

**BRIEFING PAPER 2 issued 2006ⁱ
LLL2010 SUBPROJECT 1**

**Lifelong Learning:
Patterns of Policy in Thirteen European Countries**

Context of the research

In March 2000, the European Council adopted the so-called Lisbon Strategy, a comprehensive and coordinated policy aimed at making Europe the *"most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy"* by 2010. To achieve this ambitious goal, the EU policymakers agreed to carry out a radical transformation of the European economy as well as a modernisation plan of Europe's education and social welfare systems. Within this framework, a policy aimed at increasing the participation rate of adults in lifelong learning was developed.

As part of the European Commission's 6th Framework Research Program, the project '**Toward a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: The Contribution of the Educational System**' (LLL 2010) aims at collecting and analysing information on the patterns of lifelong learning across Europe. More specifically, the five-year project seeks at assessing the effect of relevant institutions and educational policies on the participation of adults in, and their access to, lifelong learning. The project focuses on questions like: 'Are there differences in terms of lifelong learning between EU countries and, if so, do these depend on country-specific institutions?' and 'What are the barriers to lifelong learning and how can these be overcome?'

Key issues

The end of 2006 marks the conclusion of the first of five LLL 2010 subprojects, 'Review of Literature and Policy Documents', which commenced in September 2005. The focal objective of this subproject consisted of a critical assessment of the notion of lifelong learning and the conceptualisation of the various notions related to it: learning citizens, learning cities/regions and learning organisations. Moreover, this first part of the project aimed at examining to which extent different models of lifelong learning apply in national and European contexts; at developing a typology of policy measures focusing on lifelong learning policy; and at mapping the range of initiatives to encourage the participation of socially excluded groups.

Initial Results

So far, the main results indicate a clear trend across Europe to promote lifelong learning as a key means of addressing extensive economic and social changes and of focusing on labour market issues. Despite this general tendency and notwithstanding the consensus about lifelong learning's importance and desirability, this concept is perceived in different, and sometimes contradictory, ways. For example, the research team found that some countries, with no clear distinction between 'old' and new EU Member States, focus on the human capital aspect of lifelong learning, while others stress its social and personal development aspect. Other dissimilarities regard the approach to the problem of social exclusion through the creation of better learning opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Translated into recommendations, the research team concluded that the diversity of national context implies that a single model of lifelong learning is not likely to be achieved and that EU common guidelines will be strongly influenced by institutional, social and ideological elements.

Further subprojects will focus on adult learners' perspective of formal provision for lifelong learning. Thanks to the development of an agenda for a better understanding of the tensions between the knowledge-based society, lifelong learning and social inclusion in the context of EU enlargement, LLL 2010 is expected to have a major impact on the competitiveness and cohesion of the EU.

Further information

Comparative report „Lifelong Learning: Patterns of Policy in Thirteen European Countries“ will be published online at the project website <http://LL2010.tlu.ee> in summer 2007.

Any further information about this subproject, including the National Reports on the 13 countries can also be found at <http://LLL2010.tlu.ee>. Details about the entire project and the other subprojects are presented available there as well.

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