lifelong learning actions which have been implemented in the areas of Higher Education and Adult Education in Flanders will be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning: Lifelong learning and lifewide learning in Flanders first took shape when the Flemish action plan 'Learning all one's life, on the right road' (2000) was approved. The key aspects of this plan included: the recognition of acquired competences (RAC), education to labour market transitions, training credits, careers guidance and administration, stimulating vocational policy in enterprise, the alignment of the vocational training landscape, the development of ICT and the knowledge based economy (OECD, 2008). According to De Rick (2007) this 'is a key document because it translated European policy and gave it a Flemish touch.' Following on from this important document was the Vilvoorde Treaty (2001), which stated that Flanders should be a learning society by 2010 with at least 10% of people aged 25-65 participating in lifelong learning (De Rick, 2007)³⁴.

In 2004, the Flemish Government passed the 'Flexibilisation Decree'. This decree has allowed for more flexible learning paths in higher education. The initial premise is that a student can participate in higher education and acquire competences at a

³⁴ This was not achieved

suitable pace. Flexibilisation of higher education signifies a shift from a year-based system to a credit-based system. As a consequence, learning progression is no longer determined on the basis of passing all examinations each year, but by the acquisition of proof of credit for the separate course components (OECD, 2008). The procedures for recognition of prior learning in higher education integrated into the Flexibilisation Decree (2004) were simplified and improved in the Decree on the establishment of measures for restructuring and flexibility in higher education (2006). Under this decree, each 'association' (cooperation platform between universities and university colleges) has now set up an agency for the validation of prior learning. This validation of prior learning and/or professional experience in higher education may lead to access to higher education programmes and shortening of study duration (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a).

The Flemish Strategic Plan for Literacy was published in 2005. A key feature of this document was that it recognised that a number of stakeholders are involved in reaching the strategy aims, thus promoting the spirit of collaboration (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a). In fact, consultation and collaboration among key stakeholders has become a key feature in the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in Flanders. In 2007, the 'Competence Agenda 2007-2010' was signed by all stakeholders with the aim of recognising and deploying the skills and competences of students, job-seekers and employees alike under a number of key priority areas. An extra budget of €38 million was allocated for these actions in the period 2007-2009 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a). In addition, a number of consultation platforms were established in 2008 to assist with the development of the EU Lifelong Learning Programmes, thus giving key stakeholders a say in how the programmes should be implemented³⁵ (Ministry of Education and Science, 2009a).

The government decree on adult education published in 2007 aimed at attracting as many adults as possible to develop and update their key competences in Flanders. It redefined and emphasised the mission of Centres of Basic Education in Flanders, with a focus of their activities on all adults who need a basic training in order to fully participate in society or follow further training³⁶. It also further defined the structure of adult education in Flanders as completely modular. In order to eliminate the financial barriers for participation in adult education, this decree determined specific categories of participants who are free (entirely or partially) from paying a tuition fee (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a).

In September 2008, a new Decree on financing compulsory education (i.e. pre-primary, primary and secondary) came into force. It resulted in the adjustment of the financial resources of schools to better reflect the socio-economic profile of their

³⁵ The following Lifelong Learning Committees were established in line with the EU Programme: Flemish Comenius Committee; the Flemish Erasmus Committee, the Flemish Grundtvig Committee and the Flemish Leonardo Da Vinci Committee.

³⁶ Courses of basic education are free from tuition fees in Flanders to avoid any financial barrier for adults

pupils. According to the Flemish Ministry for Education and Training: 'The philosophy underpinning this decree is that pre-primary, primary and secondary education lay the foundations for lifelong learning and it is particularly important that disadvantaged groups are given the resources and opportunities to participate' (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a: 12).

The EU Commission (2009) recognises that Flanders has indeed designed a comprehensive lifelong learning strategy for the period encompassing 2004-2009. This strategy has been implemented strategically and supported with the targeted allocation of financial resources. Meeting the challenges of efficiency and equity and ensuring the relationship between education and training and the labour market is central to this strategy. A further sign of the Flemish Governments' commitment to lifelong learning can be seen in the recent 'national' action plan *Vlaanderen in actie*, which includes several measures to foster innovation in the domain of education and training. On 11 January 2008, the Flemish Government and social partners signed this action plan (*Pact 2020*) which contains 20 objectives and targets over the next decade. Three targets set are relevant to the Flemish lifelong learning strategy and are also in line with the new set of European benchmarks, each is to be achieved by 2020:

- To reduce by 50%, the number of unqualified school-leavers at the end of secondary education
- To increase the participation of adults (25-64 years old) in LLL to 15%
- To increase the participation in higher education, with special attention for the children of non-higher educated parents (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a).

In addition, increasing participation in lifelong learning, particularly for people with little initial training (population from 25-64 years old), is also mentioned as Belgium's key targets in its National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2008-2010) (Strategic Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, 2009).

Financial Allowances – As outlined in the key policy documents above, a number of measures designed to increase participation in education and training among non-traditional groups have been introduced in Flanders. The main sources of financial support are paid educational leave, the entrepreneurial portfolio system and the training and guidance vouchers for employees:

1. Under paid educational leave, employees working in the private sector are granted extra time off for courses they follow during their leisure time or they are given leave to attend courses, if they coincide with their working hours. This leave is paid by the employer in conjunction with and at the time the normal salary is paid. However, the employer may seek a refund from the fund established for this purpose. The courses may be followed for professional purposes but there does not need to be any link with the

- employee's current profession, and they can be of a general educational nature (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009b).
2. Under the 'SME-portfolio support', SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) can apply for government funding towards training, advice, mentoring and knowledge purchase. Companies must cover 50% of service provision themselves, with a maximum government payout of €5,000 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009b).
 3. Employees living in Flanders can purchase up to €250 worth of training vouchers per calendar year. They can use these to pay for training programmes organised by recognised training providers. The employee only needs to pay half of the cost of the training vouchers (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009b). The OECD (2008) notes that the focus of the training vouchers or 'credit' may change from time to time, this measure was adjusted to focus on lower-skilled and medium-skilled individuals in Flanders to enable them to pursue second-chance education and higher studies.

While higher education institutions in Flanders are mainly publicly funded, low tuition fees are considered important in Flanders in order to make higher education accessible. To this end, financial rewards are also granted to educational institutions in Flanders that enrol and graduate higher numbers of grant recipients and other at-risk students. This therefore acts as an incentive to institutions for improving access and participation of students coming from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups (such as ethnic minorities or lower socio-economic groups) and for improving the outcomes: funding is tied to performance through the funding formula and through performance agreements (Ministry of Education and Training, 2008b). The 2008 Decree on Financing of Education provides for such a new model of funding for higher education institutions in Flanders, in establishing a shift from mainly input funding to a combination of input with output funding. Under this model, universities are also encouraged to find other sources of funding in particular via collaboration with enterprises (CEC, 2009).

In addition, the Flemish Government introduced a scheme in 2005 to subsidise students in VET who study for critical jobs (i.e. jobs vacant with a low degree of applications e.g. butchers). This initiative was repeated until 2009. The aim of this subsidy (about €250 per student) was to contribute to the costs of material needed to fulfil the study programme (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a).

National Framework of Qualifications in Flanders – Driven by European developments, Flanders has taken major steps to develop a NFQ in order to make accreditation and certification of learning more feasible (De Rick, 2007). In 2008, the Flemish government ratified the essence of the draft decree concerning the Flemish Qualification Structure. It was endorsed and adopted by Flemish government and parliament in 2009 following a series of consultations with relevant stakeholders and the establishment of pilot projects. The Flemish qualification structure developed ties

in with the European Lifelong Learning Framework (European Qualification Framework (EQF)) (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009b)³⁷.

A learning outcomes approach is used for the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning in view of using the Flemish qualification framework as a common support for the recognition of all types of learning (CEC, 2009). In June 2009, an expertise network for RPL was launched in Flanders including an official RPL website³⁸. In addition, the services of several organisations were merged into one central Quality Agency responsible for coordination, quality assurance for all education, training and RPL systems. The aim of such initiatives is to support and enhance the quality of RPL procedures and to inform the wider public on different RPL possibilities (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a).

Finally, all higher education institutions in Flanders can offer courses during the evening or weekends, and organise distance-learning. As a consequence of the Decree on Higher Vocational Education ('HBO5') and secondary-post secondary VET (Se-n-se) (2009), Flemish higher education institutions are now allowed to organise vocational education on level 5 of EQF. This was not possible before (Ministry of Education and Training, 2009a).

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in Flanders can be identified. Such weaknesses will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/ headings:

Funding – levels of inadequate funding are still found to act as a significant barrier to participation in lifelong learning despite recent initiatives highlighted above. For instance, Timofei (2009) found that the majority of students in her study enrolled in continuing education programmes were sponsored by their employers. Funding provided by higher education institutions was scarce and awarded to a very small number of learners.

RPL – While RPL seems to have been solidly implemented within higher education institutions in Flanders, students in Timofei's (2009) study noted that while their prior experience was recognised, there seemed to be a general lack of awareness among students of what RPL actual means. Inefficient levels of communication between students and their institutions were also cited as a problem.

Participation – practical barriers to participation of adult learners in education and training in Flanders include the difficulty of combining work, family and study (Timofei, 2009).

³⁷ In addition, it must be noted that Flanders was the first region in Europe to introduce a statutory Diploma Supplement. This was introduced for universities in 1991 and for university colleges in 1994 (HEQF Doc 2008)

³⁸ See www.vlaanderen.be/evc

As previously mentioned, Belgium is one of the few countries in the European Union where participation rates in lifelong learning are actually falling. While this may to some extent reflect the natural 'drying up of the population', the problem of 'social inequality' in participation remains a challenge according to De Rick (2007). In particular, several key groups are still under-represented in the higher education system, including persons from lower socio-economic groups; (unskilled) immigrants and their families; disabled students and men who are relatively under-represented in the first cycle of higher education (Ministry of Education and Training, 2008b). The OECD (2008) notes that there is an under-representation of low-educated people and workers aged 50+ in receipt of the training vouchers system in Flanders. For instance, in 2006 23.7% of training vouchers went to low-educated and 19.7% to people aged 50+.

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Belgium (Flanders). The Flemish Government has shown strong commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning in Higher and Adult Education in line with the wider European agenda as observed in the many policy documents and recent initiatives introduced. Indeed, the Flemish Government has produced an extensive lifelong learning strategy covering 2004-2009. Its legal basis is sound. Despite these developments, Flanders still has some way to go in achieving adequate participation levels. Political support does not seem to be able to influence the actual developments. There is an almost unique situation where participation levels in lifelong learning are falling in Flanders. Issues surrounding the unequal participation of certain groups, inadequate funding in certain sectors and lack of awareness of RPL all hinder positive change.

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Chapter 8: Lifelong learning and Lithuania

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in Lithuania. It will follow with the same layout as the previous country chapters.

Background

There are two types of higher education institutions in Lithuania: universities and colleges of higher education ("Kolegija" in Lithuanian). University studies are organized in three cycles: first cycle (Bachelor) studies, second cycle (Master's, specialized professional) studies, third cycle (residency, doctoral and post-graduate-art) studies. College of higher education studies are organized in one cycle (professional bachelor) studies. In 2009/2010 there were 15 state and 7 non-state universities. Professional higher education was established in 2000 following the passing of the *Law on Higher Education*. In 2009/2010, there were 13 state professional higher education institutions and 11 non-state. Adult education is carried out at 63 general education schools (adult schools and training centres or general education schools carrying out general education curricula for adults). The continuous education of adults is provided at 78 vocational schools and 10 labour market training centres (Eurydice, 2009).

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania is the principal state entity responsible for education policy in Lithuania. However, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour also has a number of direct responsibilities relating to education and training.

Before 1990, the whole system of education was centralised and formal in management as Lithuania formed part of the former USSR. All educational institutions were autocratic, authoritarian and uniform in style (Taljunaite et al, 2007). Following the reestablishment of Lithuanian independence in 1990, three distinct periods in the development of lifelong learning in Lithuania can be traced according to Taljunaite et al (2007). The first period began in the early 1990's and coincided with Lithuanians' social movements towards independence. A focus of public debate in Lithuania from the 1990's onwards was systematic educational reform; and an example of such reform can be seen in the adoption of the *Law on Education* in 1991. The second phase occurred in mid 1992 when *The General Concept of Education* in Lithuania was published by government. This important policy document was extremely influential and helped to shape Lithuania's education structure and governance since. It stated that 'the education system is based on European cultural values' and 'the result of education – not the educational process – is centrally controlled.' The third phase began in early 2001 and more or less coincided with Lithuania's accession towards the European Union (Taljunaite et al, 2007). It is this period of time – since 2001 – that is the focus of discussion under the

section on key lifelong learning actions and initiatives which follows later in this chapter.

Statistics and Performance

The table below outlines key statistics in relation to education and training in Lithuania:

	Lithuania		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	16.5%	7.4	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)	42.6%	39.9%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)	5.9% ³⁹	4.9%	8.5% ⁴⁰	9.5%	12.5%	15%
Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)	5.90%	4.84% ⁴¹	4.91%	5.05% ⁴²	-	-

Source: CEC, 2009

As can be seen in the table above, Lithuania has made no progress in adult participation in lifelong learning and still performs well below the EU average on the benchmark indicator. Levels of investment in education have also decreased in recent years.

According to data from the Department of Statistics, in 2008 every fourth resident of Lithuania between 25-64 years of age had a higher education. In the autumn of 2008, 79% of graduates of general education schools and 7% of graduates of vocational schools became first –year students at higher education establishments (Ministry of Education and Science, 2009).

Regarding non-formal education relative progress has been made; such activities involved 55% of Lithuanians' population in 2006. While in 2003, this number reached only 28% (Miniotiene, 2009).

Since 1994, natural growth became negative in Lithuania with deaths outnumbering births (Taljunaite et al, 2007). High levels of Lithuanians; immigrating, in particular to other EU western countries following Lithuania's accession to the EU is a major factor in such decreases. The reasons for which Lithuanians migrate are primarily of an economic nature: the prospect of finding a better job or a higher income (www.focusmigration.de/Lithuania).

The Ministry of Education and Science (2008) notes that the option of part-time studies (both evening and extramural) and distance learning is a fast developing field

³⁹ = 2004

⁴⁰ = 2003

⁴¹ = 2006

⁴² = 2006

in Lithuania. In 2006/2007, part-time extramural students represented 38.2% of the total student population, while part-time evening students represented 6%. These figures increased further in 2007/2008 to 40% and 6.1% respectively.

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

The Lithuanian Government has produced a number of important strategies and reports relating to lifelong learning. A summary of the main policy documents which have helped drive the lifelong learning agenda in Lithuania in recent years will now be given. Following this, an outline of the key lifelong learning actions which have been implemented in the areas of Higher Education and Adult Education in Lithuania will be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning: After Lithuania became a member of the EU, the development of adult learning in education became the number one priority of Lithuanian educational policy (Lithuanian Centre for Adult Education and Information, 2009). Taljunaite et al (2007) point to a clear conceptual difference in policy documents created before 2001 and after 2002. Before 2001, lifelong learning was viewed as an *element* of the treated problem rather than a *principle*, which helps to combine the whole education system according to the needs of 21st Century. Education reform priorities were formulated in the *Concept of Lithuanian Education Reform* (1993), and the key objective of education reform was a young persons' preparation for life. New terms were used (as the translation of EU documents) after May 2001.

The *National Education Strategy 2003-2012* was approved in 2003. This document defined the mission of Education in Lithuania under the following terms:

1. To help an individual to *understand* the contemporary world, to acquire cultural and social competences and to become an independent, active and responsible person who is willing and able to learn and create a life of his own and life of society;
2. To help an individual to *acquire a vocational qualification* corresponding to the level of modern technologies, culture and personal skills, and to create conditions enabling lifelong learning, which encompasses continuous satisfaction of cognitive needs, seeking to acquire new competences and qualifications that are necessary for the professional career and meaningful life;
3. To ensure balanced and knowledge-based development of the economy, environment and culture of this country, domestic and international competitiveness of the economy, national security and evolution of the democratic society, thus strengthening the creative powers of the society;
4. To guarantee continuity of culture nourished by the nation and the country, continuous process of creation, protection of identity, as well as to foster the open and dialogic nature of the culture (Taljunaite et al, 2007).

The provisions of this National Strategy stipulate that by 2012 'every citizen of Lithuania has a possibility to study at a higher school by the chosen mode of study (distance, extramural), and more than 60% of Lithuanian youth acquire higher university or non-university education' (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution, 2003).

Lithuania introduced a lifelong learning strategy; *The Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning*. It was first produced in 2004 and renewed in October 2008. It is expected that this strategy will have a significant impact on the development of lifelong learning in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Centre for Adult Education and Information (2009) notes that the first strategy was more related to vocational training, while the renewed strategy concentrates more on the development of adult education itself. According to the Ministry of Education and Science (2008) the updated strategy treats non-formal education as fundamental not only for ensuring employability and economic prosperity but also social cohesion, active citizenship and personal fulfilment of people. The 2008 Strategy has been approved for the period of 2008-2012. Implementation of the strategy will rely on EU Structural funds (Lithuanian Centre for Adult Education and Information, 2009). The 2008 Strategy also aims to implement the provisions laid out in several national legal acts including: The Law on Education (1991, 2003); The Law on VET (1997, 2007); the Law on Non-formal Education (1998), The Law on Higher Education (2000) and The Law on Support for Employment (2006) (Minotiene, 2009).

The main objectives of the 2008 strategy are concentrated on the establishment of a fully developed model of formal and non-formal adult education in all types of institutions across Lithuania. The nine political directions of the strategy focus on the development of a comprehensive, coherent and efficient lifelong learning system in correspondence with the national priorities and individual needs that create the opportunities to acquire, upgrade or change qualifications and competences for better employment, integration into society and improving quality of life (Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning, 2008).

The Lithuanian Higher Education System Development Plan for 2006-2010 is a strategic document that defines the goal, tasks and development directions of higher education for a period of 5 years in Lithuania. One of the tasks formulated relates to lifelong learning. In implementing this task, the *Regulation for the Description of a Selective Study Programme* and the *Regulations for the Assessment of a Selective Study Programme* were approved. As a consequence, higher education establishments are encouraged to provide selective studies during which separate subjects or their cycles are studies for the purpose of improving professional qualification or re-training, also for the purpose of extension of professional or general education. However, the forms of selective studies are established by a higher education establishment itself (Ministry of Education and Science, 2009).

The Law on Vocational Education and Training was amended in 2007 and provides for a reform of vocational education and training systems and labour market training, alongside optimisation of the management of the vocation education and training system in Lithuania. This is of particular importance for persons in the labour market who need to acquire new qualifications, and for persons with special needs (CEC, 2009).

The importance of encouraging lifelong learning is also referred to in Lithuania's most recent NAPSincl; alongside the implementation of active labour market policies – under the wider priority objective of enhancing participation in the labour market (Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2008).

Consultation and collaboration among key stakeholders has become a key feature in the development and national policy documents relating to lifelong learning in Lithuania in recent years. For instance, the updated *Strategy for Ensuring of Lifelong Learning* provides for involvement of social partners in the process of implementation of the policy of lifelong learning. The role of associations (NGOs) is given particular importance in the organisation of adult education. In addition, *The Law on Vocational Education and Training* (2007 version) broadened the powers of social partners in vocational education and training. It stipulated that social partners participate in the shaping of policy; development of qualifications, standards and curricula and in their evaluation amongst other things in the VET sector (Ministry of Education and Science, 2009).

*Funding initiatives*⁴³ - In 2004, an initiative was introduced in Lithuania which allowed students to return a part of their income taxes, if they participated in the formal education system. This measure was part of a means to encourage adult participation in learning. Also, enterprises are not taxed on the money they spend on qualification courses and seminar attendance for employers in regions with high unemployment rates, the state applies such subsidies towards vocational re-/training of persons (Taljunaite et al, 2007).

The new *Law on Sciences and Studies* 2009 introduced a change in funding methods of higher education by introducing the 'student's basket'. The 'basket' can be taken to any higher education institution (State or private) upon student's choice. Study basket quotas for universities and colleges are determined by the Ministry of Education. Students who do not get 'student baskets' can be supported through the help of state-guaranteed loans. A students' right to get the 'basket' is decided upon his/her school results, additional points they may get, candidate choice priorities and any additional higher school tests. However, the candidates' study results cannot be lower than the minimal requirements set the Ministry. As a result of this new law, the sum of money allotted by the State to finance one student's studies is twice as large after the adoption of the new law than before (Eurydice, 2009).

⁴³ Education at all levels in Lithuania is highly reliant on state funding.

Other Lifelong Learning Initiatives – To provide the ‘second chance’ to acquire secondary education for early school leavers, the legislative basis is currently being improved. For example, in 2007 documents governing flexible forms of learning (the *Description of the Procedure for Module-Based Learning*, *Description of the Procedure for Independent Learning* and the *Description of the Procedure for Extramural Learning*) were updated and numerous initiatives focused on the education of socially excluded groups have also been implemented. In vocational education, the curriculum has been adapted for persons having different education and needs (CEC, 2009). The majority of higher education establishments in Lithuania now have divisions of continuing studies and/or distance learning centres which aim at creating and developing higher education studies and continuing studies based on information and communication technologies (ICT) (Ministry of Education and Science, 2009).

The programme of Lithuanian Virtual University for 2007-2012 was approved in 2007 for the promotion of e-learning and the development of an e-learning infrastructure. The programme aims to further develop Lithuanian Distance Learning Network (LieDM) and to create information technology based and integrated e-learning space, thus providing lifelong learning possibilities. Currently LieDM unites 77 institutions including universities, colleges, adult education centres and VET institutions. The network provides 10 master level programmes and more than 1070 distance learning courses in various areas (Miniotiene, 2009).

National Framework of Qualifications in Lithuania – The development of a National Framework of Qualifications on the basis of the EQF has been submitted to the Lithuanian government and is currently awaiting final approval. Once implemented, the NFAQ will create the necessary prerequisites for Lithuanian qualifications to be recognised in the EU and other countries (Ministry of Education and Science, 2008). The EU Commission (2009) notes that the national system of qualifications in Lithuania will enhance cohesion between the qualifications acquired at different levels of education and also eliminate part of the obstacles which restrict or complicate participation in lifelong learning.

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in Lithuania can be identified. Such weaknesses will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/ headings:

Participation – Overall participation rates in lifelong learning among adults are still very low and little progress has been made in increasing levels in recent years. In addition, inequalities still exist which hinder participation of certain groups in Lithuania, in particular for national minorities (e.g. Poles and Russian). The situation of national minorities in education and labour market is characterised in the following way according to Downes et al (2006): high levels of unemployment, social

marginalisation and lack of support for employing the most socially troubled groups of unemployed persons. Unemployed representatives of national minority groups also have lower education, no proper professional training, and are passive as far as involvement into labour activities are concerned. The lack of knowledge of state language (Lithuanian) is another key obstacle for those belonging to national minorities who wish to gain professional training and find a suitable job. In addition, since 2004 Lithuania's eastern border has been the external border of the EU and thus it has become a transit country for both legal and irregular international migration (www.focusmigration.de/Lithuania).

Discrepancies in participation levels also exist in other areas. For instance, those with higher levels of education attained have higher levels of participation in further learning activities. In addition, adults from bigger cities are more active in further learning than their counterparts in small cities or villages. Finally gender issues are also important in Lithuania, with higher levels of women participating in lifelong learning than men (Taljunaite et al, 2007).

RPL – While recent steps have been taken in the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in the VET sector, there is currently no system of RPL of informal learning within Higher Education Institutions in Lithuania. This is therefore a major obstacle in participation as 'one of the preconditions for lifelong learning is recognition of prior learning' (Ministry of Education and Science, 2009).

Funding – The diversification of funding in higher education remains a challenge for Lithuania, with the main source of funding for higher education institutions still being the government. In addition, the activities of lifelong learning at higher education institutions are considered services and are subject to payment by students themselves, their employers or from various funds (CEC, 2009).

Qualifications – Taljunaite et al (2007) believes that lifelong learning is still an undeveloped phenomenon in Lithuania. For instance, the qualifications of many Lithuanian citizens do not match the current skills requirements of the labour market.

Transversalism – Lifelong learning policy is still 'transversional' in character according to Taljunaite et al (2007). As a consequence, unnecessary changes in policy-making structures or practices are taking place and the lifelong learning strategy continues to be designated as a distinct or separate policy space. In addition, Taljunaite et al (2007) note that transversalism does not integrate lifelong learning into the core of policy, but tends rather to add it on top, as an additional objective or consideration.

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Lithuania. As a newer member state of the European Union, the Lithuanian Government has shown commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning

in Higher and Adult Education in line with the wider European agenda as observed in the many policy documents and recent initiatives introduced. Indeed, the Lithuanian Government produced a renewed lifelong learning strategy in 2008. However, it is clear that Lithuania still has some way to go in achieving adequate participation levels and it has made little progress in increasing rates over recent years. Natural population growth in Lithuania is in decline with many Lithuanians choosing to immigrate to other EU countries; this has led to a situation whereby Lithuania faces an intensified skills deficit. In addition, issues surrounding the unequal participation levels among certain groups, in particular of national minority groups; the absence of full recognition of RPL across all types of learning and education; inadequate funding levels; mismatching of qualifications with skills requirements and the transversional nature of policy all hinder positive change.

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Chapter 9: Lifelong learning and Scotland

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in Scotland. It will follow with the same layout as the previous country chapters.

Background

There are 20 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Scotland, comprising of 14 Universities and 6 other institutes. HEIs offer university and non-university level programmes (degree and sub-degree) under a three cycle system. Further Education (FE) takes place across 43 publicly funded colleges in Scotland. Further education colleges' offer mainly vocational and non-vocational courses but also a limited number of higher education courses, with the majority at sub-degree level (Burgess and Mullen, 2007).

The First Minister for Scotland is responsible for the overall supervision and development of the education system in Scotland. Day-to-day responsibility for education is delegated to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. They are supported by the Minister for Children and Young People and the Minister for Schools and Skills. Each is then served by the Scottish Government's Directorate General of Education. Ministers are advised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) and the national bodies dealing with the development of the curriculum (Learning and Teaching Scotland) and public examinations (the Scottish Qualifications Authority). The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is responsible for the funding of teaching and some research in the higher education institutions and publicly-funded colleges (Eurydice, 2009).

Education has a long tradition of being socially valued in Scotland and is currently high on the political agenda, falling within the remit of the Scottish Parliament. Prior to devolution in 1998, Scotland had its own education legislation and pursued policies which were distinctively different from those in the rest of the UK. The Green Paper *Opportunity Scotland* (1998) was Scotland's first policy document on lifelong learning and emphasised the need for people at all levels to have access to work-based learning opportunities. Maintaining Scotland's competitiveness in the global economy was a key driver (Weedon et al, 2007). While economic competitiveness has been the major driving force behind recent lifelong learning developments; emphasis laid on social inclusion issues (e.g. widening access for under-represented social groups) is also important (Holford et al, 2009). This use of multiple discourses is evident in the Scottish Executive's definition of lifelong learning, which is seen as: 'the continuous development of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are essential for employability and personal fulfilment' (ELLD, 2001:3 cited in Weedon et al, 2007). The Scottish lifelong learning strategy also relates to wider EU policy on lifelong learning and the Lisbon objectives have been 'adapted' to the Scottish

system (Weedon et al, 2007). The following sections of this chapter will thus outline the key policy actions and initiatives in relation to lifelong learning in Scotland.

Statistics and Performance

As at 30th June 2005, Scotland's population was 5, 094, 8000. This figure includes a net gain of 12,500 migrants from the rest of the UK and a net gain of 7,300 migrants from overseas. However, a combination of demographic trends (such as a decreasing fertility rate and increased life expectancy) means that Scotland's population is shrinking and ageing. Indeed, Scotland is one of the few countries in Western Europe where population is projected to fall in the next few decades (OECD, 2007). The table below outlines key statistics in relation to education and training in the United Kingdom⁴⁴. While Scotland has independent control over its education policy within the UK, separate statistics on education and training are not available from the EU.

	United Kingdom		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
<i>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</i>	18.2%	17.0%	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
<i>Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)</i>	29.0%	39.7%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
<i>Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)</i>	27.2% ⁴⁵	19.9% ⁴⁶	8.5% ⁴⁷	9.5%	12.5%	15%
<i>Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)</i>	4.46%	5.48% ⁴⁸	4.91%	5.05% ⁴⁹	-	-

Source: CEC, 2009

The table above illustrates that overall the UK shows good performance, with adult participation rates in lifelong learning more than twice the EU average and above the 2020 benchmark set. However, if breaks in time series are taken into consideration, the participation rate has not changed much since 2000. As concerns Higher Education attainment, the UK has a relatively high rate. Public investment in education as a percentage of GDP has shown a significant growth since 2000 and is now above the EU average (CEC, 2009).

⁴⁴ Scotland is one of four countries which make up the United Kingdom (the other 3 are England, Wales and Northern Ireland). It has devolved powers within the UK system of government, as set out in the Scotland Act (2001). This means that the country is not independent but it does have control over some of its affairs (including education) through its elected parliament.

⁴⁵ = 2003

⁴⁶ = break

⁴⁷ = 2003

⁴⁸ = 2006

⁴⁹ = 2006

In 2008-09, there were 277,615 students in HE in Scotland. Entrant numbers increased by 4.8% (6,635 in 2008-09) to 144,130 (Scottish Government, 2009). In 2008-09, there were 374,986 students undertaking courses in the 43 SFC funded colleges in Scotland. 88% of those students were studying further education courses and 82% of all students were studying part-time (Scottish Funding Council, 2010). There were 398,120 FE enrolments in 2005-06, representing an increase of 88% since 1994-95. However, there has also been a steady decline in FE enrolments since peaking at 450,790 in 2001-02 (Scottish Government, 2008a). In addition, the OECD (2007) notes that in 2003-04 over 26,000 of enrolments at Scottish Institutions were on distance learning courses.

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

The Scottish Government⁵⁰ has produced a number of important strategies and reports relating to lifelong learning. A summary of the main policy documents which have helped drive the lifelong learning agenda in Scotland in recent years will now be given. Following this, an outline of the key lifelong learning actions which have been implemented in the areas of Higher Education and Adult Education in Scotland will also be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning – In 2001-02, the Scottish Parliament Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee undertook an inquiry into lifelong learning in Scotland. *The Final Report on Lifelong Learning* was published in October 2002. Following this enquiry, the Scottish Executive published its lifelong learning strategy for Scotland, *Life through Learning: Learning through Life*. Lifelong learning was seen as developing the following capacities: personal fulfilment and enterprise; employability and adaptability; active citizenship and social inclusion. The lifelong learning strategy had the five following goals:

1. The nurturing of confident, knowledgeable and skilled people who can participate in economic, social and civic life
2. The provision of high quality learning experiences
3. The recognition of these skills in the workplace
4. Information, guidance and support for learning
5. Opportunities for all to learn, irrespective of background of circumstances (Burgess and Mullen, 2007).

The lifelong learning strategy also had a number of associated indicators intended to measure its success. The lifelong learning strategy was evaluated by the Scottish Executive in the Lifelong Learning Statistics in 2005 (Weedon et al, 2008). In 2006, the Scottish Executive undertook a consultation, *Lifelong Learning – Building on Success: A Discussion of Specific Issues related to Lifelong Learning in Scotland* which focused on the following themes: engagement with employers; flexible learning opportunities, entitlement and discretionary support; information, advice and

⁵⁰ Formally known as the Scottish Executive

guidance; community learning and development and journeys into and through learning (Burgess and Mullen, 2007).

The Review of Scotland's Colleges (RoSCo) was announced by the Scottish Executive in June 2005. The review carried out a detailed examination of how Scotland's colleges currently support Scotland's economic and social well-being, and the future of this sector's role. The outcome of this review resulted in around 100 recommendations, summarised in the report by the reviews' Core Group *Transforming Lives, Transforming Scotland* (2007). In December 2006, Lord Leitch published his final report into UK skills *Prosperity for All in the Global Economy-World Class Skills* which set out several recommendations, aiming for the UK to become a world leader in skills by 2020 (Burgess and Mullen, 2007).

The 2002 Lifelong Learning Strategy was replaced by a new Skills Strategy in 2007, taking into consideration issues arising from the Leitch Review and evidence from the Lifelong Learning Strategy Consultation. On the 10th September 2007, the Scottish Government published their new skills strategy, *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy*. 'This skills strategy provides a new agenda for skills and learning in Scotland, by developing both Scotland's skills policies and its skills landscape in tandem, crafting them into a more coherent structure designed to address Scottish requirements' (OECD, 2008:3). The Skills Strategy covers early years provision, schools, further and higher education, work related learning and informal learning opportunities as well as looking at information, advice and guidance (DCSF UK, 2009). According to Timofei (2009) the vision laid out is one of a smarter Scotland with a globally competitive economy based on high value jobs, with progressive and innovative business leadership. Three major areas of change have been identified under this strategy: a focus on individual development; a response to the needs of the economy and the demand of employers and the creation of cohesive structures. In 2009, the Scottish Government published an update on progress of the Skills Strategy to date, including the following:

- The response to the economic downturn through the development of Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) and the strategic use of European Structural Funds
- Details of how flexible skills interventions such as Modern Apprenticeships, Get Ready for Work and the integrating of employment and skills services are helping the Scottish Government to seek a clear economic payback from investment in skills
- Implementation of 16+ Learning Choices as a way of ensuring that every young a person has an appropriate offer of learning made to them, well in advance of their school leaving date
- Launch of the Joint Future Thinking Taskforce on Universities report, *New Horizons*

- Establishment of Skills Development Scotland to deliver more integrated and individualised skills services (DCSF UK, 2009).

In addition, Community Learning and Development (CLD) have developed as a distinct education sector alongside schooling and higher and further education in Scotland (Strategic Review of Learning Connections doc)⁵¹. Several legislative measures have been taken relating to CLD and lifelong learning in Scotland, including:

- *Working and Learning Together to Build Strong Communities* (2004) which set out a long-term framework for the development of CLD in Scotland
- The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 placed a duty on councils to work with other key agencies in the delivery of lifelong learning, training and local economic development. It also established Community Planning Partnerships which contribute to improving the quality of life within communities through the use of lifelong learning (Weedon et al, 2007).

Funding initiatives – The Scottish Government is strongly committed to ensuring that access to education is based on ability to learn and not ability to pay. Removing barriers to accessing lifelong learning is a key element of this approach. All HEIs in Scotland are focused on having admission processes and support systems that ensure that everyone can take advantage of the opportunities offered by higher education regardless of their background or personal circumstances (Scottish Government, 2008b). In December 2008, the Scottish Government launched a consultation paper on a fair student support package (DCSF UK, 2009). Recent funding packages introduced include the following:

- Abolition of tuition fees in 2001-02 making access to HE free at the point of entry
- Abolition of the Graduate Endowment Fee in 2008
- Part-Time Incentive Premium to encourage more part-time provision
- Widening Access Retention Premium which focuses support on students from the most deprived backgrounds
- FE/HE Access and Participation grant to help improve articulation links between colleges and universities
- Part-Time Fee Waiver to assist participation in HE by part-time students from groups underrepresented in higher education
- Funding towards the post of a National Co-ordinator on Wider Access
- Funding of the four Regional Fora (Scottish Government, 2008b).

Significant increases in funding specifically towards the FE sector in Scotland have also taken place. Such changes have coincided with changes in the labour market in

⁵¹ CLD is an area of activity that promotes achievement for adults (such as community based adult learning), achievement for young people (youth work) and achievement through building community capacity (including community development)

Scotland; as manufacturing has declined and the services sector has grown, FE colleges have begun to offer a more diverse range of programmes (Weedon et al, 2007). Examples of recent developments in FE include:

- A commitment to increase appropriate training places to 50,000 over the next 3 years
- Additional funding of £16m to increase the number of new starts on modern apprenticeships to 18,500 and to sustain individuals in these places (DCSF UK, 2009).

In addition, the Individual Learning Account (Scotland) scheme (ILA Scotland) was launched in two phases in 2004 and 2005. ILAs are intended to: widen participation in adult learning; introduce new learners to adult learning; provide an opportunity for those who have not recently participated in learning to do so; encourage individuals to invest in and take ownership of their own learning; prioritise the learning needs of certain groups of learners (in particular those in low incomes) and support the development of a quality learning provider base in Scotland across both public and private sectors. Significant growth has taken place in the scheme; for example the number of new ILA accounts opened increased by around 14,000 from 2005 to 2007 (Scottish Government, 2008c).

It must be noted that premium funding is paid to HE and FE institutions to encourage them to recruit students from under-represented groups (e.g. mature students, students from lower social classes, minority ethnic groups and disabled students). Each institution is also compared with a similar institution elsewhere in the UK in relation to the proportion of students from such underrepresented groups. However, while HEIs are encouraged to converge on their benchmark, they are not obliged to do so as they are autonomous institutions (Weedon et al, 2007).

National Framework of Qualifications in Scotland – The Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was launched in December 2001 and is now fully implemented. SCQF credits are awarded alongside ECTS credits. SCQF credits are lifelong learning credits and are used to allow for maximum accumulation and transfer with other education and training sectors and allow for flexible lifelong learning pathways (Scottish Government, 2008b). There are currently around 5,500 qualifications and 9,000 units in the SCQF, including the majority of qualifications offered in schools, colleges and universities. The SCQF also recognises ‘in-house training’ and a range of employers’ own learning programmes have been included in the framework, for example in the police and fire services, banking, social care and voluntary sectors (DSCF UK, 2009).

Scotland also has in place a clear policy to generate systems for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning as part of the development of their national frameworks for credit and qualifications. Scottish RPL policy declares that ‘developing effective mechanisms for the recognition of prior informal learning is

regarded as being fundamental to the success of the SCQF as a tool for promoting and enabling lifelong learning' (OECD, 2007). In Scotland the kinds of qualifications more generally linked to RPL are Scottish Vocational Qualifications, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, degrees (both BA and MA), and professional and qualifications. RPL is more linked to qualifications which are directly related to the workplace and occupational competence, or to developing professional competence within such areas as social work and nursing (OECD, 2007).

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in Scotland can be identified. Such weaknesses will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/ headings:

Participation – People from the most deprived areas and also men remain underrepresented in the HE sector in Scotland. While the gender gap in HE students has narrowed, the Age Participation Index was 52.9% for women and 41.2% for men. During the same period, in Scottish HEIs, students from the most deprived quintile (20%) of the Scottish population made up only 12% of the student population. One of the biggest obstacles remains achievement levels in schools by members of underrepresented groups (Scottish Government, 2008b). Indeed, Timofei (2009) refers to the challenge of reducing the drop-out of learners at all stages, particularly from compulsory schooling, as it impacts significantly on the types of provision in HEIs. In addition, Weedon et al (2007) argue that the principal focus of most policy documents is on the economic implications of ageing and there are few explicit links with educational strategies specifically targets to older people and lifelong learning policy.

RPL – The OECD (2007) identifies a number of deficiencies in RPL activity in Scotland. RPL tends to take place in the 'new' or post-1992 universities versus older universities. Within most of the new universities, RPL provision is not mainstream but is undertaken in particular vocationally specific areas such as nursing and social work. In addition, within HEIs, most RPL activity has as its focus the gaining of credit within programmes rather than as a means of gaining initial access or entry to a programme as an alternative to traditional entry qualifications. Moreover, most RPL claims within Scottish universities are made at the postgraduate level. The OECD (2007) also notes that most RPL activity that takes place within colleges is an informal, non-recorded process for the purposes of access to a programme of study despite the development of support and assessment mechanisms. RPL claims for credit are usually regarded as complicated as and more time-consuming than undertaking learning through the conventional route. Within the workplace, there are few mechanisms to formally, or externally recognise the wide range of informal learning that takes place within the workplace, unless linked to Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) provision.

Scottish Government Approach – Weedon et al (2007) believe that Scottish lifelong learning policies can be criticised as while they emphasise the importance of enhancing social capital, in reality they mainly pursue initiatives that reflect the human capital approach. It could be argued that people are less likely to experience social exclusion or participate in anti-social behaviour if they are engaged in the labour market. However, there is a danger that in emphasising human capital approaches to lifelong learning they may become a form of social control (Weedon et al, 2007).

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Scotland. The Scottish Government has shown a very strong and pro-active commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning in line with wider European developments as observed in the many policy documents and initiatives introduced. Scotland's Skills Strategy brings together its future skills policies with its skills landscape for the 21st century. Indeed, Scotland has pursued a separate stance to developments in education and training when compared with other UK systems: for example, the range of financial incentives on offer across HE and FE sectors differ to those in other areas. While Scotland and the UK as a whole has an adult participation rate in lifelong learning above the EU average, significant work remains to be done in several areas including the unequal participation of certain groups in lifelong learning and the full implementation of RPL.

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Chapter 10: Lifelong learning and Turkey

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in Turkey⁵². It will follow with the same layout as the previous country chapters.

Background

In Turkey, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) consist of universities, higher technology institutes and independent vocational higher schools. In principle, accession to higher education is conditional upon having the *Lise Diploması* (secondary school diploma) and being successful in the entrance exam. When evaluating the results of examination, the performance of students in secondary education is taken into consideration. Those who are the most successful are allocated to HEIs in accordance with their ranking and personal preferences by the National Student Selection and Placement Centre (Eurydice, 2010). As of 2010, there are 146 universities (95 state and 51 non-profit foundation) in the Turkish higher education (HE) system. Upon completion of a course at short-cycle vocational higher schools (2 years), a vocational qualification (associate degree diploma) is awarded and is in general affiliated to the universities. University degrees include a first-cycle qualification (BA degree) following 4 years of study and second cycle qualification (MA degree) after a further 2 years (Eurydice, 2010).

Non-formal education in Turkey covers those who are currently at a particular stage of their education, who have left their education at any stage, or who have never had a chance to attend school. Non-formal education is carried out through public education, apprenticeship training and distance education. Similar educational services are also offered through vocational courses opened at vocational and technical high schools (MoNE, 2008).

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Turkey is the principal state entity responsible for education and training in Turkey and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) has direct responsibility for HE in Turkey. However, lifelong learning is closely related to different departments and administrative units, it also comprises of other state institutions, private institutions and non-governmental institutions (MoNE, 2007). The modern concept of lifelong learning is still relatively new in Turkey, although the basic idea is ancient, predating the formal education system. Nevertheless, all parties agree that each and every individual needs to be able to adapt to changing life conditions and practice continuous learning in order to improve his/her personal abilities, job-related skills and competencies. It is proving essential in such a modern, fast-changing and competitive global society to keep undertaking

⁵² Turkey is currently an associate member of the EU. Negotiations began in 2005 with the EU to begin the accession of Turkey to EU membership; it is likely that this process will take several more years to complete.

education and training in line for both personal objective and labour market requirements. Lifelong learning is therefore an essential tool to raise the quality of life in Turkey (MoNE, 2007).

With its young population, Turkey has a 'demographic window of opportunities' (MoNE, 2007). It is expected that by 2020 almost 70% of Turkey's population will be of working age. According to projections made by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) 40 million persons will fall within the working age group 14-44 and 10 million within the age cohort of 45-64 years by 2020. This could be a unique opportunity for Turkey in terms of economic and social development, provided that there is a substantial increase in human resource development, through adequate investment in education and training (MoNE, 2007). A series of initiatives have been implemented in the Turkish education system in recent years; and a series of further reforms are currently being planned and discussed. The main efforts in relation to lifelong learning in Turkey will be outlined in the following sections of this chapter.

Statistics and Performance

According to the results of the 2008 Address Based Census, the population of Turkey is 71,517,100 (Eurydice, 2010). While Turkey may have a 'demographic window of opportunities' (MoNE, 2007); a number of significant gaps still prevail which could hinder any positive social and economic change. For instance, the overall educational attainment levels of the working population are low compared to the EU 25, with the average number of years of education at 6.8 for males and 5.3 for females. Although gross and net enrolment in higher education has been growing at an annual rate of 8% in recent years, only one in six students pass the university entrance examination and the net enrolment rate in higher education in 2005/06 was 18.8% (20% male and 17% female). While male employment reaches 68% in Turkey, the rate for females is 23.8% - well below the lowest EU performers. Unemployment rates decreased to 8.5% in 2007; although youth, urban and female unemployment rates stand at 19%, 11.8% and 10.7% respectively. In addition, the at-risk poverty rate among the working population is 22.7%, substantially higher than the EU average of 7% (ETF, 2009). The table below outlines key statistics in relation to education and training in Turkey:

	Turkey		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
<i>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</i>	59.3%	46.6%	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
<i>Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)</i>	-	12.4%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
<i>Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)</i>	1.8% ⁵³	1.8%	8.5% ⁵⁴	9.5%	12.5%	15%
<i>Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)</i>	2.59%	2.86% ⁵⁵	4.91%	5.05% ⁵⁶	-	-

Source: CEC, 2009

The table above shows that Turkey performs well below the EU average in early leavers from education and training, representing 46.6% in 2008. At the same time, the higher educational attainment level is significantly lower than the EU average level. With regards to adult participation in lifelong learning, the participation rate remains one of the lowest in Europe at 1.8% and Turkey's performance has indeed stagnated in recent years. Public investment in education as a percentage of GDP has increased since 2000 in Turkey, but is still clearly below the EU average at 2.86% in 2006 (CEC, 2009).

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

The lifelong learning strategy in Turkey has been developed towards increasing the employment skills of individuals in line with the requirements of a changing and developing economy and labour market (CEC, 2009). A summary of the main policy documents which have helped drive the lifelong learning agenda in Turkey in recent years will now be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning – The most significant policy document on lifelong learning produced thus far in Turkey is the national *Lifelong Learning Strategy Document*, which was initially arranged within the scope of the SVET project⁵⁷. It was prepared by the MoNE and adopted by the Turkish Government in 2009. This document takes the Lisbon Strategy and its targets on education beyond 2010 as well as European benchmarks in education and training as reference points for its priorities and action lines. The strategy recognises that in parallel to developments required regarding lifelong learning covering all levels of education; there is an urgent need for Turkey to strengthen the

⁵³ = 2006

⁵⁴ = 2003

⁵⁵ = 2006

⁵⁶ = 2006

⁵⁷ The aim of the EU supported project for 'Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System' (SVET) in Turkey was to strengthen the vocational education and training system in line with needs and lifelong learning principles. It was completed in late 2007 (MoNE, 2009).

infrastructure of education and overall improvement in the quality of education. Sixteen priorities for the development of lifelong learning in Turkey were outlined, including the following:

- Attachment of special importance to disadvantaged individuals in their inclusion to the lifelong learning process
- Strengthening of vocational guidance within lifelong learning
- Bringing the quality of the labour force to an international competitive level
- Provision of an adequate share of finance for lifelong learning along with stakeholders
- Increasing international mobility and cooperation within lifelong learning
- Support of lifelong learning activities targeted towards improving the active participation of older people in social and economic life (Turan, 2010).

The *Ninth Development Plan* covers the period between 2007-2013. Increasing effectiveness, access and equal opportunities in education have a crucial role to play in achieving future success. A number of targets have been put forward under this plan for all levels and types of education to improve the lifelong learning feeding skills required for employment and social progress (MoNE, 2008).

Many policy documents underlie the need for restructuring of the central and local management of the Turkish Ministry of National Education in order to adequately respond to the challenges of globalisation. As a consequence, *The Law on Duties and Organisation* of the Ministry of Education has been revised in such a way as to reduce the number of departments and reorganise the Ministry under new functions (MoNE, 2008).

A number of key initiatives are currently taking place in both HE and FE in Turkey in order to create opportunities for flexible learning pathways and thus promote lifelong learning. Such initiatives include the following:

- Modularisation of FE – Modular education programs of 42 fields and 197 branches have been developed to be used at vocational and technical education schools and institutions. In addition, modular education programmes have been gradually implemented as of the 2006-2007 year under the decision no: 182 of Head of Council of Education and Morality. Under this process, the infrastructure of a flexible system was laid out, one which is based on programme type rather than the school type in vocational and technical education and in which transitions between programmes can be made (MoNE, 2009).
- Continuous Education Centres (CEC) – 36 universities provide continuous education programmes apart from undergraduate and postgraduate

programmes. CECs provide special education programmes, courses, seminars and conferences based on the needs of the public and private sector in the region they operate (Turan, 2010).

- Open Education System of Anadolu University – has been providing higher education opportunities through distance education since 1982, as the national provider of distance education. The 'Second University' project has been carried out since 2001. It enables Associate and Bachelor degree holders and also the undergraduate students to be admitted to the distance learning programmes of Anadolu University without taking the university entrance examination. The current number of enrolments in various distance learning programmes of the university is over 40,000. Vocational education programmes offer Associate degrees to public officers from different institutions (i.e. Ministry of Justice) through special programmes. Similar programmes are offered with special arrangements to persons with disabilities or prisoners. Course materials for open education are also available to the public online as Open Educational Resources (OER) (CoHE, 2008).
- Evening education programmes – such programmes are offered by most universities in Turkey, making it available for students who have different occupations and work full-time during the day. According to statistics from the academic year 2007-2008, there were 357,000 students enrolled in the evening courses (CoHE, 2008).
- Distance education programmes – at undergraduate level, currently 14 universities offer 32 different programmes awarding short cycle degrees. At graduate level, 16 universities offer 40 different programmes awarding second cycle degrees. Additionally, in 2008-2009, three distance education programmes awarding first cycle degrees were offered in one of the state universities (Sakarya University) for the first times (CoHE, 2008).

EU Assistance – Turkey has received substantial assistance in its recent development and implementation of lifelong learning policies through the EU agencies such as the European Training Foundation (ETF). The latest ETF Country Plan for Turkey (2009) notes that the ETF has established a number of follow-up activities to ensure that policy documents are taken forward in 2009-2011 and support Turkey in its reporting on lifelong learning to the European Commission.

Funding initiatives – In Turkey, each student has to pay tuition fees every year to the HEI in which he/she is enrolled. The fees are fixed and announced by the CoHE. However, to financially support both students from middle or low income groups, a centralised state grant and loans system was established. According to Law no. 5102, the Higher Education Credit and Dormitory Authority (YURTKUR) is the responsible body for the administration of the state grant, loans and rooming in

higher education. YURTKUR therefore offers need and merit based study grants, study loans and tuition fee loans to students (CoHE, 2008).

National Framework of Qualifications in Turkey – The development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) involving the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) is currently high on the VET reform agenda in Turkey. Parliament has passed the necessary legislation; however, implementation still remains a challenge (ETF, 2009). Works concerning the draft of the Turkish NQF, which is largely in accordance with the EQF and consists of 8 levels, have been transferred to the Vocational Qualifications Institute. Establishment of the NQF for HE should be implemented by the end of 2012 (CEC, 2009). NQF for Bachelors, Masters and PhD levels were fully approved with the CoHE decision dated as of January 21st 2010. With the same decision in January 2010, Associate level descriptors were also approved. The name of NQF is “Turkish Higher Education Qualifications Framework”. Now, “field based qualifications and programme based qualifications and “learning outcomes” are being defined at universities. This work will be finalized by the end of June 2010.

With regards to recognition of prior learning (RPL), such a system by which the informal learning of individuals is defined, evaluated, re-organised and directed towards international validity is not yet available in Turkey (CoHE, 2008). However, an initial step towards recognition took place when *Regulations on Vocational Qualification, Exam and Evaluation* were put into force in Turkey in 2008, within the scope of the SVET project. According to the new regulations, there should be at least one exam for the certification of informal learning in an institution accredited by the VQA. The exam and certification may now be evaluated as an overall qualification as well as a part (module) of this certification (MoNE, 2009).

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in Turkey can be identified. Such weaknesses/shortcomings will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/headings:

East, West Divide – One of the key problems for Turkey is the East-West divide of its country. Western Turkey has good economic conditions, with industries competing at global levels, higher employment rates and better and more balanced access to education and higher educational attainment levels. In stark contrast, the Eastern provinces of Turkey are more rural, with low employment rates and poorer educational attainment levels (ETF, 2009). This is a major obstacle that the Turkish Government faces in the development and implementation of lifelong learning across all parts of the country (Turkey is a relatively large country with its geographical position and has a heterogeneous cultural, social and economic structure) Moreover, it is worth mentioning that in recent years, new public and non-profit universities

have been established in each part of Turkey and the increase in number of universities will help strengthen regional development with the participation of stakeholders.

Stakeholder Involvement – A strong civil sector with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is very important as an environment in which lifelong learning can flourish. However, the NGO sector in Turkey still appears rather weak and co-ordination between key stakeholders does not appear to be good enough. Though good practices are emerging, pre-employment and institution-based training is still considered to be a government responsibility, while financing of continuing education is left to the social partners. It is crucial that all stakeholders put in more effort to make lifelong learning in Turkey a success (SVET, 2006).

Participation – Overall participation rates in lifelong learning among adults are still very low in Turkey, falling well below the EU average, and little progress has been made in increasing levels in recent years. For example, nearly 60% of the labour force in Turkey is composed of basic education graduates or people who dropped out from basic education. In addition, problems relating to access of education according to gender, geographic and social background still exist. Indeed, 12.5% of the population – 4.7% of men and 20.1% of women – is illiterate (ETF, 2009).

RPL – While initial steps have been taken in the recognition of prior learning, the validation of non-formal and informal competencies is currently not applicable in Turkey for access to first cycle degrees due to the lack of a favourable framework (CoHE, 2008). This therefore acts as a major shortcoming to adult participation in lifelong learning in Turkey.

Funding – HEIs in Turkey are still heavily reliant on state funding. As a consequence, public universities have very little flexibility on how they use their sources within limited items in their budgets and little flexibility to switch resources (MoNE, 2009). The SVET Paper on lifelong learning (2006) notes that a rational approach to the question of who should pay for lifelong learning is that it should be financed by those who benefit: the individual, employers and the state. The CoHE (2008) recognises that the financing model in Turkey must be re-designed in order to ensure the diversity of resources and equal opportunities and increase the efficiency of use of the resources provided.

Demand versus Supply – Turkey's demand for higher education is currently much higher than the supply of the system. This is one of the most important strategic problems which the Turkish Government faces in the development and implementation of lifelong learning (CoHE, 2008). However, in recent years, the number of universities has increased considerably in each part of Turkey to bring supply and demand into balance. Moreover, in order to increase access to higher education for much more students, quotas of programmes offered by universities for the admission of new students has recently increased. (Turkey should take initial

step in the implementation of recognition of prior learning. However, since 2008, Turkey gives priority in making further progress in the fields of quality assurance, internationalisation and demand-supply balance in higher education.).

Quality of VET – There is an urgent need to improve the quality of vocational higher schools in Turkey. By improving the qualifications of graduates from these schools, the expectations of labour market needs will be better met (CoHE, 2008).

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Turkey. As a candidate country for full membership of the European Union, the Turkish Government has shown commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning in Higher and Adult Education in line with the wider European agenda as observed in the policy documents and recent initiatives introduced. However, it is clear that multiple shortcomings still exist in Turkey which hinders positive change. Turkey still has some way to go in achieving adequate participation levels in lifelong learning and it has made little progress in increasing rates over recent years. Many of those in the paid labour force in Turkey have inadequate levels of education. In addition, issues surrounding the unequal participation levels in education and training among certain groups still persist, in particular among women, individuals from rural areas and those from lower social and economic backgrounds. The West-East divide in Turkey, the absence of full recognition of RPL across all types of learning and education, inadequate funding, demand outweighing the supply of HE and the quality of qualifications in the VET sector all pose serious challenges. It is clear that Turkey still has a long way to go in achieving full development and implementation of lifelong learning.

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Chapter 11: Lifelong learning and Finland

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in Finland. It will follow with the same layout as the previous country chapters.

Background

Higher education in Finland is offered by universities (Yliopisto/ Universitet) and Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS, formerly known as polytechnics) (Ammattikorkeakoulu/ Yrkeshogskola), professionally oriented higher education institutions. Universities are maintained by the state and enjoy an extensive autonomy while UASs are mostly municipal or private. At the beginning of 2010, there were 16 universities, 25 UASs and 204 adult education centres in Finland. Both sectors have different profiles; universities emphasise scientific research and instruction, whereas UASs adopt a more practical approach (Eurydice, 2009). Jäminki (2010) notes that UAS's are oriented towards working life and vocational competences. The Finnish matriculation examination provides general eligibility for higher education. In addition, those with a Finnish UAS degree, a post-secondary level vocational qualification or at least a three-year vocational qualification also have general eligibility for university education. The general requirement for admission to UASs is completion of general upper secondary education or vocational education and training. Student selection to UASs is mainly based on school achievement and work experience and, in many cases, entrance examinations (Eurydice, 2009). Adult education is available at all levels of education in Finland. Adult education may aim at a formal vocational or professional qualification or the focus may be on the individual learners' self-development. About half of adult education takes place in liberal education institutions which arrange language instruction and ICT training. Upper secondary schools for adults are also important providers of education for people in working age (Jäminki, 2010).

Education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Finland. The Finnish National Board of Education (FNBE) works with the Ministry to develop educational aims, content and methods. In addition, each of the six Finnish provinces has an Education and Culture Department that deals with such issues. Local administration lies with the responsibility of local authorities (municipalities) which play a prominent role as education providers.

In Finland, as in other Nordic welfare states, higher education is seen as a good that should be made available to all citizens on equal terms. Finland is widely regarded as one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of equality of opportunity (OECD, 2006). Democratic practice in Finland tends to establish basic principles and then try to follow them. One of the principles underlying politics in Finland is the value of education. Equity and relative equality are other important principles

(OECD, 2005). In Finland, everyone has an equal right to participate in education according to ability and in keeping with the principal of lifelong learning (Kyrö, 2006). In addition to basic education, everyone has the right to post-basic education and the Finnish education system gives everyone access to upper secondary education or higher education. General education alone is not regarded as being sufficient (Nyyssölä and Hämäläinen, 2001).

Lifelong learning is defined as one of the guiding principles of Finnish education policy. At the same time, knowledge, skills and the opportunity for acquiring them and staying up-to-date have become major issues both in succeeding in working life and in active societal participation. At government level, lifelong learning is seen as a premise for Finnish prosperity, industrial policy and as a starting point for competing at an international level (Lindroos and Korkala, 2009). As a consequence, Finland has been highly committed to making lifelong learning a reality, and measures taken place have Finland ahead of many other countries. The main steps taken in relation to lifelong learning in Finland will be outlined in the following sections of this chapter.

Statistics and Performance

On 31st December 2009, the total population of Finland was 5,351,427. It is estimated that while the proportion of persons aged over 65 will rise from 17% to 27% in 2040, the proportion of people of working age will diminish from the present 66% to 58% in 2040. A total of 168,000 students attended university education leading to a degree in 2009, representing a rise of 2.7% on the previous year. The proportion of women of all students attending education leading to a degree was 54% and their proportion as new students was 56%. A total of 21,000 polytechnic degrees were attained in Finland in 2009. This is 3.5% less than in the year before. The proportion of women of polytechnic degrees was 64%. Higher polytechnic degrees were obtained by 941 students; of them 66% were women (Statistics Finland, 2010).

	Finland		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
<i>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</i>	9.0%	9.8 ⁵⁸	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
<i>Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)</i>	40.3%	45.7%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
<i>Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)</i>	22.4% ⁵⁹	23.1%	8.5% ⁶⁰	9.5%	12.5%	15%
<i>Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)</i>	5.89%	6.14%	4.91%	5.05% ⁶¹	-	-

⁵⁸ = break, provisional

⁵⁹ = 2003

⁶⁰ = 2003

⁶¹ = 2006

The table above (CEC, 2009) shows that Finland performs above the EU average in almost all areas of education. Finland is well above the EU average regarding its rate of early learning from education and training (9.8%). Almost half of adults aged 30-34 have attained a higher education in Finland (45.7%). Adult participation in lifelong learning in Finland is more than twice the EU average at 23.1%. Public investment in education as a percentage of GDP is relatively stable and is also above the EU average at 6.14% in 2006 (CEC, 2009).

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

A summary of the main policy developments which have helped drive the lifelong learning agenda in Finland in recent years will now be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning – In Finland, forming majority coalition Governments has been the practice already for a long time; the Government prepares for the whole electoral period a Government programme that deals with the development and education issues also for the parts beyond the MoE's sector. A separate strategy for lifelong learning has not been considered necessary (MoE, 2007). A distinguishing feature of Finnish tertiary education is the central role assigned to the labour market demand in the allocation of resources for tertiary education. Forecasts of labour market needs, adjusted to reflect policy targets for the government, then become the basis for the National Development Plan (OECD, 2006). Thus, every fourth year the Finnish government decides on future guidelines for education and training. This five year plan forms the basis for the development and reform of education in the coming years (Kyro, 2006). The aims of the development programme also support the implementation of the Governments' wider policy programmes for the well-being of children, youth and families, for health promotion and for employment, entrepreneurship and working life, and the child and youth policy programme (MoE, 2009).

Finland's first distinct strategy for lifelong learning was enshrined in its *Development Plan for Education and Research 1999- 2004*, which set aims for lifelong learning policy. It stressed that lifelong learning must be understood as an approach which steers education policy and other policy sectors involved in learning in order to offer opportunities for continuous learning and to learn throughout their lives. The content of the principle of lifelong learning was defined in the plan as follows: high standard of education, learning skills, and ensuring an adequate amount of chances and implementation methods of the continuous learning of the adult population. This definition is regarded as the central educational goal for the entire population (Nyyssölä and Hämäläinen, 2001). Previous to this document, one of the key milestones in Finland was the establishment of the Lifelong Learning Committee in 1997. It represented wide expert social knowledge and underlined that the challenges of broad and permanent learning needs along with societal changes can be answered by promoting learning of people everywhere in their environments (Kevätsalo K and K Oy, 2002).

Finland's current objectives for lifelong learning are set out in the *Development Plan for Education and Research 2007-2012* adopted by the Government in 2007 and in the strategic policy lines set out under the Government Programme. Focus in the period 2007-2012 is on equal education opportunities, high quality education and research, access to skilled labour, higher education development and competences of teaching staff (MoE, 2009).

The New Universities Act was submitted to Parliament in February 2009 and took effect in early 2010. It includes the mission of lifelong learning to universities. Under the new legislation, some universities became foundations under private law while most universities became a new type of legal personality under public law. The aim is to pool resources, capacity and HEIs and adjust the demographic change by the means of structural development. Structural developments such as a higher education network will lead on to several mergers of HEIs (MoE, 2008). It is envisaged that the changes will also provide a flexible system allowing for studying parts of degree programmes without having to apply for a full study programme and combine further studies with work. The HEIs may also sell degree modules to employers as staff-development training (CEC, 2009).

A number of key initiatives are currently taking place in both HE and FE in Finland in order to create opportunities for flexible learning pathways and thus promote lifelong learning. Such initiatives include the following:

- A considerable subsidy has been allocated to various adult education providers in Finland since 2006 for promoting civic participation. For example, the 'Noste' project (2003-2009) provided the least educated adults training for completing vocational qualifications and the 'ICT Driver's Licence' for free. By March 2009, around 9,300 persons aged between 30-59 participated in training for the computer driving licence (MoE, 2009). In 2007, the MoE introduced a study voucher scheme. Under such scheme, immigrants, the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups have been given vouchers to continue learning in liberal adult education. Similarly, drop-outs from universities receive vouchers to continue in summer universities (CEC, 2009).
- Through a national agreement (JBO-agreement), students can also attend courses and modules in other universities in Finland. In addition, there is a virtual university and virtual polytechnic which gives students a wider selection of studies than their home institution can offer. There is an open university and open polytechnic that are accessible to all students despite their educational background. It is possible to enter a degree program through the Open University (MoE, 2008).
- Finland has created a wide variety of second-chance programmes. For example, adults may enrol in secondary vocational schools and graduate just as regular students can, with options to then go into employment or a polytechnic. Alternatively, they can instead enrol in an adult school and

complete programmes that lead to one or another of the *Näyttökoe* (competence-based) qualifications (OECD, 2005).

- In response to unequal participation levels between the relatively urban municipalities in the south, and rural areas located in the north, Finland developed a regional network of more than 50 education institutions, many of them also with sub-campuses or branches in other towns (OECD, 2005).
- HEIs arrange education and training intended for adults. Efforts have been made to make the provision as flexible as possible in order to enable adults to study alongside work. In higher education, adults can study in separate adult education programmes offered by polytechnics. Some 20% of polytechnic students are mature students. In universities, there are no specific programmes for mature students, who study in the same groups with young people. However, universities offer fee charging continuing education and Open University instruction which do not lead to qualifications but can be included in an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (MoE, 2008).

Financial Allowances – A public student finance scheme has been developed in Finland in order to ensure equal possibilities to enter higher education regardless of the student's social or financial background. All higher education leading to a degree is free of charge for students. Finnish student financial aid, which is funded by the governments' budget, is available for full-time studies from post-comprehensive school studies up to studies in institutions of higher education. Student financial aid is intended to provide an income to financially needy students whose parents are not under obligation to finance their studies and who are not eligible for aid under some other provisions. However, the financial aid may not be decreased on the basis of parents' income⁶². All full-time students enrolled in degree programmes in polytechnics and universities are entitled to the student grant. The student grant is based on three elements: student grant, student loan and housing supplement. A tax relief can be granted for those who graduate in the normative time specified in legislation (MoE, 2008). University students, though not polytechnic students are also eligible to receive subsidised health and mental care (OECD, 2006).

National Framework of Qualifications in Finland – The Finnish MoE appointed a national working group to prepare the national qualifications framework for all levels of education (MoE, 2008). It is projected that the new national framework for qualifications and other learning, compatible with the EQF will be ready during 2010 (CEC, 2009). One aim of the NQF is to strengthen knowledge-orientation and approaches based on learning outcomes in all education and unify and improve the recognition of learning in order to promote lifelong learning (MoE, 2009). At Finnish polytechnics, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a statutory obligation. However, while higher education legislation encourages the recognition of prior learning, there is more discretion in credit transfer (MoE, 2008).

⁶² Like other Nordic countries, students are considered to be independent of parents by the age of 18, and neither by law nor custom are families obliged to support students' study-costs (OECD, 2006).

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in Finland can be identified. Such weaknesses will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/ headings:

Student Subsidies – On the one hand, the amount of student subsidies is clearly helpful to equity, since low-income students need not worry about having to come up with the resources that students in other countries do. On the other hand, the size of these subsidies is troublesome because most students come from middle and upper-income families, and therefore providing public subsidies to well-off families is not helpful to equity (OECD, 2005).

North/ South Divide – Despite recent initiatives such as the development of a regional network of over 50 institutions; an inequality still exists between urban municipalities in the south and rural areas in the north – students in remote areas are commonly forced to move away from home to attend tertiary level education (OECD, 2005).

RPL – Full implementation of RPL across all sectors of higher education in Finland remains a future challenge, particularly in Universities. For instance, while RPL is a statutory obligation in polytechnics, credit transfer is at the discretion of individual universities (MoE, 2008).

Participation – While adult participation in lifelong learning in Finland is more than twice the EU average, gaps still exist in terms of the participation of certain groups. The Ministry of Education (2009) recognises that not all population groups participate equally. The lowest participation rate is found among the poorly educated, personnel in small companies and business owners, the unemployed, the rural population, men and people aged over 55 (MoE, 2009).

Equity effects of Polytechnics – One rationale for creating a non-university alternative through polytechnics in the early 1990's was the equity rationale: they would open up access to tertiary education to 'non traditional' students who would otherwise have no access. However, whether the creation of polytechnics has in fact increased access from these groups is an empirical issue, rather than one whose answer can be assumed; since it is possible that the expansion of polytechnics simply provided more places for middle-income students. Expanding tertiary education, while simultaneously differentiating, it may not lead to equitable outcomes, unless the process of access and selection is also made equitable (OECD, 2005).

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Finland. The Finnish government has shown a very strong and pro-active commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning and performs well above the EU average in most targets set under education and training. The five year Development Plan outlines in detail educational issues and also acts as a lifelong learning strategy in Finland, thus guiding short and medium term policy developments. While the Finnish education system is widely regarded as one of the most advanced in the world in terms of promoting equality of opportunity; several issues still remain problematic such as student subsidies, the north/south divide, RPL, unequal participation in lifelong learning among certain groups and the equity effects of UASs.

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Chapter 12: Lifelong learning and The Netherlands

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in the Netherlands. It will follow with the same layout as the previous country chapters.

Background

The Netherlands has a binary system of higher education: university education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs = WO) is offered by universities and higher professional education is offered by HBO institutions (hogescholen or universities of applied sciences, formerly known as universities of professional education). Admission requirements for higher professional education are: a diploma of secondary vocational education (MBO) provided certain conditions are met. Admission to university is possible with a pre-university (VWO) school-leaving diploma or a HBO qualification or HBO propaedeutic certificate. Since 2002, the higher education system in the Netherlands has been organised around a three-cycle degree system consisting of bachelor, master and PhD degrees (Eurydice, 2009a).

Education is the main responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) in the Netherlands. A distinctive feature of the Dutch education system is the combination of a centralised education policy with decentralised administration and management of education institutions. Central government controls education by means of regulations and legislation and is responsible for the structuring and funding of the system, the management of public-authority institutions, inspection, examinations and student support. At the same time, municipal authorities are responsible for all education within their own area, whether publicly or privately run. However, institutions for higher professional education and universities are fully autonomous (Eurydice, 2009a). The Central Funding of Institutions Agency (CFI) is responsible for funding Dutch educational establishments. Under the constitution, all educational institutions (public or private) are funded on an equal footing. This means that government expenditure on public educational institutions must be matched by expenditure on private government-funded educational institutions (Eurydice, 2009b). At the same time, universities and institutes of higher professional education are mainly funded by government contribution: an initial lump sum funding represents 70% of all funding, supplemented by tuition fees. A second source of funds comes through (research) grants supplied by government institutions and an increasing third source of funds is grants supplied by business, the EU and others (CEC, 2009).

A number of important economic and labour market forces influence education policy in the Netherlands, including the aging of the labour force population which will lead to a big replacement demand in the near future. Therefore, increasing the labour force participation rate of older persons and limiting early exits have become key

objectives of the Dutch government and social partners. In parallel, stimulating lifelong learning especially for the unemployed and those already at work has become a major government priority. The Project Directorate Learning and Working, which was installed in 2005 has the task to take concrete steps forward with lifelong learning in the Netherlands (Visser and Cox, 2008). The main steps taken in relation to lifelong learning in the Netherlands will be outlined in the following sections of this chapter.

Statistics and Performance

The Netherlands has a population of 16.49m (as of 2009) (Eurydice, 2009b). Ethnic minorities⁶³ formed 19.6% of the total population in 2008 with just over a third (36.6%) from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. In addition, the number of people over the age of 65 in the Netherlands is set to continue to grow steadily over the coming years as the population ages (Eurydice, 2009b). Figures from 2006-2007 show that 366,400 HBO students and 207,700 WO students participated in higher education (representing an increase of 12% in a 4 year period) (OECD, 2008). In 2007/08, 50,000 full-time students obtained a bachelor's degree in HBO (higher professional education). While in university education (WO) 19,000 full-time VWO (secondary education at the pre-university level) graduates obtained a bachelor's degree in 2007/08. In 2007, there were as many higher as lower educated persons in the Netherlands for the first time. In 2007, 29% of Dutch no longer attending education or training programmes had only lower education, whereas 28% were higher educated. The proportion of higher educated Turks and Moroccans rose sharply from 5.5% in 2001 to 9% in 2007, while the share of 25-34 year old women with a degree in higher education topped 40% for the first time in 2008 (CBS Statistics Netherlands, 2010). In 2004, higher education graduates accounted for almost 36% of the Dutch professional population in the 25-44 age bracket. It is envisaged that by 2020, 50% of the professional population aged 25-44 will have a higher education (OCW, 2007).

	Netherlands		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
<i>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</i>	15.4%	11.4% ⁶⁴	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
<i>Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)</i>	26.5%	40.2%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
<i>Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)</i>	16.4% ⁶⁵	17.0%	8.5% ⁶⁶	9.5%	12.5%	15%

⁶³ Ethnic minorities consist of persons born in another foreign country or persons with at least one parent born in a foreign country. In Dutch policy, distinction is made between western and non-western ethnic minorities. The policy on ethnic minorities is only aimed at non-western migrants because of their socio-economic background and their migration history (OCW, 2008).

⁶⁴ = break

⁶⁵ = 2003

⁶⁶ = 2003

<i>Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)</i>	4.96%	5.46%	4.91%	5.05% 67	-	-
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Source: CEC, 2009

The table above (CEC, 2009) shows the Netherlands' performance in different areas of education. For instance, the Netherlands is below the EU average in early leavers from education and training although recent progress has been made (11.4%). The share of the population with higher education attainment has strongly improved since 2000 and is now among the higher ones in the EU (40.2%). Regarding adult participation in lifelong learning, the Netherlands is currently above the EU average at 17%. However, in the last 5 years there has been limited progress in increasing this figure even further. Public investment in education as a percentage of GDP has increased by half a percentage point since 2000 and is now clearly above the EU average (CEC, 2009).

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

A summary of the main policy developments which have helped drive the lifelong learning agenda in the Netherlands in recent years will now be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning – The Netherlands' strategy for lifelong learning is not described in a one volume document. However, the Netherlands carries out a conscious policy for lifelong learning across the whole educational system aiming at maximum participation in all educational sectors and one which is up-to-date with wider social and economical developments. It should also be noted that the Ministry's lifelong learning policy is drawn up based on talks with and visits to stakeholders on an ad-hoc basis (OCW, 2007). The lifelong learning strategy has been laid out in a number of interrelated policy documents, including *HOOP (2004) for Higher Education; Reinforcing learning and working 2005-2007* (EU Report 2007); *Carrying on with learning and working: plan of approach 2008-2011*; *Steering course for BVE (2004-2008)* and the *Strategic Agenda for adult and vocational education (2008-2011)* (OCW, 2009).

Since 2005, the Netherlands has a fully comprehensive framework for lifelong learning as a consequence of the establishment of the Interdepartmental Project Unit for Learning and Working (PLW) between the Ministry of the Education, Culture and Science (Dutch: OCW) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (Dutch: SZW). The Ministries of Agriculture, Economic Affairs and Immigrant Matters and Integration are also involved (OECD, 2007)⁶⁸. The Project Unit PLW is charged with advancing lifelong learning in the Netherlands. The aim is to encourage regional joint

⁶⁷ = 2006

⁶⁸ In addition, in 2008 the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science installed the 'Thinktank Learning and Working'. The Thinktank brings together experts from CINOP, Central Planbureau (CPB), Open University, RWI (Council for Work and Income) and the Project Unit for Learning and Working. In July 2009, the Thinktank published an advice 'Time for Development' ('Tijd voor ontwikkeling'). They also commissioned a report on the effectiveness of learning accounts ('Werkt het scholingsbudget').

ventures between the education world, local authorities and Centres for Work and Income, in order to realise the combination of learning and working (work-based learning routes), the recognition of acquired competences and so-called learning working desks (OCW, 2007). The government does not carry out the project itself, but rather stimulates and facilitates 45 regional partnerships. Such partnerships comprise of educational institutions, local and provincial government, the Employment service and business community who jointly determine lifelong learning needs, both present and future, in their region and agree on the best way to implement measures (OCW, 2009).

Originally the Project Unit PLW was meant to stop by the end of 2007, but because of the positive results, the new administration decided to continue with the project until 2011 (OECD, 2008). The main focus for 2008-2011 will be on young workers (18-24 year olds) without vocational qualifications at basic level, jobseekers and employees threatened with redundancy (CEC, 2009). A temporary learning and working incentive scheme with a budget of €24m provides the 45 regional partnerships with financial support specifically to invest in these target groups (OCW, 2009).

Another concrete result of the Lifelong Learning Project Directorate has been the launch of the associate degree programme at level 5 of the EQF (Onderwijsraad, 2009a). In 2006-2007, Associate-degree (Ad) programmes were introduced in the Dutch system as pilot projects. The two-year Ad programmes are embedded in such a way that students with an Associate degree, who enter a bachelor programme can finish as a Bachelor after obtaining another 120 ECTS. With the introduction of Ad-programmes, the Netherlands hope to attract more employees and more students who have finished MBO 4 to higher education. A second important reason for the introduction is that within the small and medium enterprises in the Netherlands, there is a growing need for employees to be both professional and highly educated (OECD, 2008). The aim set down in the *Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research* is that by 2011, 10,000 more people between the ages of 27 and 40 should be taking HBO courses than in 2007 (OWC, 2009).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)/ EVC⁶⁹ is an essential element of the lifelong learning policy of the Netherlands. RPL procedures are used to formally recognise and accredit competences developed through formal, informal and non-formal learning. While RPL procedures are not nationally established in the Netherlands, it is developed 'bottom up', by providers of RPL-procedures. These providers are educational institutions (both government founded and private) and specialised RPL-companies (OCW, 2008). A number of specific measures have recently been taken to promote RPL in the Netherlands. Firstly, an advertising campaign on TV and radio aims to raise awareness about EVC/RPL. A grants scheme has also been set up to

⁶⁹ In the Netherlands the term 'Erkennen van Verworven Competenties' (EVC) is used instead of RPL, literally translated in English means 'recognising acquired competencies' (OECD, 2007). RPL is sometimes also referred to as APL – accreditation of prior learning (Kenniscentrum EVC 2010)

increase the intake of adults in HBO by promoting prior learning assessments and recognition, and made-to-measure programmes for working and learning in the Netherlands (OCW, 2009). In addition, the establishment of the Dutch Knowledge Centre for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) by the government supports the process of stimulating and subsidising the development of a national infrastructure for RPL (OCW, 2008).

In addition to RPL, a large variety of flexible delivery methods are available in the Netherlands to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners; such as modular systems, e-learning, tailor-made work-based learning, blended learning (and combinations). The 'Open Universiteit' (Open University) has free entrance (OCW, 2008). By law, higher education programmes can be given full-time, part-time or as sandwich courses (dual) (Onderwijsraad, 2010a). In addition, the age limit of 29, above which an institution may set its own tuition fees, has been abolished, making training more affordable for those over the age of 29 (OCW, 2009). In relation to ethnic minorities and people with disabilities, the Dutch government has introduced a number of targeted measures in order to increase their participation in higher education. For ethnic minorities and first generation students, the following initiatives have been developed:

- From 2006-2008, the government financed pilot projects in 21 HEI's with a budget of €4.5m. The goal of the projects was to increase the number of ethnic minority students and to improve the study success of these students
- From 2008-2013, the government is financing the universities of applied sciences in the four big cities and from 2011 the research universities in the big cities to improve the study success of ethnic minority students. The budget available in 2008 was €4m and will build up to €20m per year in 2011 (OCW, 2008).

For students with disabilities, a number of initiatives have been developed including:

- Anti-discrimination law – since 2004, legal prescriptions have been in place for HEIs to supply disabled students with examination-provisions
- Temporal financial support has been given to HEI's to develop structural organisation to facilitate disabled students and to undertake surveys to identify students' bottlenecks, identify best practices and the costs involved (OCW, 2008).

Financial Allowances – A basic grant is available to all students in the Netherlands. It differentiates between students who live with their parents and those who live on their own. A supplementary grant is available for students with low-income parents. All students also receive a season ticket for free public transport. Students can take out a loan from the government up to €280 per month. Loan facilities were extended in 2007 to allow students to take a loan for the payment of tuition fees. This is

expected to enable students to study more efficiently and invest more time in their studies. Entitlement to grants and loans is valid for a period of ten years. Along with this goes the right for student grants for the period of the normative study length and for another 3 years. This facilitates both quicker and slower students (OECD, 2008).

The Dutch government recently made changes to the student support system which aims to give more flexibility to students while also being more efficient. Under the adapted system, the rules and regulation for repaying study loans are for all ex-students dependent on the actual benefit an ex-student gains from his/her qualification. Above a certain income level (120% minimum wage level for couples), the ex-student has to repay a fixed rate of their annual income, as long as is necessary to repay the total debt, but during a maximum period of years. Below that income level, there is no repayment required. A possibility of a break in refunding was also introduced, thus enlarging the repayment period. Once the maximum period of repayment has expired the ex-student is exempted from any remaining debt (OECD, 2008).

Individual Learning Accounts (ILA's) were introduced in the Netherlands as a financial incentive to encourage the continuation of vocational education and training. An ILA comprises of a budget to fund a course of study or training that is made available by the government, with additional contributions from sector based training and development funds and from individual employers. Employees can make use of this budget to purchase education and training as they see fit. Following a two part pilot phase between 2006-2008 results showed that the availability of an ILA stimulates the learning behaviour of employees in general and of its contribution to improving personal performance in a current work situation (Doets and Huisman, 2009).

National Framework of Qualifications in the Netherlands – The National Qualifications Framework has been fully implemented in the Netherlands and is linked to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) (OCW, 2008).

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in the Netherlands can be identified. Such weaknesses will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/ headings:

RPL – While most education institutions have procedures in place and implement RPL when approached by students, it is still up to the education institutions themselves to apply RPL in the Netherlands. Challenges still remain in the recognition and acceptance of RPL assessments by other institutions (OCW, 2008). There is also the question as to whether the education that PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) replaces might in fact have more added value than PLAR itself. In addition, there is the concern that PLAR opportunities may encourage younger people in particular to leave the world of learning early because they see it as an attractive alternative (Onderwijsraad, 2010a).

Participation – While adult participation in lifelong learning in the Netherlands is above the EU average, gaps still exist in terms of the participation levels of certain groups. While the number of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities in higher and further education has increased in recent years and the Dutch government has introduced a range of targeted measures, both groups are still underrepresented. Obstacles which ethnic minority students' face include lack of academic integration; lack of social integration and choice of study. Obstacles faced by students with disabilities include the practical difficulty in ensuring appropriate and agreed support is provided by their HEI and lack of information on necessary adaptations (OCW, 2008).

Individual Learning Accounts – While ILA's have been an important financial incentive in encouraging employees to continue vocational education and training. There is a danger that in not having a savings component as part of the ILA, employees may therefore lack a longer-term perspective in terms of their education and training (Doets and Huisman, 2009).

Drop-out rate – There is a high drop-out rate in the first year of higher professional education (HBO) programmes in the Netherlands. In 2008, 34% of students with a senior secondary vocational education (MBO) background dropped out, while 39% of senior general secondary education (HAVO) students dropped out (Onderwijsraad, 2010b). High drop-out rates may be directly related to the fact that there is no selection mechanism upon entering HE in the Netherlands.

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in the Netherlands. The Dutch government has shown a very strong and pro-active commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning and performs well above the EU average in most targets set under education and training. The importance of lifelong learning can be identified in various key documents and recent initiatives. The Netherlands now has a comprehensive framework for lifelong learning in place due to the ongoing work of the Interdepartmental Project for Learning and Working. Central government is thus stimulating the advancement of lifelong learning through a series of regional partnerships. However, several issues still remain problematic such as RPL, unequal participation in lifelong learning among certain groups, Individual Learning Accounts and drop-out rates.

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Chapter 13: Lifelong learning and France

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policies in France. It will follow with the same layout as the previous country chapters.

Background

Higher education in France is provided by a range of co-existing institutions with different purposes, structures and conditions for admission. Three types of institutions offer provision: universities; établissements publics à caractère administratif (EPA) and private institutes and schools of higher education (instituts ou écoles supérieures privés). They offer different types of provision: university programmes (including university institutes of technology (IUT)); ‘grandes écoles’ preparatory classes for the grandes écoles (CPGE) offered in Lycees; sections de techniciens supérieurs (STS) and écoles spécialisées (Eurydice, 2009). In total, over 3,500 institutions (both public and private) contribute to the higher education service in France and offer curricula resulting in over 2,500 recognised qualifications. Since the mid-2000’s, the higher education system in France has been organised around a three cycle degree system consisting of bachelor, master and PhD degrees (Eurybase, 2009).

Obtaining the *baccalaureat* is a pre-requisite to being admitted to an institution of higher education in France. The *baccalaureat* is a diploma that acknowledges the successful completion of secondary education and the first level of university studies. However, completion of the national higher education diploma (DAEU) will confer the same rights as does the *baccalaureat*. Access to the different levels of post-baccalaureat education offered by institutions under the Ministry of Higher Education and Research can also be gained by the professional experience validation system (VAE), in particular, students with foreign degrees can also benefit from this validation process. Admission to IUTs is based on an application process involving an interview of baccalaureat-holding candidates (Eurybase, 2009).

Education is the main responsibility of the Ministry of Education in France, while higher education falls under the specific remit of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. Education is mostly financed out of the central government budget. The fundamental principles of the French education system are outlined in the *Code de l’Éducation* under Article L111-1: ‘Education is the first national priority. The Educational public service is designed and organised following the needs and requirements of pupils and students. It contributes the equal opportunities. Everyone is guaranteed the right to education in order to enable them to develop their personality, to increase their level of initial and continuous education, to fit into social and professional life and to exercise their citizenship’. In addition, the role of higher education is, according to the Code, to contribute both to broad economic aims such

as increasing research and the level of human capital in France, but also to reduce social inequality. Higher education is also seen as having a specific role in regional and national economic development, taking into account the current and expected needs of the labour market (O'Brien, 2007).

The French government undertook a period of reform in the mid-2000's, which aimed to make lifelong learning a reality in France. These policies affected all segments of education and training (primary, secondary, professional, continuous training and higher education) and have been implemented by multi-annual plans of modernisation and an adaptation of education and training and its organisation (CEC, 2009). The main steps taken in relation to lifelong learning in France will be outlined in the following sections of this chapter.

Statistics and Performance

As of 1st January 2008, the French population was estimated at 63.8m. In 2007-2008, 2,258,000 students were enrolled in higher education in France, representing an increase of 4,000 from 2006. Universities account for the highest number of students: 1,326,000 in 2007-2008. Overall, the number of tertiary graduates in France has increased by 3% between 2000-2007 (622,900 in 2007) (CEC, 2009).

	France		EU Average		EU Benchmarks	
	2000	2008	2000	2008	2010	2020
<i>Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)</i>	13.3%	11.8% ⁷⁰	17.6%	14.9%	10%	10%
<i>Higher Education attainment (age 30-34)</i>	27.4%	41.3%	22.4%	31.1%	-	40%
<i>Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64; 4 weeks period)</i>	7.1% ⁷¹	7.3%	8.5% ⁷²	9.5%	12.5%	15%
<i>Investment in Education (Public spending on educ, % of GDP)</i>	6.03%	5.58% ⁷³	4.91%	5.05% ⁷⁴	-	-

Source: CEC, 2009

The table above (CEC, 2009) shows France's performance in different areas of education. France performs below the EU average in relation to early leavers from education and training (11.8%). The share of the population with higher education attainment now surpasses the EU benchmark set under the Education and Training 2020 Programme at 41.3%. However, as concerns adult participation in lifelong learning, France has made little progress in recent years and is now performing clearly below the EU average at 7.3%. In the area of investment in education as a percentage of GDP, the performance of France has fallen since 2000 (if economic

⁷⁰ = break

⁷¹ = 2003

⁷² = 2003

⁷³ = 2006

⁷⁴ = 2006

growth is taken into account it has however, still grown in absolute terms), but is still above the EU average (at 5.58%) (CEC, 2009).

Key Lifelong Learning Policy Actions and Initiatives

A summary of the main policy developments which have helped drive the lifelong learning agenda in France in recent years will now be given.

Policy Documents and Legislation with relevance to lifelong learning – The current framework for lifelong learning in France is set out in the *Law on Lifelong Learning and Social Dialogue* of 4th May 2004. Under this legislation, The National Council of the Lifelong Vocational Training was established. This is a forum of cooperation for the state and the economic and social partners on legislation, regulation, financing and regional policies in the fields of training and apprenticeship, thus contributing to the development of a lifelong learning strategy in France (CEC, 2009).

The *Law on Lifelong Learning and Social Dialogue* also created the individual right to training (DIF) in France, which makes it possible for each employee to benefit from an annual 20-hour minimum of training (CEC, 2009). This period of training can also be held concurrently during 6 years. Up to 50% of training can still be financed should part of the training take place outside of working hours. In addition, the 2004 Law established the possibility of a professionalisation contract for employees with insufficient qualifications (E-Learning paper). A National Register of Professional Certifications (RNCP) has also been created; the idea is to make existing qualifications and diplomas more legible and to facilitate the creation of new professional qualifications which are adapted to economic requirements (Eurybase, 2009).

The modernisation of higher education in France has been a high priority for the French Government in recent years. Three main principles guide current changes: greater autonomy of the higher education institutions; their opening to lifelong learning and the development of vocational professional training and the vocational inclusion of the students (CEC, 2009). Two specific aims of university reform are to ensure that 50% of each age category obtains a higher education qualification and transform French universities into centres of excellence (Eurybase, 2009). Examples of key initiatives taken include:

- The Law on 'freedom and responsibility of the universities' (2007) which guaranteed greater autonomy to universities in the management of their budgets. Universities can now diversify their sources of financing and are open to private funds, thus enabling higher education institutions to approach the economic world, and improve their governance (CEC, 2009). By virtue of this law, university budgets have benefited from an additional €1 billion

funding in 2008, representing an 8% increase or the equivalent of €400 more per student (Eurybase, 2009).

- The validation of informal learning (2002), the governmental plan of development for apprenticeship (2005), and the development of supply of continuous training and certification have all contributed to the opening of the universities to vocational and lifelong learning.
- The creation of an assistance office for the students' professional inclusion shows that the universities are taking active measures to improve the vocational integration of students in France (CEC, 2009).

France has also undertaken a number of measures to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education and to encourage participation of under-represented groups, including:

- The *Plan for Success in First Degree Courses* was launched in 2008 and aims to encourage the fulfilment of projects which will allow universities to develop student support schemes, assistance with guidance and the strengthening of knowledge in preparation for employment or further studies. The French government has committed €730m for the period 2008-2012 for this program (MoE, 2008).
- The 2005 Act for 'equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship for disabled persons' provided for the strengthening and support measures for students with disabilities and increased the responsibility of education institutions in France. In addition, a 'University/ disabled charter' was signed in 2007 by the Ministry of Labour, Social Relations and Solidarity and the Conference of University Rectors (MoE, 2008).
- The National Centre for Long-distance Education (CNED) in France offers teaching and training courses by correspondence in all fields and at all levels through the 'campus électronique'. 35,000 students pursue long distance higher education in France each year (Eurybase, 2009).
- In addition, Higher Education Institutions in France have introduced a range of lifelong learning measures including the organisation of programme specifically designed for students in continuing education and taking into account people who are working through the provision of evening courses, full or half-day courses and correspondence courses (Eurybase, 2009).

In France, there is a highly developed system in place for the recognition of prior learning, based on the evaluation of competences (Timofei, 2008). For example, in 2002, France set up an efficient system of validation of non-formal and informal learning: *Validation of Acquired Experience* (VAE). It enables all adults to obtain certification which approves their professional and personal experience (CEC, 2009). The legislation makes the VAE a new means of access to accreditation in the same way as initial training, apprenticeships or ongoing vocational training (MoE, 2008). The system of recognition is equally promoted at government level in France which, following the law adopted VAE in 2002, ran a widespread

national campaign to promote the program. VAE processes also involve a constant partnership between the higher education institutions and social partners in France, in the form of employers and/or representatives of the trade unions (Timofei, 2008). In addition, *The Social Modernisation Act* in 2002 established a system of job experience validation, which allows any person with at least 3 years of job experience to obtain an official recognition of their skills, in the form of a professional diploma or a professional qualifications certificate (CQP) (E-User Project, 2006).

Financial Allowances – The ‘Student Life’ programme has introduced a range of direct and indirect financial aids to students in higher education in France. It forms an important part in current higher education reform and thus promotes lifelong learning in France. Following vast consultation during 2007, a new welfare system aimed at providing greater transparency and fairness was set up with the following elements:

- Higher education grants based on social criteria (BCS) are granted according to the resources and liabilities of the parents or legal tutor
- The support for merit (€200 per month) is now assessed upon entry to a master’s program. In addition to a student’s entitlement to the BCS, this is available to students not entitled to a grant and whose parents do not pay income tax
- Mobility grants have been increased to €400 per month
- A national emergency grant fund (FNAU) has been created to address more effectively difficulties that the BCS cannot address alone
- A system of State-guaranteed bank loans has been established and is open to all students whether they receive grants or not, without parental guarantees or meanstesting
- Other measures introduced under this plan include an improvement of the conditions for student accommodation and the promotion of health issues (MoE, 2008).

In addition, tertiary studies allocations are granted to students who encounter certain difficulties (e.g. family breakup) or who are returning after the 26 year age limit. 11,000 tertiary studies allocations are set aside each year. Other allowances which are offered to higher education students in France include the student settlement allowance (AINE) and the Honour Loan (Eurybase, 2009).

National Framework of Qualifications in France – The National Commission of Professional Certification (CNCP), created in 2002 manages the national commission for professional qualification (RNCP). It is in charge of referring the French national qualifications framework to the European Qualifications Framework (CEC, 2009).

Gaps in Lifelong Learning

A number of significant gaps in lifelong learning in France can be identified. Such weaknesses will now be outlined under a number of specific themes/ headings:

Participation – France has made little progress with regards adult participation rates in lifelong learning in recent years and is now performing clearly below the EU average (CEC, 2009).

Mixed Higher Education System – Despite recent reforms, it is widely believed that many public universities in France remain underfunded with high dropout rates. At the same time, these institutions co-exist alongside very successful higher education institutions for elites. For example, in 2004, 20% of those who entered non-selective university courses left the system with no higher education diploma and 15% shifted to shorter courses. Also, expenditure per student in *classes préparatoires* is, on average, twice what is spent on students in public universities (about €14,000 as compared with €6,900) (O'Brien, 2007).

Structure of Higher Education – The structure of higher education in France remains rather complicated, with considerable differences in terms of organisation, funding and accessibility criteria among the different kinds of institutions (O'Brien, 2007).

IUTs – University Institutes of Technology (IUTs) were introduced in 1966 and the original idea was to develop shorter courses oriented towards professional rather than academic studies. While IUTs are located within public universities, they have more resources per student and smaller teaching groups than mainstream universities in France. As a result, demand for their courses is quite strong and they are able to select high-quality students and many choose to stay on in higher education, moving to one of the selective institutions or rejoining the public university. Therefore, while the IUT progress has been rather successful, it has also been viewed in another sense as a failure in that it did not help the target group it was originally designed for (O'Brien, 2007).

Student Funding – In recognition of the fact that a large number of students in higher education live with their parents in France⁷⁵, income tax allowances for dependent children are extended to parents with children in full-time education. However, the effect is highly regressive as the greatest benefit goes to high-income parents whose children, will, on average, also be getting the greatest subsidy and the highest private returns from education in the first place (O'Brien, 2007).

Conclusion

This chapter has given a detailed account of the development and implementation of lifelong learning in France. The French government has shown commitment to the promotion of lifelong learning and recent legislation and initiatives introduced across

⁷⁵ Public universities students are largely recruited from their own geographical catchment area

the higher education and adult education sectors are assisting in this process. However, it is clear that obstacles still exist in France which hinders positive change. France still has some way to go in achieving adequate participation levels in lifelong learning and it has made little progress in increasing rates over recent years. Several other issues still remain problematic, such as the mixed higher education system, structure of higher education, IUTs and student funding.

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Section 4

Chapter 14 Comparative Matrix of Lifelong Learning, Policy ‘Hooks’ and Practise Responses

Introduction

The foregoing chapters reveal the wide range of country responses to the lifelong learning agenda laid out in the EU over the last 20 years. The statistical analyses of the relevant benchmarks have shown the great variation in country success in meeting these benchmarks. This final chapter attempts to synthesise the findings in a manner that may be more useful to the researchers involved in the other work packages involved in the FLLLEX project.

A specific objective of this Work Package was the development of a matrix showing the progress and implementation of policy and strategy issues around lifelong learning and their implementation in different countries. Accordingly, the first part of this chapter provides such a matrix with the authors’ judgements on the apparent intensity of response to each of the policy issues identified. We note that we cannot definitively correlate success in meeting the EU benchmarks with particular policy or strategy approaches by individual countries. However, we believe that the matrix may be helpful for contextualising the experience of individual academics and administrators in HEIs as they attempt to engage with the lifelong learning agenda. This aspect of the project is dealt with in the section ‘A Comparative Matrix for Intensity of Lifelong Learning Policy Implementation in FLLLEX Countries’

In the second part of this chapter we consider what the practical implications arising from the identification of policy ‘hooks’ could be for individual HEI’s. Specifically we are concerned here with attempting to identify those policy matters over which individual HEIs could have control or freedom of action. This is discussed further in the section on ‘Policy ‘Hooks’ and Freedom of Action.

In the final section of the chapter we translate the areas in which individual HEI’s have a higher freedom of action into a series of prompts or questions that could trigger strategic actions or responses and thus move forward the lifelong learning agenda in the individual HEI. This section is entitled ‘Practise Responses’.

A Comparative Matrix for Intensity of Lifelong Learning Policy Implementation in FLLLEX Countries

A key objective for this Work Package was the development of a comparative matrix for each of the countries participating in which the progress and implementation of lifelong learning policies was marked. As noted above, it is beyond the scope of this report to definitively correlate intensity of implementation with success in the achievement of EU benchmarks. Accordingly benchmark data are not included in

the matrix. Table 14.1 clearly outlines that certain characteristics which promote lifelong learning are interlinked and when present enable the participating countries to achieve the EU benchmarks for participation in lifelong learning set. For example, large disparities exist among the 8 countries with Finland, Scotland and the Netherlands having the highest ranking characteristics. All three countries also perform well above EU benchmarks set for participation levels in lifelong learning. At the same time, several countries score very poorly in the presence of characteristics which promote lifelong learning. Turkey, Lithuania and France are among the worst performers, with such low scores also broadly linked to participation rates in lifelong learning. Both Ireland and Belgium (Flanders) appear to score somewhere in the middle, with an overall partial attainment of lifelong learning characteristics, again reflecting their participation levels. We believe that the matrix may be helpful for contextualising the experience of individual academics and administrators in HEIs as they attempt to engage with the lifelong learning agenda. The matrix is presented in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1
A Comparative Matrix for Intensity of Lifelong Learning Policy Implementation in FLLLEX Countries
Key: 1 = Adequate, 2 = Partial, 3 = Insufficient

Characteristics	Countries							
	Ireland	Belgium	Lithuania	Scotland	Turkey	Finland	Netherlands	France
Legal framework/ legislation	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Participation rates	2	3	3	1	3	1	1	3
Funding and investment	3	2	3	1	3	1	1	2
Flexibility and access to learning pathways	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	3
Link between education and work	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	2
Transparency of qualifications system	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	2
Public awareness and perception of lifelong learning	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	2
Link with wider EU developments	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
Involvement and support of key stakeholders	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2
Information and guidance for learners and potential learners	2	1	2	1	3	1	1	2
Recognition of all forms of learning	2	1	3	1	3	2	2	1
Cost of Education – support/ initiatives	3	1	2	1	3	1	1	2
EU Benchmark for LLL (2010=12.5%; 2020=15%)	7.1%	6.8%	4.9%	19.9%	1.8%	23.1%	17.0%	5.58%

Policy 'Hooks' and HEI Freedom of Action

From an early point in the work for this Work Package it became clear that while the production of a comparative matrix, as noted above, would be helpful, the possible real benefit from the work would be the identification of policy 'hooks' that could legitimise strategic actions by individual HEI's or small groups of HEI's in their attempts to grow and develop their involvement in lifelong learning. As we noted at the beginning of this document by 'hook' we mean a state or EU policy, directive or piece of legislation that legitimises activities by a HEI.

For individual HEI's the type or intensity of response to a particular policy 'hook' will vary depending on the extent to which it believes it has freedom of action in the policy matter. For example, it would be unreasonable to expect an individual HEI to fund individual lifelong learning students in the absence of such provision by the state. In contrast, if the state has designated a particular set of institutions as being responsible for workforce education and provided resources to do so it would be expected that this would be reflected in the mission and strategy statements by the said institutions as this matter is entirely within their control. The relationship between high level policy and institutional action or strategy is seldom as clear cut as noted above and often there is a strong element of 'positioning' by the state of HEI's or groups of HEI's into a particular policy space accompanied by an acceptance or negotiated acceptance by the same HEI's of their state designated mission. A good example of this is the involvement of the Institutes of Technology in Ireland in workforce education (Thorn, In Press).

Thus the degree of control or freedom of action is not as simple as 'it is possible' or 'it is not possible'. More likely the degree of freedom depends to a significant extent on far a HEI is prepared to push the boundaries. The adage 'you ask forgiveness and not permission' comes to mind. Table 14.2 considers the policy 'hooks' identified in Table 14.1 in the context of the freedom of action, we believe, an individual HEI could exert in their implementation.

For each of the policy areas identified in Table 14.1 a judgment is made as to the degree of freedom of action a HEI can exercise in respect of the policy. For example, participation rates are determined by a broad range of socio economic conditions that an individual HEI generally has little control over. In contrast, the involvement of stakeholders in the lifelong learning agenda is a matter over which individual HEI's can exert significant freedom of action. The practical implication of this is that for matters over which a HEI has a high level of freedom of action, even if its country implementation is weak, it may nonetheless undertake supportive activities.

Table 14.2
Policy ‘Hooks’ and Institutional Control or Freedom of Action

Policy ‘Hooks’	Freedom of Action by Individual HEI	Observation
Legal framework/ legislation	Limited freedom of control	
Participation rates	Limited freedom of control	
Funding and investment	Limited freedom of control	
Flexibility and access to learning pathways	Limited/Moderate freedom of control	Depending on the legal arrangements governing the access, transfer and progression of students individual HEIs may have opportunities to enhance progression pathways
Link between education and work	Moderate freedom of control	Depending on the mission of the HEI some opportunities exist to enhance the link between education and work
Transparency of qualifications system	Moderate freedom of control	Where member states have introduced qualifications frameworks and enabling regulations/policies HEI's have significant freedom of control to publicise these developments
Public awareness and perception of lifelong learning	Significant freedom of control	Individually or collectively through representative bodies HEI's can widely promote public awareness of lifelong learning
Link with wider EU developments	Significant freedom of control	Individual HEI's have tended not to get involved in EU wide projects and other developments. Such involvement potentially greatly enriches the lifelong learning agenda within an HEI
Involvement and support of key stakeholders	Significant freedom of control	Many opportunities exist at no cost to involve wide ranging groups of stakeholders into the lifelong learning agenda
Information and guidance for learners and potential learners	Significant freedom of control	Many opportunities exist for individual HEI's to significantly enhance the information flow to potential learners
Recognition of all forms of learning	Significant freedom of control	RPL and APL are EU wide policy requirements and individual HEIs should have policies and practices in place to accommodate this aspect of lifelong learning
Cost of Education – support/ initiatives	Moderate freedom of control	Although funding policy is outside the remit of HEI's, where LLL is regarded as of strategic importance flexibility exists to design counseling, guidance and mentoring initiatives that are low or no cost

Practise Responses

The final section of this chapter takes as its starting point an observation that while much policy has been developed at a high level in Europe on lifelong learning, while much analysis has been undertaken of its growth and development at national level (see previous sections in this report) and while some work has been undertaken on the experience of individual learners and teachers as lifelong learners and teachers (e.g. Burge (2007), comparatively little work has been undertaken on the strategies, actions and structures used by individual HEI's that link policy with practise⁷⁶. This final section attempts to link those policy areas over which individual HEI's may have freedom of action as identified in Table 14.2 with a series of prompts or questions concerning possible actions or responses.

The prompts and questions are drawn from three sources. First, the framework for institutional self evaluation used by the Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC, undated) in Ireland and based in turn on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ENQA, 2009). Second, the work undertaken in the EQUIPE-Plus project 'Getting to grip with university lifelong learning indicators' (Seppala, et al, 2008). Third, unpublished self evaluation guidelines prepared by the Higher Education Authority in Ireland and to be used by publicly funded HEI's during the course of a review of Access and Flexible Learning activity. It should be noted that many of the prompts or questions could appear in more than one policy category.

Flexibility and access to learning pathways

- If your HEI has a plan for lifelong learning how does it integrate with overall strategic planning in the HEI?
- Does your HEI have targets for lifelong learners? If it does, how often are they monitored? If they are monitored are they evaluated?
- How does your HEI participate in and contribute to national policies and initiatives to achieve the policy aim of increasing lifelong learning?
- What specific arrangements are in place with local VET providers to provide access to lifelong learning opportunities in your HEI?
- How many courses in your HEI are offered in e-learning or blended learning formats?
- What proportion of your academic staff use the HEI VLE (virtual learning environment) e.g. Moodle, Blackboard?
- Is there training offered to staff in the new flexible learning technologies?

⁷⁶ A comparative study on structures, organisation and provisions for continuing higher education and lifelong learning completed in 2009 (Knust, M. and Hanft, A. (eds.) is a useful survey of practises but lacks utility value as a tool for implementation.

Link between education and work

- Who designs the courses offered by your HEI? Academic staff solely, in conjunction with external bodies or external agencies solely?
- Does your HEI have an RPL or APL policy? If it does when was it last reviewed? How many students have opted to use the policy to gain credit?
- How many courses in your HEI are co-curricular?
- How many courses are jointly delivered by academic staff and external employer/business organisations?
- Do you have external stakeholders on course validation and accreditation processes?
- Does your HEI have a policy in relation to work-based learning?
- Does your HEI offer its programmes on an outreach basis in association with employers and professional bodies or in collaboration with community or other groups?

Transparency of qualifications system

- What structures are in place for academic credit, access, transfer and progression? When were they last reviewed?
- How has your country's qualifications framework been implemented, including
 - Levels
 - Credit transfer
 - Learning outcomes
 - Learner Assessment
 - HETAC award standards

Public awareness and perception of lifelong learning

- Is lifelong learning mentioned specifically in your HEI's mission statement?
- Are there specific actions on lifelong learning in your strategic plan? If there are specific actions how often are they reviewed/monitored?
- How often does the rector/president/vice chancellor of your university mention lifelong learning in speeches?
- How does your HEI provide information and guidance to individuals and groups wanting to participate in lifelong learning?
- Are part-time/lifelong learning students allowed to be members of the student union in your HEI?

Link with wider EU developments

- Does your HEI have a system to award full academic credits to lifelong learning programmes as per the Bologna process?
- Does your HEI engage in research in areas of lifelong learning with national or international partners?

Involvement and support of key stakeholders

- In what ways does your HEI participate in and contribute to regional and local community based initiatives for lifelong learning?
- What external partners does your institution work with (e.g. educational, formal learning partnerships, other) to further the lifelong learning agenda in your region, nationally and/or internationally?
- If your HEI does work collaboratively with external groups how do these collaborations work? e.g. joint curricular, shared supports for lifelong learners, etc?
- Does your HEI know what the typical experience of a lifelong learner is in accessing and progressing within programmes your institution?
- Has your HEI encouraged or established the concept of learning partnerships?
- Has your HEI encouraged or participated in initiatives to have your city or region designated as a learning city or region?

Information and guidance for learners and potential learners

- Does your HEI have a Department or Unit with responsibility for lifelong learning?
- Does your HEI have a senior staff member responsible for lifelong learning?
- What is the title of the person designated to be responsible for the development of lifelong learning at your HEI? Is this department or unit considered an academic department or a support department?
- Does your HEI produce a separate prospectus for lifelong learners?
- Does your HEI carry out market analyses specifically for lifelong learners?
- Does your HEI hold open evenings/open days specifically for lifelong learners?

Cost of education – support initiatives

- Does your HEI offer special support for lifelong learning students?
- Does your HEI offer mentoring programmes for lifelong learning students?
- Does your HEI offer formal back to education programmes?
- Does your HEI offer a guidance service to part time students?
- Does your HEI have a formal psychological service for part time students?
- Does your HEI offer 'learning to learn', or equivalent modules to its part time students
- If part time education is not funded in your country does your HEI offer a payment plan service to its part time/lifelong learning students?
- Does your HEI have a flexible entry policy for individuals or groups from targeted areas who do not fulfil the minimum entry requirements operated by your university and who wish to become full or part time students?

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has presented the key findings of Work Package 1 in a comparative matrix showing the progress and implementation of the difference policy issues surrounding lifelong learning in the participating countries of the FLLLEX project. In addition, this Work Package has taken an important step in linking the policy 'hooks' identified in the research to possible individual HEI practice responses.

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