

## **Lifelong Learning:**

# **Patterns of Policy in Thirteen European Countries**

**A Review of Lifelong Learning Policy & Practices in Austria,  
Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, England, Estonia, Flanders,  
Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Russia, Scotland,  
Slovenia.**

Report of Sub-project 1

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## Foreword

This is the report of the first Sub-project of a five-year programme of research funded by the European Commission's 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Research Programme, and entitled 'Lifelong Learning 2010: Towards a Lifelong Learning Society in Europe: The Contribution of the Education System' (LLL2010). The LLL2010 programme is co-ordinated by Ellu Saar at the Institute for International and Social Studies, Tallinn University, Tallinn, Estonia. For a full list of all research team members, see Appendix F.

This first sub-project has been prepared by a team drawn from the Universities of Surrey and Edinburgh, and the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education, co-ordinated by John Holford at the University of Surrey.<sup>1</sup> The members of the team involved in drafting the report have been:

- University of Surrey: John Holford, Linda Merricks, Guy Hannan
- University of Edinburgh: Sheila Riddell, Elisabet Weedon, Judith Litjens

The Slovenian Institute of Adult Education team was jointly responsible for this Sub-project, and contributed through preparation of a report on European Union policies. This report made a vital contribution to the Sub-project's work. The members of the SIAE team were: Vida Mohorcic Spolar, Peter Beltram, Jasmina Mirceva.

As explained in the body of the report, the analysis was only possible because the Subproject team was able to draw on research undertaken by the thirteen national project teams, which was reported in the form of 'National Reports' on each participating country. These valuable documents are available on the LLL2010 website at Tallin University (<http://lll2010.tlu.ee/>). The national project teams provided the national-level policy data on which much of this report is based; specific inquiries relating to the national-level evidence should in general therefore be directed to the national teams themselves (see Appendix F).

At an early stage, the Sub-project also drew on a questionnaire completed by the national teams for each country; the questionnaire was prepared by Stephen McNair at the University of Surrey.

The Report has been substantially revised following constructive comments from European Commission reviewers (Philipp Grollman, Bremen University; Dragana Avramov, BE Population & Social Policy Consultants, Brussels; Jacqueline Brine, University of West of England, Bristol) on an earlier draft.

John Holford

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<sup>1</sup> The English research on which this report was based was, however, undertaken largely by a team at the University of Surrey. John Holford moved to the University of Nottingham in May 2007; Surrey's research relating to LLL2010 also transferred to Nottingham at that time.



University of Nottingham  
May 2007

# 1 Introduction

## The Context

In the policies of the European Union, lifelong learning has been a means of achieving both competitiveness and social cohesion in an increasingly knowledge-based and globalised economy. Though the concept itself is far from new, lifelong learning's current policy incarnation dates from the mid-1990s (Field 2006); it has therefore coincided with a period of rapid EU expansion. When Austria, Finland and Sweden joined in 1995, the EU had 15 member states; today there are 27, with others knocking on the door. The LLL2010 Research Project seeks to examine how lifelong learning has been understood and operationalised, focussing in particular on countries within the area of the EU's expansion. While the countries which are the subjects of our investigations include some long-standing EU member-states, the bulk are recent joiners – or in some cases, not yet members.

The concept and practice of lifelong learning in Europe has developed in close connection with wider, political, economic, and social forces. This is true at both EU and national levels. Although there is broad consensus across Europe that lifelong learning can both enhance economic competitiveness and help generate social cohesion and stability, understandings of the concept are subject to wide variation and have to be viewed in relation to specific national contexts.

For these reasons, the project has studied lifelong learning in 13 countries. These include a range of EU member states and others. They are drawn from three main geographical areas: Northern; Eastern and Central Europe. They have diverse political, social, and economic histories; their educational systems have also developed along varying paths. Their rich histories include many periods of convergence and divergence, however – especially over the past century. To take but three examples: in 1914 Ireland, Scotland and England formed parts of the United Kingdom; Hungary, Slovenia, and Austria formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; while Estonia and Lithuania formed part of the Russian Empire. Today all are independent countries.<sup>2</sup> During the twentieth century, however, their histories have varied: Estonia and Lithuania enjoyed a brief period of independence between the two world wars, but were absorbed into the USSR in 1939; Hungary became independent from 1918, though it fell under German rule during the Second World War and into the Soviet 'sphere of influence' after 1945; Slovenia became an integral part of Yugoslavia; Austria remained independent after 1918, apart from a period of absorption into 'greater Germany'. Although educational policy and

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<sup>2</sup> Apart from England and Scotland, which form parts of the United Kingdom: Scotland has a substantial element of devolved decision-making, with its own Parliament and government.



practice are not simply a product of history, we cannot make sense of the diversity of how lifelong learning has been understood and operationalised without an awareness of the diversity – but also the commonalities – of these national histories.

## The LLL2010 Research Project

The LLL2010 research programme, which forms part of the European Commission's 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Research Programme, has a number of specific strategic objectives; these include:

- achieving a better understanding of the tensions between a knowledge-based society, lifelong learning and social inclusion in the context of EU enlargement and globalisation;
- analysing the role education systems play in the enhancement of lifelong learning – and in particular, the role institutions play in this at 'micro, meso and macro levels';<sup>3</sup>
- providing an analysis, based on evidence, of the adequacy of lifelong learning policies for different social groups (especially the socially excluded);
- developing policy proposals, relevant both to the EU and to national governments, as to how lifelong learning strategies can play a role in decreasing social exclusion – and what implications this has for other areas of social and economic policy;
- strengthening the international and multi-disciplinary research infrastructure in relation to lifelong learning; and
- developing transnational data sources.

The LLL2010 research project extends over five years (commencing in September 2005), and these questions will be addressed in various ways through a number of 'sub-projects'. The present report covers the findings of the team only during the first Sub-project, 'Review of Literature and Policy Documents'. Clearly Sub-project 1 is designed to address only some of the above objectives – it is, however, intended to provide a foundation for the entire research programme.

While it would be invidious to imply any priority among the research objectives, underlying several of them a more general concern may be discerned: how is EU policy being received, understood and operationalised in a range of Central and East European countries? The countries in question are those of the EU's newer members and aspiring members, which until some fifteen years ago, had been governed for several decades by Communist Party-led regimes. This is evidently a matter of some importance in the formation of a new Europe. This is not, of course, the only issue with

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for a Glossary of terms used in this Report.

which LLL2010 is concerned; nor is LLL2010 able to deal with all aspects of this question (lifelong learning is only one aspect of social and educational policy; and there are several Central and Eastern European countries which LLL2010 does not consider). Nevertheless, countries studied provide a rich range of evidence for the exploration of these matters; and a sound basis for comparison both among the various countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and between these and a number of more established EU member-states.

## **Lifelong Learning & the EU**

The nature and development of European Union policy in lifelong learning is discussed in some detail in Chapter 5 below. At this point, it is necessary only to note that since the 1990s lifelong learning has become a key term in the EU lexicon, and that the EU has now established itself as a prime mover in the development of educational policy from a lifelong perspective. In common with much other usage, though also for its own particular reasons, EU lifelong learning policy has taken a strongly vocational orientation. Although the EU's definition of lifelong learning has shifted over time, the version which currently has strongest official sanction is probably that contained in the 2002 Resolution of the EU Council:

lifelong learning must cover learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. (EU Council Resolution 27 June 2002: 2002/C 163/01)

However, while many have argued, in line with this EU view, that the concerns of lifelong learning, properly so-called, stretch from cradle to grave, the term has more often been applied to learning which takes place after the initial phases of education has been completed (Field 2006: 2-3). Lifelong learning may have emerged as a policy concern in the 1990s, but its history can be traced back in many European countries at least to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Jarvis & Griffin 2003, Field 2006) – though chiefly under the label 'adult education'. Education, and adult education in particular, were of course intellectual and popular movements strongly linked with the Enlightenment; adult education's history is, in many countries, therefore closely entwined with that of 'Enlightenment projects', not least socialism.

Every country's system of adult education has been the product of specific national traditions, but there have also been strong international trends and influences. The post-1945 evolution of adult education is inseparable from the social, political and economic context of the Cold War. Often strongly influenced by socialist ideas, adult education formed a significant feature of

the apparatus of many communist-led states in Central and Eastern Europe; western European Social Democracy also typically saw a role for adult education. The term ‘lifelong learning’ itself, however, was rarely used. Faure’s UNESCO report (1972) adopted and promoted the subtly (but significantly) different term ‘lifelong education’. Lifelong learning as it emerged in the 1990s – especially in the Delors UNESCO Report (1996) – has frequently been criticised as having dropped Faure’s humanistic concerns, in favour of a narrow vocationalism: ‘human resource development in drag’ as Boshier (1998) put it. It is hard to avoid the view that, in the formation of lifelong learning during and since the 1990s, OECD influence has been marked. Since its White Paper *Education and Training: Towards a Learning Society* (1995), and the “European Year of Lifelong Learning” (1996), the EU itself has become an influential opinion-former.<sup>4</sup> In March 2000, the Lisbon European Council set out lifelong learning as a vehicle for delivery of a key EU objective: to become the world’s most dynamic knowledge based economy. While competitiveness has been a constant theme of Commission statements on lifelong learning, social inclusion and citizenship have also frequently been prominent.

A key concern of the LLL2010 research is to investigate how lifelong learning, now a key element of EU policy, is conceptualised and operationalised in a range of countries. As remarked above, the project gives some priority to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but a range of (chiefly Northern) countries are also included. The territories studied also include two states which are not members of the EU (Norway and Russia), three regions which are not in themselves states, but which have substantial internal autonomy (England, Flanders and Scotland), and length of EU membership varying from a founder member (Belgium) to a new member state (Bulgaria). The largest country studied (Russia) has a population one hundred times larger than the smallest (Estonia). This diversity is ensures that the research questions will be pursued across a large spectrum of societies.

## **Economic Change & Lifelong Learning**

Lifelong learning may have emerged as a discourse in the 1990s for principally economic reasons, but within the European Union context it has been asked to carry progressively more political ‘baggage’. Establishing the EU as a dynamic, knowledge-based economy has continued to be key, but the growth in the size of Europe has meant this function must be performed on a much wider scale, and in a more diverse range of economic environments. Economic changes have been central to the development of lifelong learning, and while many of these stem from globalisation and the conditions of late-modernity, some relate more specifically to the transition from centrally-planned to market economies in Central and Eastern Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> The Commission has also, of course, used lifelong learning as a vehicle for strengthening European identity, through programmes such as ‘Leonardo da Vinci’ and ‘Socrates’.

Economic change has been more stark and radical for formerly centrally-planned economies. Transition to new types of economic and democratic structures in these countries has created demand for new types of work and specialists; a widely-held perception is that lifelong learning can be effective in producing a workforce that can meet the new economic challenges. At the same time, the move from planned to market economies generated unemployment rates which such countries had not previously experienced. Emerging private and service sectors were often unable to provide enough jobs to compensate for major industrial decline. Having said this, there are considerable variations in rates of economic activity and types of employment opportunities between new member and candidate states. See Chapter 4 for further detail.

Lifelong learning may, then, play a valuable role in modernising formerly planned economies. But if the need to modernise post-communist economies is unavoidable, lifelong learning has also been expected to play a role in revitalising western European economies. All countries have of course been subject to globalising processes, with radical change in labour markets and increased international competition. Increased flexibility, and demand for a more highly skilled workforce, has meant that individuals' life courses are far less stable and determined. Within the Northern European countries, economic recession during the 1970s and 1980s played a significant part in reorienting educational systems towards more vocational models: the central economic imperative for lifelong learning has been to meet the demands of a knowledge-based economy.

### **Lifelong Learning, Citizenship & Social Inclusion**

There has, then, been a marked neo-liberal theme in lifelong learning in Europe. The EU's rhetoric on lifelong learning has, however, always stressed the need to overcome social exclusion – it has always recognised that in a dynamic capitalist economy, there are losers as well as winners. Often – more positively – the rhetoric has gone beyond this, and actively promoted social inclusion, cohesion, and the need for a wider and fuller active citizenship. Despite these aims, however, there is a widespread perception that social inequality is on the increase. This may be particularly pronounced in the post-communist countries: one of the strengths of their previous societies was success in widening educational participation and reducing inequality. The introduction of market forces into education appears to have exacerbated inequality – more highly educated people have proved more able to adapt to changing market conditions.

The energetic promotion of active citizenship emerged as an EU priority in the late 1990s, slightly later than lifelong learning itself, but was rapidly assimilated into policy statements on the latter. Although a notoriously slippery

term, active citizenship was seen as both necessary to economic success – the ‘learning citizen’ would adapt in the flexible world – and contribute to European governance – active citizens would engage with, and generate trust in, political institutions at all levels. Not only did it appear in policy statements: various programmes have been introduced to promote active European citizenship and civic participation, and these incorporated measures of non-formal and informal lifelong learning.

## **Demography & Migration**

While economic and political change are clear factors driving the perceived need for lifelong learning, demographic change has also had a major impact. There has been a slight increase in the working age population (those aged 20-59) in all EU partner states between 1990 and 2005. However, the old age dependency ratio has increased in all of the countries during this period except Ireland, the UK and Norway. This is linked to a falling young age dependency ratio indicating a falling birth rate suggesting there will be a decrease in the working population in the future. In some countries, mainly northern and Eastern European ones, this has been exacerbated by emigration; whilst some western European countries have had the impact lessened by immigration (Eurostat, 2006). This has generated discussion of how employment levels among the working age population can be maximised, and whether older generations can be re-trained to enable them to remain economically active. Lifelong learning has been seen as an important way in which this can happen. For instance, in Norway it is believed more workers would work until the official retirement age if they had greater competence in ICT: increasing such skills for older workers is therefore seen as key to enabling people to work longer, increasing the proportion of the population which is economically active.

The post-communist economies have been particularly hit by emigration and a ‘brain drain’. Changed economic demands have necessitated a workforce with new kinds of skills. (The problem of emigration by more highly-skilled workers appears to have been a particular issue in Bulgaria, a new EU member state, and Russia which is not a member.)

In western European countries, immigration is a more pertinent issue. The Republic of Ireland is a particularly interesting case, having moved over a relatively short period – following a period of sustained economic growth – from being a country of net emigration to one of net immigration. In western European countries, immigration is often seen as a way to address ‘skills gaps’ and demographic deficits. However, pronounced immigration presents its own set of problems, particularly in relation to social inclusion and cohesion; lifelong learning is often seen as having a role here too.

## 2 Aims & Methods

### Aims of the Report

Although there is a broad consensus within Europe that lifelong learning has an important part to play within the context of the current scale of economic and social change, there are widely varying understandings of the concept. There is also diversity in delivery, with variation at national and regional levels and for specific social groups. In the light of economic change and transformations within group and individual identities as a consequence of globalisation, the Sub-project has undertaken comparative research on the development of lifelong learning policies and practices.

The purpose of this report is to review how lifelong learning is being conceptualised and put into operation across a range of countries in Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. We investigate the nature of the educational and lifelong learning regimes in each country, and how they are changing. It considers how far lifelong learning has entered the policy rhetoric in each country, and in what forms it has done so – in particular, how far it has been shaped by the European Union’s thinking, or by national or other influences. It considers how far rhetoric and practice diverge in each country. Lifelong learning can occur in all areas of social life: we therefore also consider how far the actions of different areas of policy and government support it, or hinder its development.

The Sub-project applies a comparative documentary analysis of approaches to lifelong learning. Through analysing national policy documents and addressing lifelong learning in participating countries, the aims included: to critically assess the concept of lifelong learning at various levels; to investigate and develop a typology of different policies and initiatives across the countries; to map the range of initiatives to encourage the participation of socially excluded groups in lifelong learning.

This chapter on Methodology explains the approach taken in more detail, and explains the structure of this Report.

### Objectives & Research Questions

The specifications for the Sub-project were set out in the Technical Annex (“Annex 1 – Description of Work”) for LLL2010. During discussions among the research team, it became clear that there was some dissonance between the Sub-project’s Objectives (Annex 1, p. 4) and the specified research questions (Annex 1, p. 14). The team discussed this at some length, and decided to focus principally on the research questions. This chapter explains how these

research questions were analysed and interpreted, and how they were addressed.

The research team's decision was reached in the light of the research methodology set out in the Technical Annex. This specified "a comparative documentary analysis". Such a methodological approach could not enable the team, for instance, "to critically evaluate the impact of a range of initiatives on local community health, housing and welfare needs" (Technical Annex, p. 4), since it would generate no data on impact.

Similarly, neither the research questions nor the methodology referred to evaluating the impact of policy; neither did they refer to social exclusion. The Sub-project did not, therefore, gather objective data on which a systematic account or analysis of lifelong learning initiatives relating to social exclusion could be constructed. Nevertheless, we have been able to include a number of examples of what different governments regard as good practice, or which they wish to encourage; and issues relating to social inclusion and exclusion are critically discussed in several chapters below.

The Sub-project 1 team has also been able to use the data to address a significant issue set out in the Sub-project objectives. This was "to develop a typology of policy measures focussing on lifelong learning policy". The development of a typology of lifelong learning policy is a substantial task; the results, which are inevitably preliminary, are presented in Chapter 12 below.

## **Research Development**

The full project team met for the first time in Tallinn, Estonia, in September 2005. During this meeting, the main elements of a questionnaire on national policies and legislation were devised. This was subsequently refined, and circulated. The participating national teams completed their respective questionnaires in time for in-depth discussion at the second preparatory workshop, held in Edinburgh in January 2006. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information on national policies for lifelong learning in all the participating countries and provide an outline framework for comparisons.

A distinctive feature of the research was the diverse project team, which reflects not only all the countries studied, but also a range of disciplinary and research specialisms. In discussions, a range of theoretical perspectives and distinctive national histories emerged. Each of the teams made presentations based on the content of their questionnaire at the Edinburgh meeting, and following this there was debate on the purpose, rationale and structure of the national reports which each team would submit.

During the course of this discussion, it was agreed that the national reports should aim to discover strategies and policy measures for the implementation of the lifelong learning concept, and to consider policy recommendations relevant to each country. Compiling them included consideration of national policy documents and academic literature. There was also a separate analysis of documents at EU level. The national reports were submitted in April 2006, and analysis of them formed the principal basis for this comparative report.

The national reports were substantial documents, comprising typically 7,000-10,000 words (though one was nearer 13,000). Each contained the following chapters:

- Introduction: Historical background to Lifelong Learning
- 1. Theoretical Perspectives
- 2. Influence of Conceptualisations and Drivers on Lifelong Learning Policy and Practice
- 3. Understandings and Operationalisations of Lifelong Learning
- 4. Significance of Key Concepts in Lifelong Learning Policy
- 5. Legislation and Policy
- 6. Main Patterns of Provision and Participation
- 7. Broader Social Policy and Lifelong Learning
- 8. Effectiveness of Lifelong Learning Policies
- 9. Policy Recommendations

The report on EU policy followed a similar structure.

## Research Questions

Research questions for the Sub-project had been specified in the programme of research for the entire project. However, during a two-day meeting of the Sub-project 1 co-ordinating team held at the University of Surrey in May 2006, the national reports were examined in detail to uncover general themes, comparisons and contrasts. For clarification, and to ensure they flowed more effectively, the SP1 co-ordinating team reviewed, slightly rephrased and introduced some new ordering to the original research questions (the original research questions, and the phrasing actually used, are provided in Appendix D). These research questions provided the structure for this comparative report, with each being discussed largely in the relevant chapter as follows:

- (a) Which different lifelong learning concepts are included in:
  - EU level policy documents? (Ch. 5)
  - National policy documents (Ch. 6)
- (b) Which national policy measures focus on lifelong learning? (Ch. 7)  
How significant is lifelong learning in national policy rhetoric?
- (c) What concrete initiatives and public sector policies have (Ch.8)



- been implemented at each level of the education system?
- (d) Is education policy effectively co-ordinated with labour and social policy on matters related to the development of lifelong learning? (Ch.9)
  - (e) What barriers exist to effective co-ordination across these different policy fields? (Ch. 10)
  - (f) To what extent is lifelong learning allocated a merely residual role in national policy-making? (Ch. 11)

The SP1 co-ordinating team then undertook analysis of individual sections of the national reports in order to address the research questions. The national reports have therefore been the basis for this comparative report. However, the Report begins with a brief consideration of theoretical perspectives which have informed our understanding and analysis of lifelong learning.

### 3 Key Concepts

This chapter outlines some of the key concepts used in research and policy development in the broad field of lifelong learning.

#### Lifelong Learning & the Learning Society

In Europe, there is a rich and critical literature on lifelong learning and the learning society, drawing on US and European sources, as well as those which are specific to particular national contexts. In this section we summarise key elements of social theory which have informed thinking about the lifelong learning and the learning society (see Riddell et al, 2001 for further analysis).

The rise of interest in lifelong learning and the learning society must be understood in the context of the rise of global capitalism. Within this new economy, productivity and competitiveness are products of knowledge generation and information processing. Global capitalism and the knowledge economy are dependent on, and have emerged as a result of, new information and communication technologies, allowing capital to be moved electronically around the globe almost instantaneously, with consequent implications for national, regional and local labour markets. The new economy has the tendency to generate great prosperity for some, but also to intensify the social and economic exclusion of continents, countries, regions, localities and social groups. There are fears that the global markets created by the new technology may be uncontrollable by trans-national bodies or national governments

Social commentators have described the radical changes in individual and group consciousness and life experience arising as a result of globalisation. Beck (1992; 2000), for instance, suggests that, whereas in the past an individual's life course was strongly influenced by deterministic social factors such as social class and gender, the new global economy provides new opportunities to exercise individual agency. Acquiring academic credentials is clearly one of the ways in which an individual can strive for upward mobility. Giddens, another key social theorist, has also emphasised the role of individualisation in society. Field (2006) characterises these as **reflexive modernisation** theories. They both stress the central role of knowledge in our society and emphasise individual agency in shaping biographies and social relationships. In the context of the workplace, for example, employers expect flexibility from their employees, who in their turn are less likely to stay in the same firm for life (see also Sennett, 2006). One key aspect of this theory is that the individual is expected to engage in a constant quest for new knowledge. Field suggests that:

*All behaviour and all relationships can be, and frequently are, subjected to the process of institutionalised reflexivity. (Field, 2006: 71)*

In addition, there is an increasing expectation that the individual will make choices both on a day-to-day and long-term basis. A common criticism of theories of individuation is that they fail to acknowledge that socially advantaged people are likely to have far more freedom to negotiate individual biographies and life chances than those from less socially advantaged backgrounds. For example, the concept of 'reflexive individuation' is questioned by Ecclestone (2007) on the grounds that it is unsupported by empirical evidence.

### **Human and Social Capital in the Context of the Learning Society**

Human capital as a notion dates back to Adam Smith though it was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that it emerged as a fully developed concept (Balatti & Falk, 2002). In post-industrial and post-agrarian society individuals within a society and their knowledge and skills are seen by policy makers as the key resources of that society – they form the human capital of that society. The individual is expected to learn throughout life in order to upgrade skills and knowledge through the use of new technologies. Recently the state's role has come to be seen as one of making a range of learning opportunities available to individuals. Lifelong learning becomes the driver of development of human capital. This narrow conceptualisation of lifelong learning has been described by some as 'human resource development in drag' (Boshier, 1998: 4). Field (2006) argues that the human capital approach of lifelong learning leads to a focus on vocational training and on the economic aspects of individuals' lives and it leaves out the profound social changes that have occurred in society.

Social capital as a concept is more recent. Balatti and Falk (2002) identify at least three different conceptualisations. The first sees social capital as the social networks available to people including the values and norms associated with these networks; another is that it is an individual's private asset as well as an asset that can be owned by a particular group. Others describe social capital as a combination of the networks and the private good. For some it is seen as entirely beneficial, whilst others argue that it has both a negative and a positive side. Putnam (2000) suggests a definition based on the first of these conceptualisations. A more recent literature review suggests that the concept was developed by Bourdieu and Coleman and describes social capital as **'intrinsically relational, with attendant emotional and perceptual consequences, and as being open to useful exploration through the metaphor of capital'** (McGonigal et al, 2007: 79). The authors further suggest that Putnam developed his definition from that of Coleman.

Social capital is also increasingly identified as the key factor contributing to the health and well-being of individuals and societies (Riddell et al, 2001, 143). It has been argued further that certain social networks lead to an individual engaging effectively lifelong learning whilst others act as a deterrent to engagement. For example, certain types of networks value education and encourage engagement with learning, whilst others do so to a lesser degree. Field (2006), notes that in Britain there has been a decline in the membership of voluntary organisations by manual workers. He argues that this is an example showing how lack of access of networks that promote learning impact on an individual's access to learning and ultimately acts to increase in inequality.

### **The Social Functions of Lifelong Learning**

At European and national level, lifelong learning is regarded as fulfilling a number of central functions which are explored further below. These are, of course, by no means mutually exclusive: any particular lifelong learning instrument may reflect several of these purposes. First, lifelong learning is seen as a generator of **human capital**, enabling states and individuals to maintain their economic competitiveness by constantly updating their skills and competences, giving individuals a better chance of understanding and controlling information technology rather than being its servant. Secondly, lifelong learning is seen as a generator of **social capital**, bringing people together to engage in a shared endeavour. Thus citizenship, which previously referred to rights to access welfare services, may increasingly rest on an individual's willingness to participate in lifelong learning, thus nurturing social capital and collective identity in an increasingly fragmented and individualised world. Thirdly, lifelong learning is seen as playing a key role in the **European liberal education tradition**, in which learning is valued for its own sake and seen as a means of attaining personal growth and development, as well as contributing to the greater social good. This tradition is reflected in the existence of ancient universities in many countries, dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and sometimes opposed by the Church and the state. It has also formed a part of adult education systems in many European countries, and can often be seen as overlapping with a social capital approach. Finally, lifelong learning may be seen as an instrument of **social control**, mediating particular value systems and corralling those at risk of social exclusion into activity which is deemed to be socially beneficial, rather than destructive.

Covering the same terrain, but framed slightly differently, Schuetze (2007) proposes three distinctive models of lifelong learning, which 'envision and advocate different models of education and learning, of work and ultimately of society'. They are the following:

- An emancipatory or social justice model which pushes the notion of equality of opportunity and life chances through education in a democratic society ('Lifelong learning for all');
- An 'open post-industrial society' model in which lifelong learning is seen as an adequate learning system for citizens of developed, multicultural and democratic countries ('Lifelong learning for all who want and are able to participate');
- A human capital model where lifelong learning connotes continuous work-related training and skill development to meet the needs of the economy and employers for a qualified, flexible and adequate workforce ('Lifelong learning for finding or keeping jobs in a changing labour market').

The particular slant on lifelong learning in different countries depends on their history and current social, political and economic context. For example, in common with old member states, accession states and new member states of the European Union have tended to see lifelong learning as a means of promoting economic development, possibly downplaying their earlier liberal educational traditions. Enhancing economic growth is the major concern of states which have recently joined the European Union (e.g. Bulgaria, Estonia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Lithuania). In the older parts of the European Union (England, Scotland, Flanders, Austria and to some extent, Ireland),<sup>5</sup> the principal concern seems to be retaining position in the economic 'pecking order', as manufacturing continues to decline and greater emphasis is placed on high-tech, high value-added production. Norway, although not officially a member of the EU, has much in common with these countries in terms of welfare systems and economic development. With its small population and wealth derived from North Sea oil and gas, Norway has many economic assets, but is still clearly concerned about safeguarding its national prosperity into the future when the oil runs out. The Russian Federation has a number of economic commonalities with some of the new member and candidate EU states, sharing with them common Soviet traditions. However, the scale and cultural diversity of the country means that it faces particular challenges in managing economic liberalism. Whilst the Russian Federation couches its policies in terms of adult education rather than the Learning Society, it is evident that the building of human capital is increasingly emphasised. In addition, the push to promote lifelong learning throughout Europe (including the Russian Federation) is due to the problems posed by a declining and ageing population, and the related need to enlarge the age-groups available for active participation in the labour market. Furthermore, a high proportion of

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<sup>5</sup> Ireland's White Paper on Adult Education (2000) outlines six areas of priority: Consciousness Raising: to realise full potential; self-discovery; personal and collective development; Citizenship: to grow in self-confidence, social awareness and social responsibility; proactive role in shaping overall direction to the society and community/societal decision-making; Cohesion: to enhance social capital and empower those significantly disadvantaged; Competitiveness: to provide a skilled workforce; Cultural Development: role of adult education in enriching cultural fabric of society; Community Development: role of adult education in development of structural analysis and collective sense of purpose.

younger people in Europe are from migrant groups, some of whom lack the necessary paperwork to be legally employed in the EU. Migrant workers and their children pose particular challenges for social inclusion, which lifelong learning policies are only just beginning to address.

The nurturing of social capital has become increasingly important in old member states, for example the Republic of Ireland and the UK, as rising prosperity is coupled with growing social exclusion, which is seen as a threat to social stability. In countries like Ireland, with strong voluntary traditions, there is a strong emphasis on the need to nurture social cohesion through the incorporation of lifelong learning into neighbourhood regeneration strategies (see for example, the Irish Green Paper on Adult Education entitled Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning, Department for Education and Science, 1998). Sometimes, lifelong learning in this context is seen as a good in itself, and at other times it is portrayed as the vehicle for the development of human capital.

Adult and community education has traditionally been informed, at least in part, by a commitment to lifelong learning not only as the vehicle for personal growth and development, but also as a mechanism for progressive social change. From the nineteenth century, influential theorists – Grundtvig, Dewey, Tawney, Lindeman, and many others – argued that adult education was central to democracy and nation-building (Dewey 1916, Lindeman 1926, Eley 1987). From the mid-twentieth century, various theorists argued that education could contribute to the collective development of communities (Holford 1988). A more radical strand, of which the work of Freire (1972) is outstanding, developed collective approaches to education drawing on the innate expertise of excluded and oppressed communities: ‘pedagogies of the oppressed’. These approaches remain influential in some quarters – especially, perhaps, among educators themselves. However, in policy there has been a growing emphasis on human and social capital paradigms, and, in countries like England and Scotland, accreditation and funding systems have driven home the message that the state will only resource programmes which contribute to an individual’s employability. In many countries, the tradition of self-development and improvement continues through participation in a wide variety of leisure activities, but individuals are expected to fund their own personal growth interests. The web is increasingly being used for personal education purposes, with individuals benefiting from the free transfer of knowledge which it permits. Clearly, those living in extreme poverty are additionally disadvantaged by lacking access to the internet.

The social control functions of lifelong learning are evident in the growth of links to welfare benefit systems and in the uses of lifelong learning to promote particular ideologies. Older EU member states tend to have relatively generous levels of social welfare, and there are major concerns that these may produce incentives towards economic inactivity, rather than efforts to upskill and rejoin the labour market. As a result, in countries such as the UK, Belgium and Austria, receipt of social security benefits is tied to requirements

to participate in upskilling and ‘active labour market’ activities. In Austria, conscious efforts were made in the post-war period to use lifelong learning and other types of education to re-educate people away from adherence to national socialism. In new and accession member states, the emphasis on the value-free nature of the learning society, in contrast with the obvious ideological character of former Soviet-style education, may occlude the presence of less obvious ideological aspects, including the hegemony of market values.

## **Social Exclusion & Inclusion**

The terms social exclusion and social inclusion are commonly used in European social policy, although there is no monolithic pan-European definition of these concepts. Levitas (1998) identifies three particular political discourses associated with the concept of social exclusion and inclusion. The first version of social exclusion is associated with a redistributive discourse, and operates on the assumption that if an individual or household is living in poverty, then they are unlikely to be socially included. A relative definition is employed here, so that households with less than 60% of the median household income are regarded as living in poverty. Within this discourse, the way to increase social inclusion is by lifting individuals out of poverty particularly through progressive taxation and social transfers. Within this discourse, social exclusion and inclusion are inextricably linked with poverty. The second discourse deploys cultural rather than material explanations of social exclusion and inclusion. Within this discourse, an individual may be socially excluded if they reject social norms and values, or if they belong to a group lacking in political or social recognition. To achieve social inclusion within the terms of this discourse, it is necessary to encourage individuals and groups to accept dominant social values, or else to re-educate the wider society to value the cultural identity of the rejected group. The third, social integrationist discourse sees social inclusion primarily in terms of labour market attachment, and suggests that the means of achieving social inclusion is to encourage or require individuals to participate in paid work. These discourses of social exclusion and inclusion are not mutually exclusive, but weave in and out of the welfare and lifelong learning policies of European countries.

Within each of these discourses, it is evident that lifelong learning plays a key role. For example, within the redistributionist discourse, since education is regarded as a social good, those who have traditionally been excluded may achieve a greater degree of social inclusion if lifelong learning opportunities are opened up. Whether socially disadvantaged people are able to translate access to resources into improved life chances will depend on the quality and status of the education they receive. Within the cultural discourse, lifelong learning may be used to achieve a greater degree of social cohesion by educating people not only about social norms and values, but also about the

need to respect diversity. Finally, the social integrationist discourse may be promoted by using lifelong learning to enable people to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain and retain a job through initial training and upskilling.

Since social exclusion and inclusion have both material and cultural underpinnings, it is evident that any attempt to objectively define or quantify them would be unsuccessful. It would be possible, for example, for an individual who was not classified as living in poverty to still regard themselves as socially excluded on account of some other aspect of their social identity, for example, they might experience disrespect on account of their sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, political affiliation or religious belief. Similarly, terms such as social disadvantage are used loosely to define those who might be less socially privileged, without implying any absolute definition within a particular society or across societies.

## **Social Equality & Inequality**

As with notions of exclusion and inclusion, there is no absolute definition of social equality and inequality, but rather a range of competing definitions. The following discourses of equality are reflected in European and national social policy, although equality of opportunity is arguably the dominant discourse:

### *(i) Equality of process*

This implies ensuring that people are treated equally, for example, in lifelong learning this would involve ensuring that procedures for accessing courses of study were fair and transparent.

### *(ii) Equality of worth*

This involves ensuring that individuals within a society are treated with equal respect and have access to political rights such as the right to vote. In education, it would entail making efforts to ensure that certain groups do not get favourable treatment on account of their social or cultural characteristics. The representation of groups within formal and hidden curricula would also be important.

### *(iii) Equality of outcome*

This discourse of equality is based on the notion that societies should make every effort to ensure that wealth is equally spread amongst the population, or that any discrepancies are justifiable. Other indicators of social well-being, such as education and health outcomes, should not reflect disproportionalities between different groups.

### *(iv) Equality of opportunity*

There are two versions of this discourse. The first suggests that opportunities should depend on an individual's talents, merits and efforts, implying that





equality of opportunity will probably produce unequal outcomes. The second version of the discourse implies that equality of opportunity requires an effort to 'level the playing field'. Compensating for disadvantage in the field of lifelong learning might entail, for example, positive efforts to recruit young people and adults from socially disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education.

European social policy on equality has been driven both by social justice concerns and by the desire to achieve the conditions for market equality between countries who are both partners and competitors. In particular, legislation and regulation have sought to ensure that countries with less generous equality regimes do not enjoy a competitive advantage. European employment legislation and regulation currently identify six strands in relation to which discrimination is prohibited. These are the following: gender, race, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation and age. In education and lifelong learning, countries vary as to whether they have passed national legislation on equality, and the quality of statistics gathered at national level is also very variable.

## 4 Population, Labour Market Trends & Patterns of Participation

Lifelong learning, as revitalised in the 1990s (Dehmel, 2006), was seen in large part as a way to deal with European unemployment problems. The Lisbon Strategy (see chapter 5) argued that for Europe to be able to compete globally, it was considered necessary to develop a highly educated and skilled labour force. This strategy also emphasised the importance of social inclusion and personal development, suggesting that access to educational opportunities throughout the lifespan would allow citizens to contribute to their own well-being and to that of society. Lifelong learning therefore became part of educational, economic and social policy in the 1990s and the development of lifelong learning opportunities for all was considered an essential component of developing a knowledge economy (Jones, 2005). The EU actively promoted this development through its Structural Policies and the structural funds – the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

The chapter will examine participation in lifelong learning in the thirteen countries. In order to consider issues in relation to equal opportunities participation in relation to gender and age will also be discussed and, where possible, ethnicity. One aspect of the knowledge society is its emphasis on the role of new technologies. This chapter therefore also considers whether there are measures in the different countries to support the development of ICT skills. As lifelong learning is closely linked to labour policy lifelong learning participation rates will be examined in relation to demographic characteristics and labour market statistics for each country.

### Demography

There is considerable variation in the population in the 13 countries. Overall populations (2005) range from over 144 million in the largest country, Russia, with the smallest, Estonia, having a population of just over 1.3 million. Apart from Scotland, the six Northern European countries have all had increases in population since 1990. In Scotland the population has fluctuated. In the post-communist countries, populations have decreased since 1990. However, all the countries apart from Norway and Ireland have experienced a change in the demographic patterns with an increasingly elderly population (see Figure 4.1 and Statistical Report, Section A). These figures cover the period up to 2005. Population projections in the EU-25 countries (Eurostat, 2006) (please note this excludes Norway, Russia and Bulgaria) state that there will be a slow growth in the population across EU-25 countries, followed by stagnation from 2025. However, the growth will be unequal across the EU and it suggests that the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Hungary will experience a population decline earlier and these countries are expected to experience the largest declines. Of the 10 partner countries which were part of the EU at the

start of the project, only Ireland is expected to have an increase in population. United Nations projections confirm these trends suggesting that Northern Europe will have a very slight increase in population between 2005 and 2025, Western Europe is expected to remain constant over this period with the Russian Federation and Eastern European countries experiencing a considerable decline.<sup>6</sup> Table A0 in the statistical appendix which covers the period 2004-2028 also presents a similar picture. It shows the EU overall experiencing a slight increase in the population during this period but that there is a marked variation between EU countries and the Eastern European experiencing a declining population. The UN report suggests that immigration will contribute to maintaining and possibly increasing the populations in countries in Western and Northern Europe.

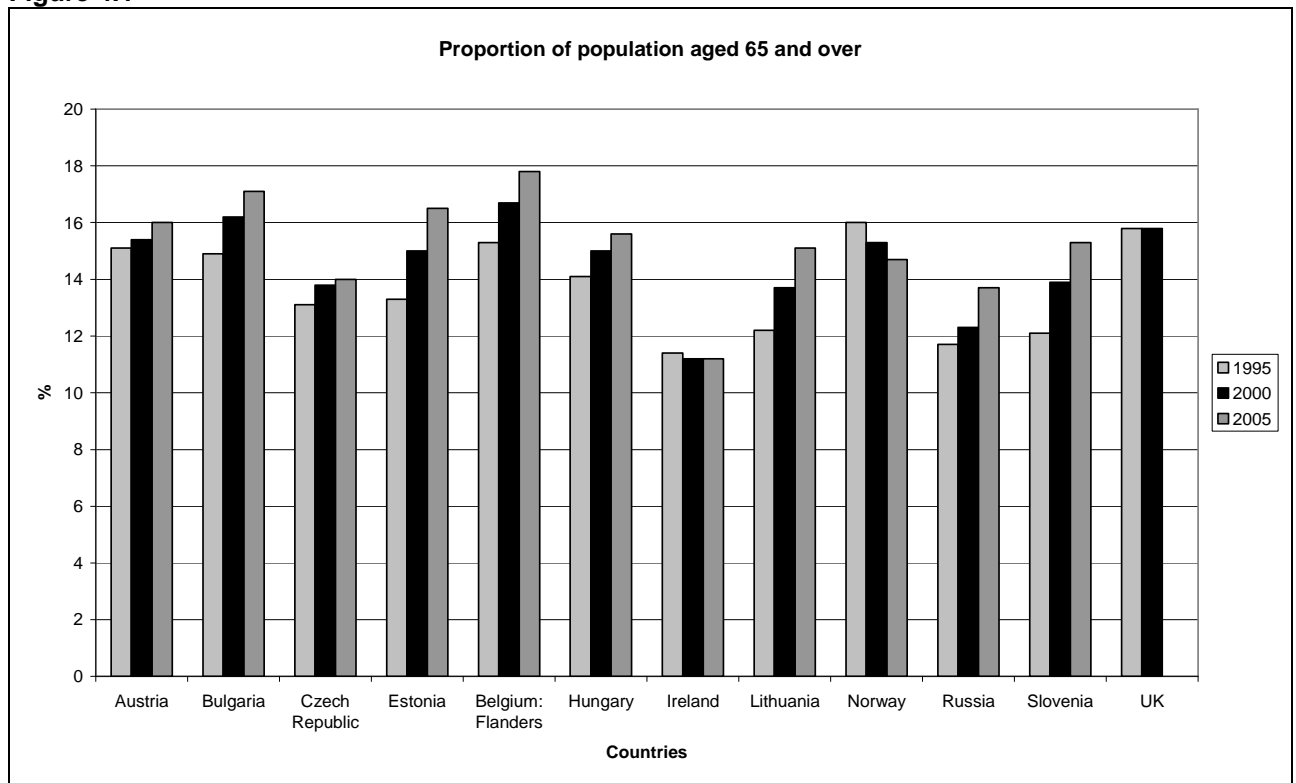
Changes in the age composition of the population are of importance as this impacts on the proportion of the population that are of working age. Eurostat data (European Communities, 2006) uses the age dependency ratio to examine the proportion of the working-age population compared to those that are dependent on that population. These data suggest that in the longer term (up to 2050) this ratio will be affected by an increase in the population of those over 60. It is suggested that the impact is limited in the near future and as can be seen from figure 4.1 there are variations between the countries.

It is clear that these projections are of importance to issues in relation to lifelong learning as changes in the age composition of a population may require changes in provision of education and training. This will be returned to below when participation rates for different age groups are considered.

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<sup>6</sup> See [www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WPP2004/WPP\\_2004\\_Volume\\_3.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WPP2004/WPP_2004_Volume_3.htm)

Figure 4.1



Source: Eurostat

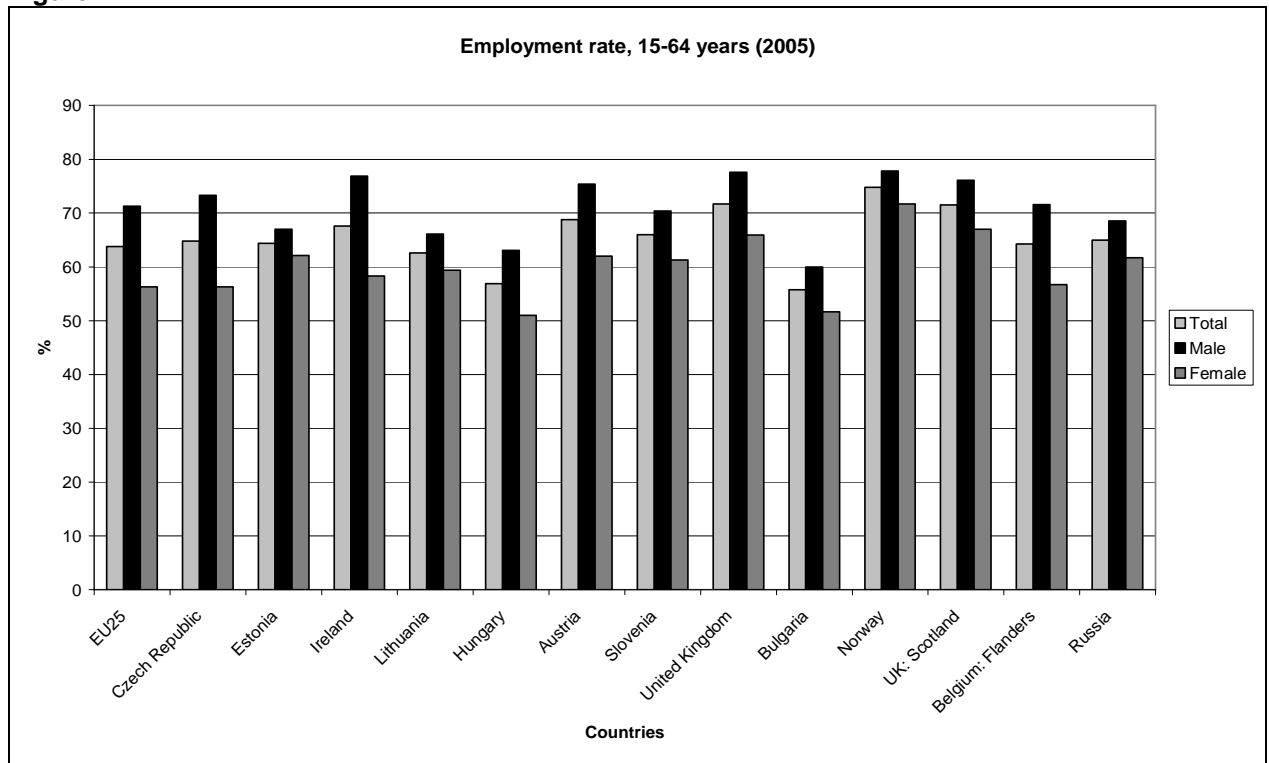
NB: The data for England and Scotland refers to the proportion of the population aged 60 and over and is therefore slightly higher compared to the other countries.

### Labour Market

The labour market indicators used here are employment rates, unemployment rates, economic activity and economic inactivity as these measures provide different insights into labour market functioning (see glossary for definitions of these terms).

The average EU employment rate was 63.8% in 2005; with corresponding figures for men at 71.3% and 56.3% for women. The rates vary in the 13 countries (see Figure 4.2), the lowest rates being found in Bulgaria and Hungary (around 57%), which together with Lithuania (62.6%) are the only countries with a rate below the EU average. Norway has the highest rate at 75% with the UK (including Scotland) at just under 72%. Countries with high employment rates tend to have a larger number of part-time workers (Eurostat Year Book 2005). Employment rates are generally lower for women in all countries; however, there are some notable differences with Ireland having the biggest difference between male and female employment rates at nearly 19 percentage points while in Flanders, Hungary, Austria and the UK differences are more than 10 percentage points. The remaining countries are below EU average difference between men and women, with Estonia having the smallest difference.

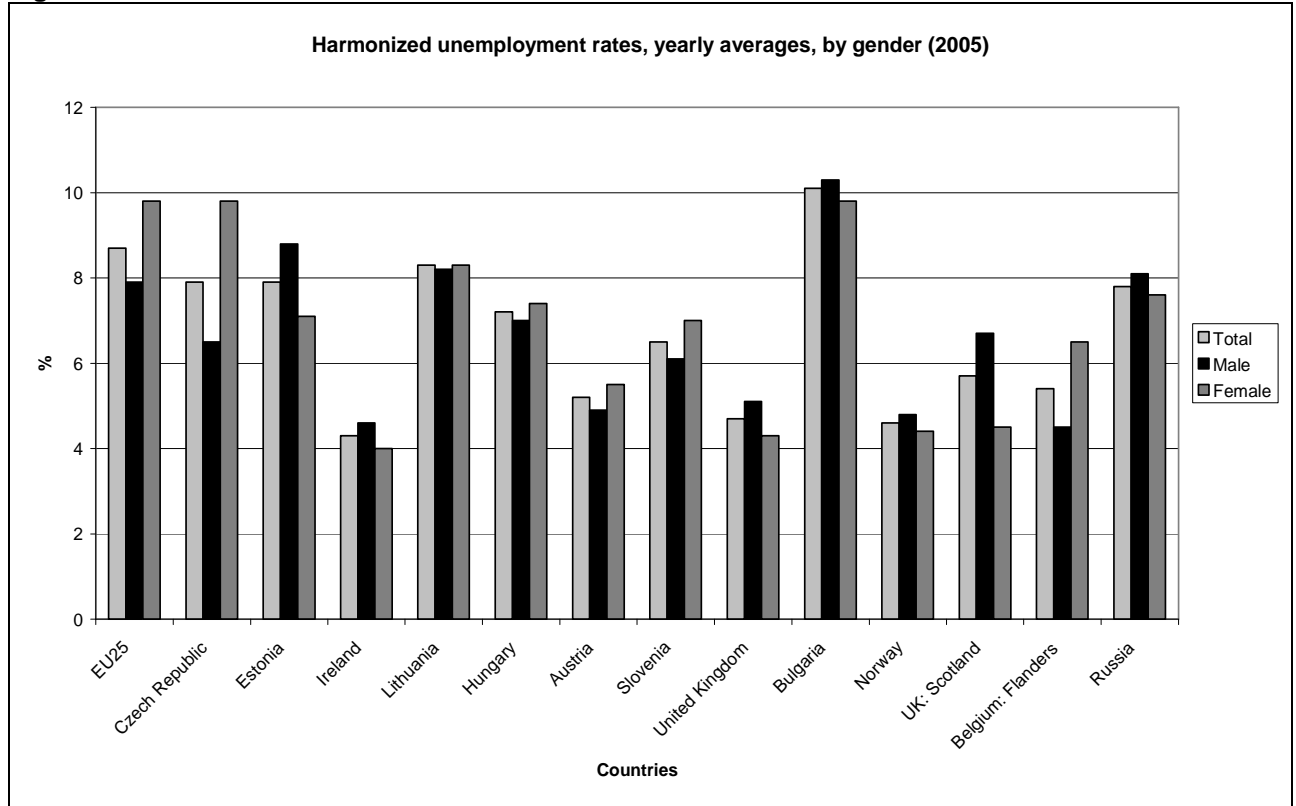
Figure 4.2



Source: Eurostat

The average unemployment rate for the EU was 8.7% in 2005; the figure for men was 7.9% and women 8.9%. Overall unemployment rates are below this average in Norway (6%), Ireland, the UK, (with Scotland having a slightly higher rate than the UK overall), Austria and Flanders (below the overall rate for Belgium). In the main, Russia, the Eastern and Central European countries have higher unemployment rates but only Bulgaria is above the EU-25 average (see Figure 4.3). However, in those countries with the highest unemployment rate the trend between 2000 and 2005 is downward, with a slight upward trend in most of the countries with lower rates. There are marked differences in unemployment rates between men and women, with particularly high unemployment rates for women in the Czech Republic. Flanders, Austria, Slovenia and Hungary also have higher unemployment rates for women though less marked than the Czech Republic. In Scotland and Estonia the difference is in the other direction with higher unemployment rates amongst men. This is also the case for the UK, Russia, Ireland, Bulgaria and Norway though the difference is not so great.

Figure 4.3

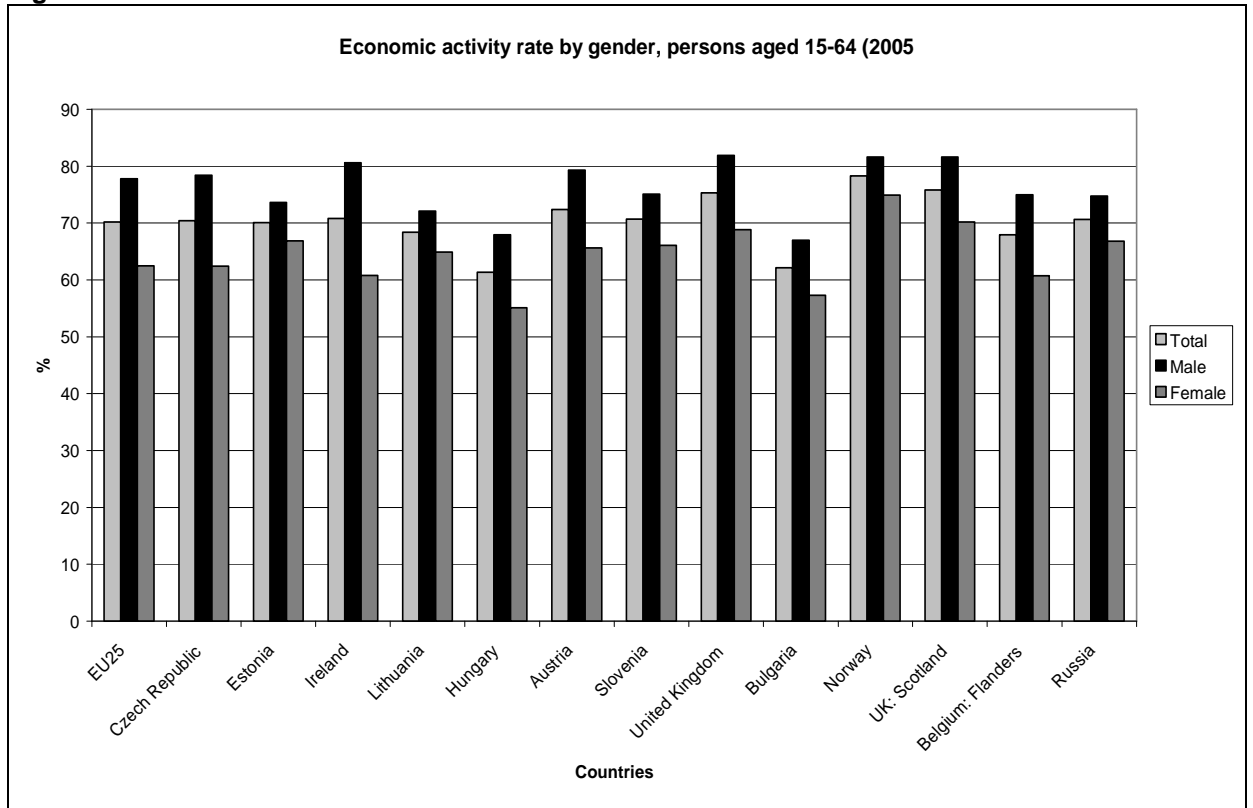


Source: Eurostat

NB: Figures for Flanders, Scotland and Russia are for 2004.

Employment and unemployment rates provide one form of data; however, economic activity and economic inactivity rates are measures showing the total available labour force compared to those not available for work. In all 13 countries the economic activity rate (see Figure 4.4) for men is higher than that for women, with the greatest differences in Ireland followed by the Czech Republic, Flanders and Austria. Conversely, as Figure 4.5 demonstrates, the economic inactivity rates are highest for women. It is likely that differences within the countries that reflect welfare provision are in part responsible for these differences, in particular differences in the provision of childcare.

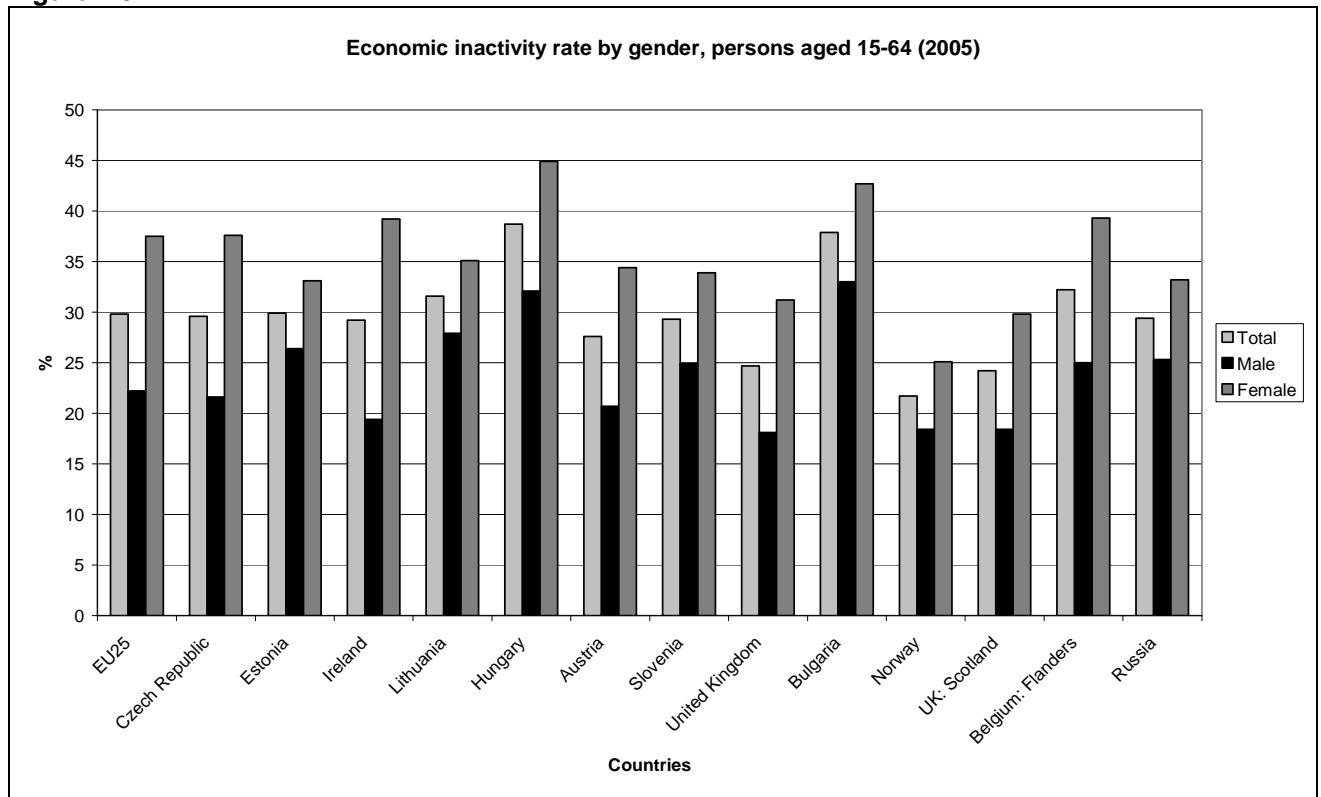
Figure 4.4



Source: Eurostat

NB: Figures for Flanders, Scotland and Russia are for 2004.

Figure 4.5



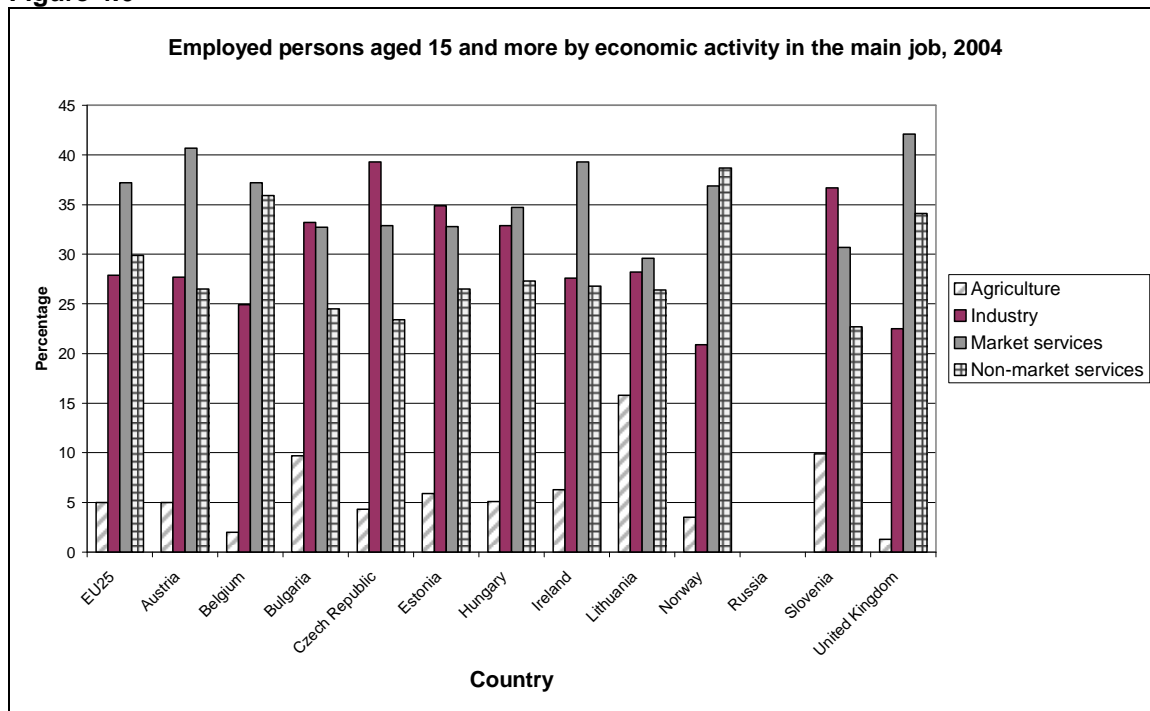
Source: Eurostat

Note: Figures for Flanders, Scotland and Russia are for 2004.

Unemployment rates for young people (15-24) are generally higher than for older age groups. In 2002 the differences between all 15-24 year olds and those no longer in education and training was not marked, except in the UK and Slovenia where the rate for those not in education and training was higher. However, in Lithuania and Norway the rate was lower for those not in education and training. The difference in UK and Slovenia, it is suggested, is due to availability of part-time work for students in these two countries (EU, Eurostat, Key Data on Education, 2005). This source also notes a concern about relatively high levels of unemployment for all 15-24 year olds in Belgium, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania and Bulgaria, though in Ireland there has been a recent decrease. However, beyond the younger age group, the benefit of ISCED level 5 or 6 education is considerable, especially for the 35-44 year group.



Figure 4.6



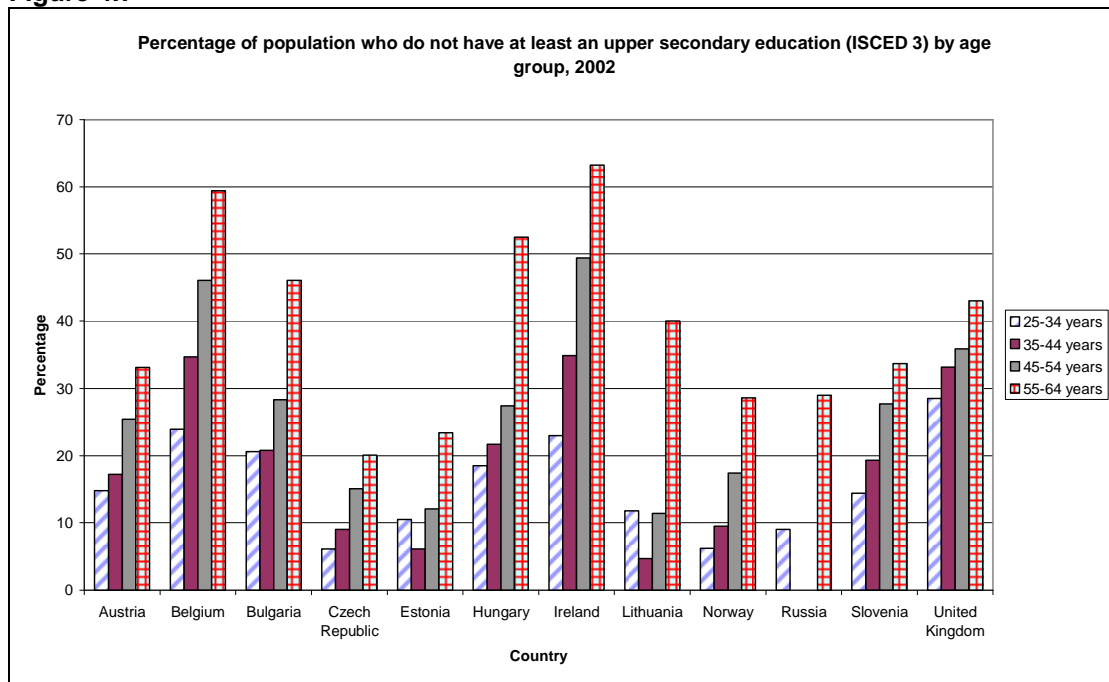
Source: Eurostat, Statistics in Focus 9/2005

To summarise, the Central and Eastern European countries and Russia generally have lower employment and higher unemployment rates than the Northern and Western European countries. However, in the former the trend has been for decreasing unemployment rates over the period 2000 to 2005, with a slight increase in the latter group. Whilst there is an ‘east-west’ split in unemployment rates overall, this is not the case in relation to gender. The UK, with Scotland in particular, Estonia, Bulgaria, Russia, Norway and Ireland all have higher unemployment rates for men, with the rest having higher rates for women. In all countries economic activity rates are higher for men than for women; however, the differences are greatest in Ireland and the Czech Republic. Labour market indicators thus provide little basis for grouping these countries in a meaningful way; indeed they may indicate that there are some important differences between countries that could be considered similar (such as post-communist countries). However, differences in types of employment exist (Fig. 4.6) and industry provides nearly 40% of all employment in the Czech Republic and around 35% in Slovenia and Estonia. This compares to the UK and Norway where it accounts for only 20% of employment and the service industries dominate. Private sector service employment is also strong in Austria, Belgium and Ireland. A domination of service industry employment is often considered part of the knowledge economy (see Hudson, 2006 for an elaboration of definitions of the knowledge society). What is of importance here is a recognition of different local contexts and the way that these might influence the manner in which particular countries engage with the developing lifelong learning opportunities for their citizens.

## Attainment in Compulsory & Tertiary Education

Educational attainment levels (see Figure 4.7) are generally higher for younger age groups than older people indicating an increase over time in the level of qualifications within all the countries. However, there is some variation between the countries. In Norway, the Czech Republic and Russia (though note that Russian data comes from a different source) more than 90% of the youngest age group (25-34) have at least ISCED 3 level education. The Czech Republic has overall the greatest proportion of its working age population qualified to ISCED level 3 or above, followed by Estonia and Norway. In Russia the level is similar but data are missing for the middle two age groups which makes comparison problematic. Estonia and Lithuania are the only two countries where the educational level of 25-34 year olds is lower than the next nearest age group, 35-44 year olds. This is attributed to the changes in the education system following independence and the advent of a market economy (Eurostat, 2005, p. 308). Ireland, Belgium and Hungary show the most marked differences between the educational level of the youngest and the oldest age group, in the case of Ireland it is a difference of around 40 percentage points. The United Kingdom (including Scotland) show the highest level of those aged 25-34 who have not achieved ISCED level 3 but the differences between the different age groups are not as marked as in the previous three countries.

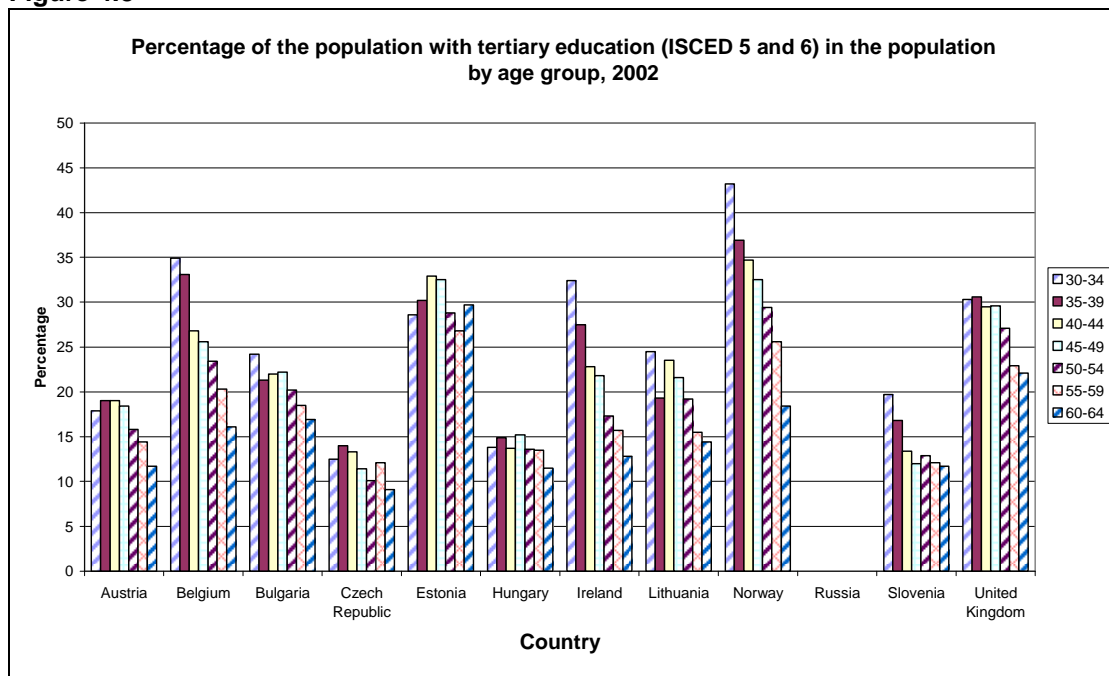
Figure 4.7



Source: Eurostat, Key Data on Education, 2005, p. 307;

NB: Figures for Russia are an estimation from year 2003 and are only for the youngest and oldest age group, Source: OECD 2005, Education at a Glance,

Figure 4.8



Source: Eurostat, 2005

Figure 4.8 shows that Norway followed by Belgium, Ireland and the United Kingdom have the largest numbers in the age group 30-34 qualified to ISCED level 5/6, in these countries apart from the United Kingdom there is

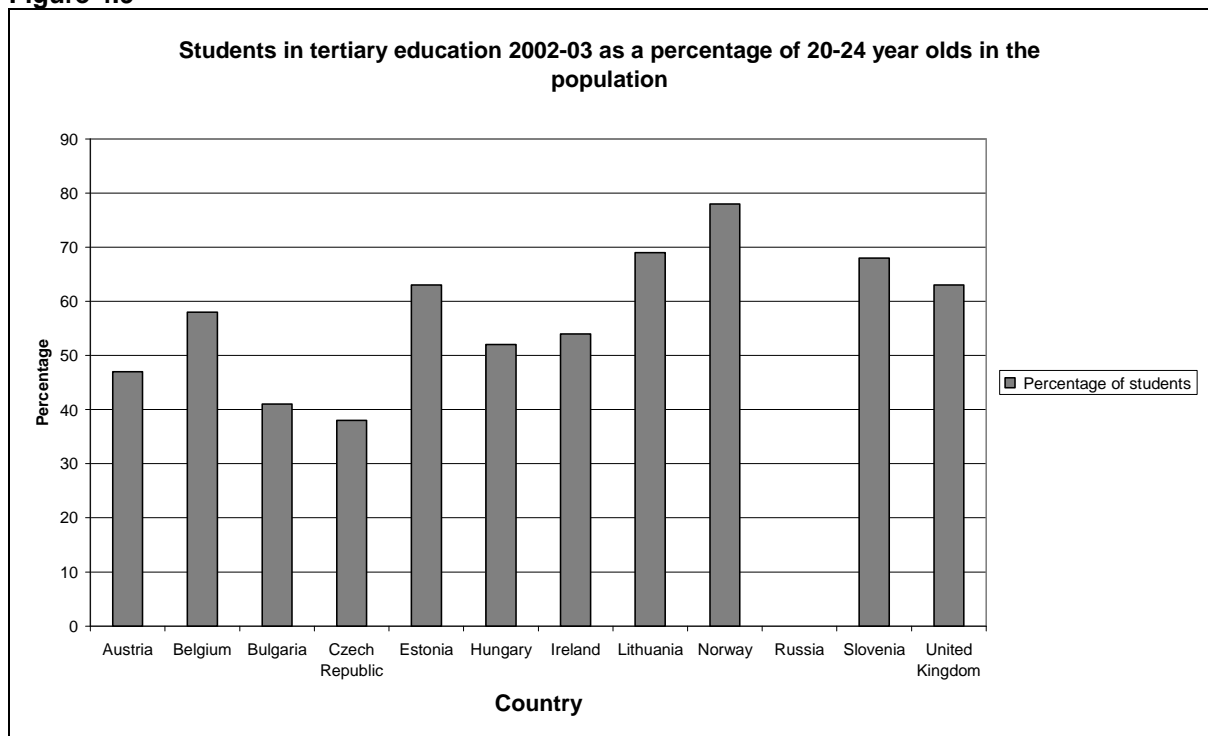
considerable difference between the oldest and the youngest age group with the youngest age group being more highly qualified. Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia show similar patterns to these other countries but with less marked differences between the age groups. In Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary the level of education is slightly lower in the youngest age group than in the 30-44 groups. The differences in these groups are relatively small and in all three the oldest age group is the least qualified. Overall then the level of education in the countries has risen over the long term; however, there is a suggestion that there has been some levelling off in terms of educational attainment for younger age groups. In those post-communist countries where the highest level of attainment in the youngest age group is lower than the older age groups, the reason may be changes following independence.

The data on attainment does not demonstrate a clear cut split between the countries, though Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic have relatively low proportions of citizens qualified to level ISCED 5-6 and relatively larger numbers of employees in industry who may not require qualifications at this level. However, this does not account for the relatively low level of qualifications in the population at this level as Austria has a high level of employment in service industry and Estonia has a relatively high proportion of its population in industry and a relatively highly qualified workforce.

### **Participation in Post-compulsory Education & Training**

Participation in tertiary education (ISCED 5 and 6) varies between the countries. Data from Eurostat shows that, as a percentage of the population aged 20-24 years old, Norway, Lithuania, Slovenia, the UK and Estonia have the highest levels. Out of the countries shown (omitting Russia for which no data is available) the Czech Republic has the lowest level of students enrolled.

Figure 4.9



Source: Eurostat, Statistics in focus, 19/2005

The national reports for Bulgaria, Flanders and Scotland all report increases in participation in tertiary education during the 1990s but state that there has been a levelling of the participation rate in recent years. Norway stated that there had been a downward trend in continuing education during the late 1990s but a slight increase in 2003 which is likely to be due to a change in data collection; however, it is worth noting that the level in this country is the highest amongst the 13 countries. Flanders and Austria report that higher education is mainly attended by younger people. Ireland, Scotland and England also show a similar pattern but in these countries there are deliberate measures to widen access to higher education for mature and non-traditional students. However, there are some differences between these countries according to the Eurostat Education statistics. The United Kingdom has the greatest age range of all EU countries in students in tertiary education with a span from 19 to 40; in the other countries the age range is far more limited. It could be suggested then that the UK measures to widen participation has had an impact on provision for mature students. Bulgaria, Lithuania and Russia all mention that participation rates differ markedly between urban and rural with participation being higher in the bigger cities. (National Reports).

Education statistics at ISCED levels 5 and 6 are problematic due to the different types of programmes in higher education in the different EU countries and this should be noted when interpreting the figures. The Austrian data (fig 4.8, p. 9) showing relatively low levels of qualifications at ISCED level 5 and 6 may be accounted for by the fact that most vocational qualifications are rated

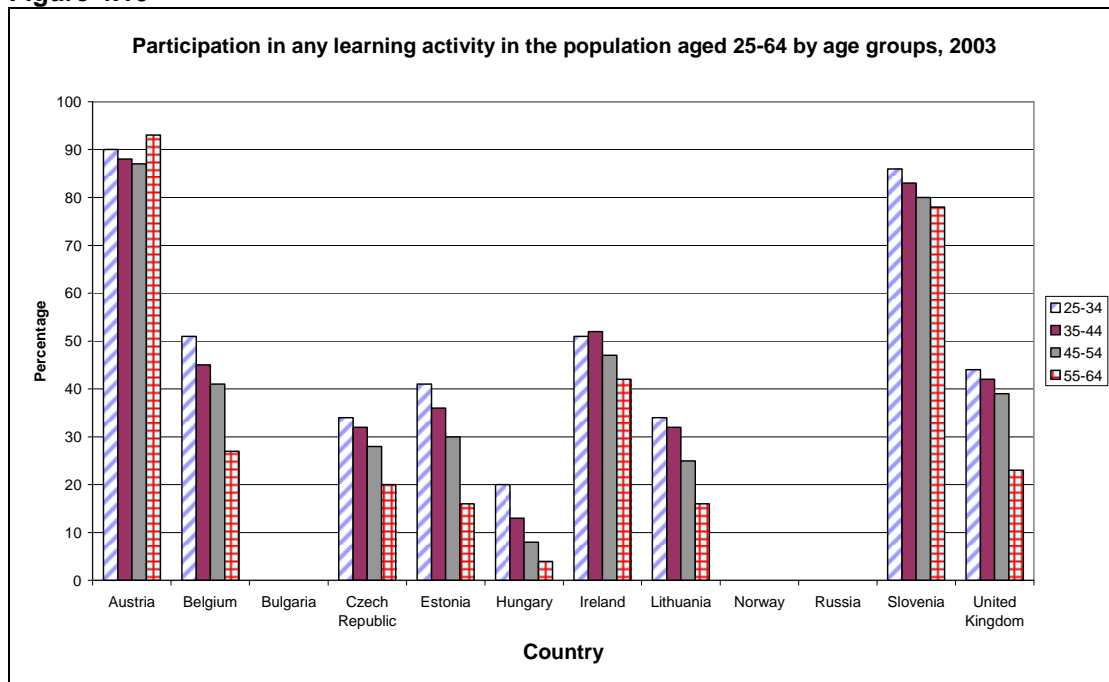
as below these levels. This is not the case in other countries such as the UK. The Bologna process aims to harmonise education at this level and, whilst all countries have officially adopted the Bologna agreement, they are still in the process of implementing it.

There are gender differences in higher education and the percentage of female students overall in the EU was 54.6%. The number of female graduates in 2002-03 was even higher – 58.3% - suggesting that the drop-out rates may be lower for female than male students. The only exception is Austria where the enrolments were higher than the graduation rate (Eurostat, Statistics in focus 19/2005).

Figure 4.10 based on Eurostat data (Statistics in Focus, 8/2005) provides some insights into the participation in all forms of lifelong learning. It demonstrates some considerable differences between countries with very high levels of participation in Austria and Slovenia. Bulgaria, and the non EU countries, Russia and Norway, are not included in this analysis, and there are no separate data for Flanders and Scotland. Whilst it is clear that there are some considerable differences between the countries, recording of informal learning is problematic. Data collected through the Labour Force Survey may have methodological limitations for this purpose.

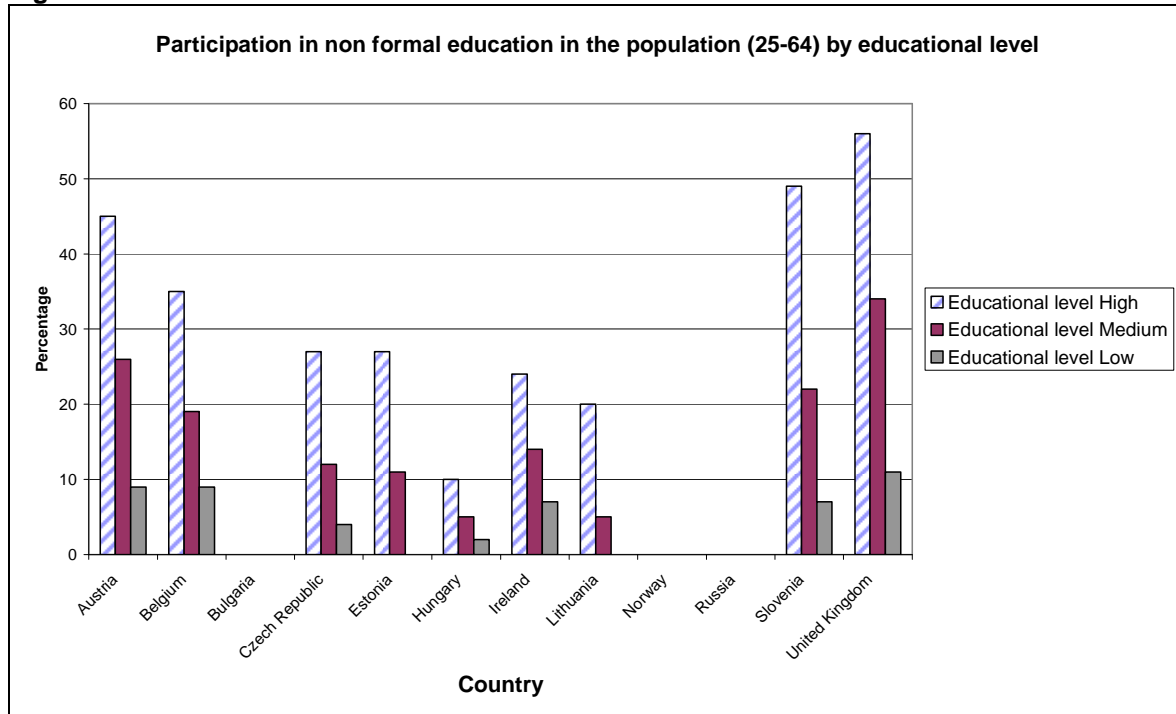
When non-formal education is considered in relation to educational level there are also some country differences though the trend is similar. The levels are highest in all countries for those with highest levels of education (see Figure 4.11) and the UK has the highest level of participation in non-formal education, followed by Slovenia and Austria. The lowest level is to be found in Hungary. However, the intensity of non-formal education is greatest for those who are unemployed as they are targeted to participate in longer training courses (Eurostat, Statistics in focus 8/2005).

Figure 4.10



Source: Statistics in Focus (8/2005) Lifelong learning in Europe  
 NB: the figures for the UK do not include informal learning

Figure 4.11



Source: Statistics in Focus (8/2005) Lifelong learning in Europe

The National Reports confirm the variation in the rate of participation in non-formal learning and adult education (see Figure 4.10). The UK (Scotland and

England) report the highest rate with around 35% of 25-34 year olds having participated in job-related training. Austria reports 25% participation in non-formal learning over a 12 month period, Estonia states that participation in adult learning has remained stable over the past 10 years at 15%; Hungary reports a figure of 3.2% in 2002 which increased to 4% in 2003, though the Eurostat figure for Hungary is slightly higher than the one reported in the National Report. However, it is important to note that variations in data collection are probably leading to some discrepancies. A further issue is raised by the lack of conceptual clarity in the term 'non-formal' learning and that boundaries between non-formal and informal learning are fuzzy (Colley, et al, 2002). This suggests that comparisons between countries in relation to non-formal and informal learning should be treated with caution, though there are some overall trends that have been experienced by several of the countries:

- employed people with higher level of education are likely to participate more in further learning and training than those with lower level education
- there is regional variation in terms of access to education between cities, towns and rural areas
- those employed in the public sector are more likely to be able to access training than those in the private sector
- employed people have greater access to education and training than unemployed or economically inactive
- unemployed people are more likely to participate in longer, more intense levels of training than those in employment

## Gender

Overall women outnumber men in continuing education; with the exception, however, that in most countries men tend to outnumber women in vocational training. The Hungarian report states that differences between men and women are minimal; in Lithuania men are represented to a greater extent in vocational education and at PhD level education (National Reports). Currently there are more women graduating in all countries (although figures for Russia are not available). In Austria the gender difference is slight (106 women per 100 men), whereas in Estonia it is considerable (214 women per 100 men) (Eurostat, Key data on Education in Europe, 2005). In higher education there are gender differences in subject areas, with the majority of graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction being men and this is also the case in science, mathematics and computing. The Labour Force Survey also shows that women participate more overall in education and training than men, with the exception of Belgium (Figure 4.12).<sup>7</sup> Men are also

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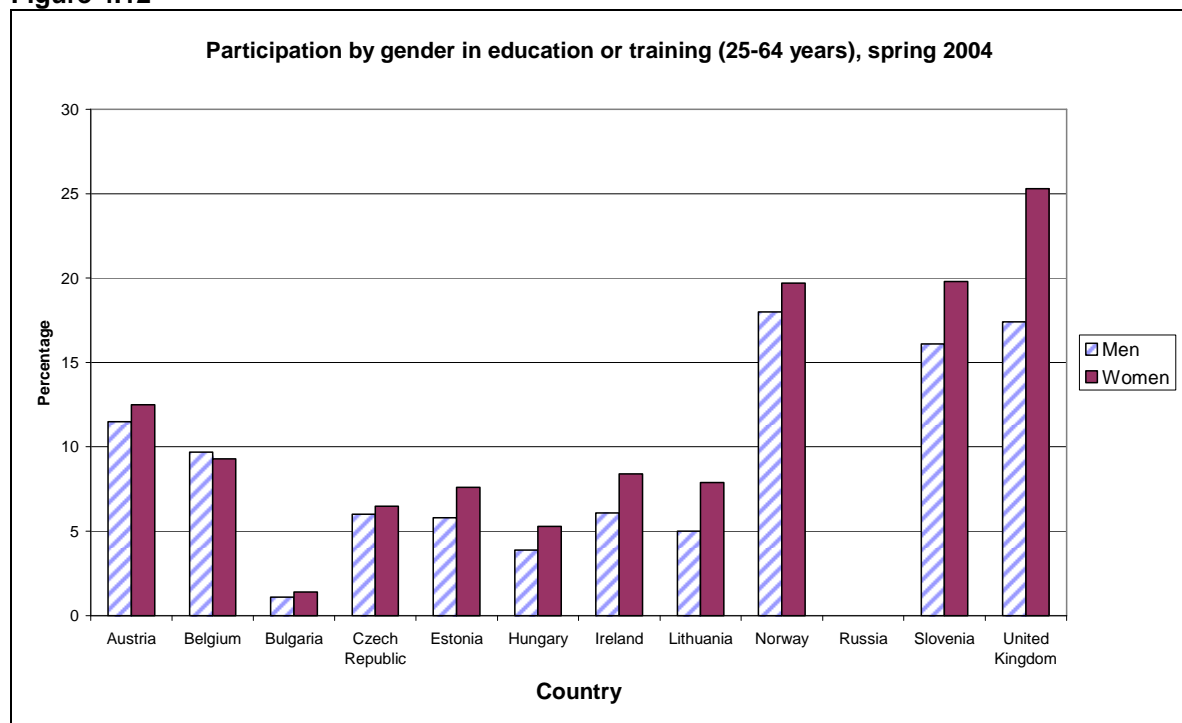
<sup>7</sup> The Irish team points out that in Ireland, women's community education groups have been key drivers in the field of lifelong learning in recent decades.



more likely to leave school early compared to women, except in the Czech Republic (Figure 4.13). Gender differences are particularly marked in Estonia.

However, the data on the labour market shows that fewer women are economically active than men and in relation to economic benefits from education, it is mentioned in the Russian National Report that men benefit economically more from their education. OECD data (OECD, 2005) show that generally this is the case though Norway and Belgium are exceptions.

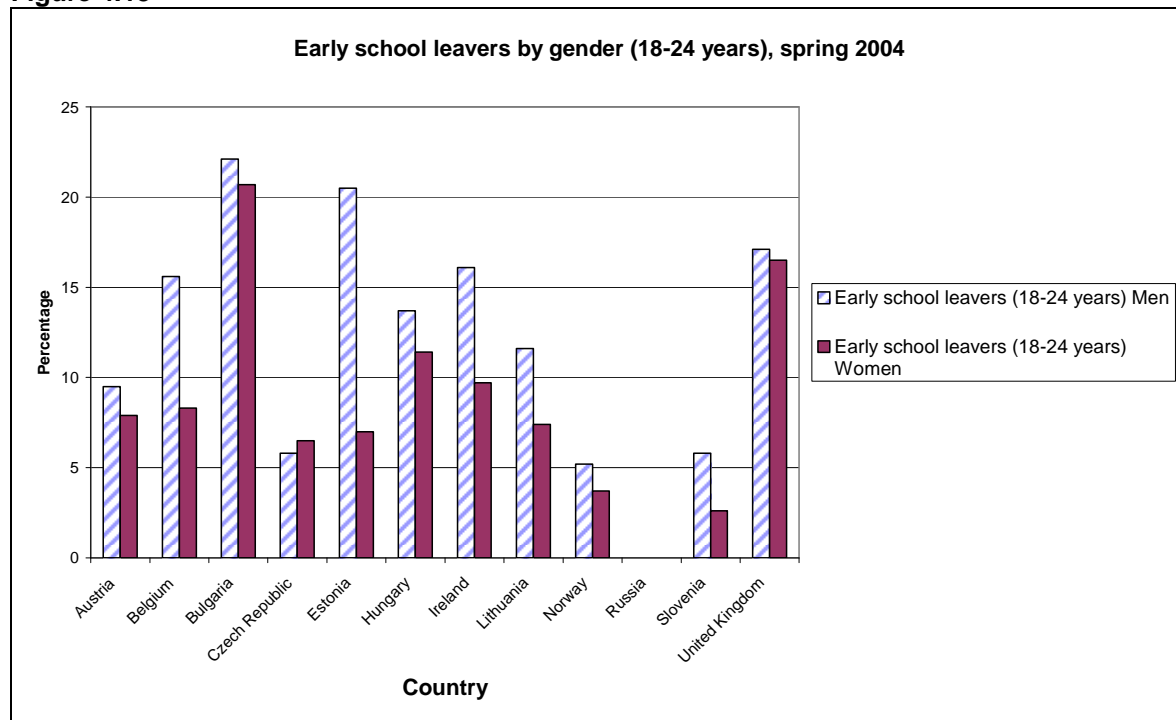
**Figure 4.12**



Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, Principal Results 2004 (Statistics in focus 9/2005)

Note: There are no comparable data for Russia

Figure 4.13



Source: Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey, Principal Results 2004 (Statistics in focus 9/2005)

Note: There are no comparable data for Russia.

## Age

The national reports note that in all countries, apart from Norway, it is younger people who have the greatest access to education and training. In Norway there is very little difference but older people tend to be involved with shorter training courses. When all forms of learning are considered the picture is similar, though data are only available for the EU countries. However, in Austria, according to official EU statistics, it is the oldest age group that reports most participation in any kind of learning<sup>8</sup> and there is not a marked difference between the age groups in Slovenia (see Figure 4.10).

## Ethnic Minority

There are limited data in all the reports on ethnic minority groups though the Flanders, English and Scottish reports highlight that the indigenous population is better represented in tertiary education than students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The national reports from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania note that the Roma population are underrepresented in tertiary (and compulsory) education; in Ireland, the Traveller population is

<sup>8</sup> On methodological grounds, the Austrian team questions this finding.

similarly under-represented. However, in Lithuania, the Russian population is generally well educated (supplementary communication from the Lithuanian research team). In Estonia, the extent of the population of non-Estonian origin is as high as about 31 per cent;<sup>9</sup> most belong to the Russian-speaking minority. Knowledge of the Estonian language and the possession of Estonian citizenship differentiate labour market chances of the two language groups.<sup>10</sup> Knowledge of the official language provides better access to local higher education institutions and higher-status jobs, and is also a crucial prerequisite for foreigners' obtaining Estonian citizenship; therefore the state organises and co-finances special language courses for ethnic minorities.

It is also worth noting that figures for ethnic minorities statistics are not distinguished in many of the statistics on lifelong learning, education and the labour market.

### **Social Inequality & Lifelong Learning**

Lifelong learning is currently promoted as one way that social inequality can be tackled, in particular to ensure that individuals have the relevant knowledge and skills to enable them to participate in the labour market. An example of this approach is provided by the 'Skills for Life' strategy produced by the Department for Education and Employment in England.

This role of learning as a way of dealing with social inclusion is questioned by some. Rogers (2006), argues that this represents the excluded as having a 'deficit' that can be remedied provided they engage with learning. It also does not question the way that the formal education system operates. A different way of exploring the exclusion is the 'disadvantage' paradigm. According to Rogers, this approach focuses on the way that people are excluded by elites and advocates would argue for a change of the system, for example through de-schooling as advocated by Illich. Field (2006) argues that social inclusion and exclusion are terms that have replaced the term poverty. This, he maintains, signals a change away from dealing with poverty through social change and acknowledging that there are structural causes for poverty that have to be managed through a welfare system, to an acceptance that inequality is an inevitable consequence of capitalism and that the government's task is to promote inclusion into society. The key point for Field is that the discourse has changed to emphasise individual agency. Hudson, exploring the relationship between inequality and the knowledge economy (Hudson, 2006), claims that development of the knowledge economy is likely to increase inequality as changes in employment patterns will lead to differentials in income. This is due to the development of a highly skilled workforce serving the knowledge economy, a decline in skilled trades and an

<sup>9</sup> Data on 2005 are from the Estonian Statistical Office database: [www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee)

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Hallik et al. (2001), Pettai and Hallik (2002), Evans and Lipsmeyer (2002), Hallik (2002), Kazjulja and Saar (forthcoming), Kazjulja and Roosalu (2007).

increase in unskilled labour. If this is the case, the fact that those already highly educated are more likely to engage in further training may serve to exacerbate this trend. The data in Figure 4.10 tends to support this claim.

The National Reports do not explore social inequality across all the equality strands. However, several of the reports from the post-communist countries note that social inequality has increased since the early 1990s and this includes access to educational opportunities. The Norwegian report comments that there is now provision for those requiring to improve their literacy skills and the Flemish report notes that language learning is essential for immigrants in order to encourage social cohesion. In Estonia, there is a concern about social exclusion among members of the Russian-speaking population,<sup>11</sup> which is concentrated in the Eastern Estonian regions of Ida-Virumaa. As Saar and Kazjulja (forthcoming) show, patterns of advantage and disadvantage in the life courses of non-Estonians in Estonia have been cumulative. By and large, social exclusion in the early 1990s was consolidated during the following period. Increased post-socialist economic risks fell disproportionately on disadvantaged groups; those who benefitted were already better rewarded.<sup>12</sup> As in Flanders, Estonia offers language courses. Re-training for new specialisation is also offered to the unemployed, although this is mostly on a project basis, and relies heavily on state labour office and EU funds.

The reports from England, Scotland and Ireland mention measures to widen access to further and higher education for students who have not traditionally been involved in higher education. In the UK as a whole it has been mandatory for higher education institutions to gather fine-grained data on social class, ethnicity and disability among their students which allows for monitoring of social inequality in higher education.

## ICT

ICT is mentioned in two ways in the national reports: (i) as a means for education through distance learning; (ii) as a skill that is required in today's society. Slovenia and Hungary note its role in provision of education, whilst Scotland mentions that ICT is part of the broader concept of literacies. A recent Eurostat news release indicates that there are problems with basic computer skills and differences between EU countries (Eurostat News Release, 83/2006, 20.06.06). In this news release more than 50% of the population in Hungary and Lithuania are identified as lacking in basic ICT

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Aasland and Flotten (2001), Kennedy (2002), Downes (2003), Gil-Robes (2004).

<sup>12</sup> In this sense the situation of non-Estonians in Estonia is quite close to life course patterns in East Germany where later corrections were also rare (Diewald et al., 2006). There are also similar features in recruitment process to elite and upper service class positions. After reunification a West German "import" to elite and upper service class positions in East Germany has taken place (Solga, 2006). However, in Estonia, liberal ideology has been fused with nationalism: non-Estonians in higher social positions were often replaced by Estonians (Kennedy, 2002)

skills; whereas the corresponding figure for the UK was only 25% and for Norway it was only 10%. Those with higher education generally have better ICT skills and older people are generally less skilled in all countries. (There was a lack of data for some countries for the 55-74 age group, however).

## Summary

Overall there is only limited evidence for an ageing population in the near future within the EU with Norway and Ireland being least affected by an ageing population. However, the trend in the longer term is for an increasingly dependent ageing population in European countries and this will occur more quickly within some of the project partner countries. Those most at risk are Russia, the former Eastern states of Lithuania and Estonia, the Czech Republic and Hungary also fall into this category. It may be that the improvement in levels of attainment and qualifications will help ameliorate the impact of the ageing population in some of the countries. However, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Hungary have seen a slight decrease in those with ISCED level 5 and 6 qualifications in the younger age groups. These countries are also among those most at risk of a rapidly ageing population. For these countries the concentration of education and training provision within the younger population is a valid policy solution. The data suggests that this is where most of the provision is concentrated. For the countries where the qualifications are generally lower for older people there may be a need to examine where to focus provision of training and education. This could be particularly evident in relation to ICT skills which tend to be better amongst young people. The Western and Northern European where populations are least likely to decline in the immediate future may still face educational challenges as immigration is one factor in maintaining the population steady. This group may have qualifications that are not recognised in the host country and may require support in learning the language of the host country. Development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is therefore likely to be beneficial.

Unemployment rates are generally higher in post-communist countries but these rates are reducing and those in the Western and Northern European countries have increased slightly. There are some differences in terms of the sectors of employment with industry tending to be more important in the post-communist countries than in the Western and Northern European countries where services dominate.

In terms of provision and participation in lifelong learning the following has been noted:

- demographic changes are likely to affect the thirteen countries in different ways and pose different challenges. Those with a more rapidly declining population may need to focus on education and

training for older people, whilst countries which rely on immigration to maintain their population might require better provision of language learning and better ways of recognising qualifications from other countries. In addition, those countries where there is a suggestion of a decrease in higher level (ISCED 5 and 6) qualifications may need to consider how to reverse this trend.

- employed people with higher levels of education participate more in further learning and training,
- there is regional variation in terms of access to education between cities, towns and rural areas in some countries.
- those employed in the public sector are more likely to be able to access training than those in the private sector,
- employed people have greater access to education and training than unemployed or economically inactive though the intensity (duration) of training programmes is generally greater for unemployed people,
- women participate more in formal education except in vocational education where young men outnumber women,
- in all countries apart from Norway younger people participate more in education and training than older age groups,
- social inequality in participation in education has increased since independence in post-communist countries,
- there are no statistics in key data sets on education with regards to ethnic minority groups.

## 5 The European Union & Lifelong Learning

One of the aims of the LLL2010 project is to explore conceptualisations of 'lifelong learning', the 'learning [or 'knowledge'] society' and the 'learning citizen' in European Union policy. In undertaking this element of its work, however, the research team had to interpret the nature and purpose of this objective in the light of the overall aims and purposes of the project. The central focus of LLL2010 is 'the contribution of education systems to the process of making lifelong learning a reality and its [*sic*] role as a potential agency for social integration' (Project Summary); the critical analysis of EU policy which follows is to be seen principally as a contribution to that overarching purpose. This chapter therefore focusses on the extent to which European lifelong learning policies and initiatives address issues with which LLL2010 is concerned, such as human and social capital concepts, active citizenship, knowledge society and equal opportunities. Attention is also paid to the way in which policy co-ordination between the European and national level can contribute to establishing congruence in lifelong learning policies.

### Education Policy & the Shaping of EU Lifelong Learning

It is a commonplace that only with the Treaty of Maastricht (signed in 1992) did education become unambiguously an element of EU competence. Education was 'not explicitly alluded to in the Treaty of Rome, and there is little evidence to suggest that it was considered important to the original design of the Community' (Blitz 2003, 2). With rather minor exceptions (such as the decision to establish the European University Institute), education appears to have been a 'taboo subject' in debates at European level until the early 1970s (Blitz 2003, 4). In 1971 Education Ministers agreed an uncontroversial and non-binding resolution which 'aimed to provide the population as a whole with the opportunities for general education, vocational training and life-long learning' (Blitz 2003, 5), and in 1974 – influenced by the first enlargement – the Education Ministers agreed to encourage 'co-operation' in various priority sectors, while preserving 'the originality of educational traditions and policies in each country' (CEC 1979, 2).

These two themes, of co-operation and diversity, enabled the Commission to move forward while minimising conflict with member states. Blitz describes the 1970s decisions as 'declaratory resolutions ... agreed at minimal cost to the member states', but sees them as important in providing a basis for incremental development, led chiefly by EU functionaries: 'co-operation generated further co-operation and new ideas about the role of education in the Community' (Blitz 2003, 15). However, what stands out is the tendency of

policy development creatively to conflate education as a universal value with the economic requirements of the single market. At the same time, the Commission and the Community put little emphasis on lifelong learning in the 1970s, the principal, if marginal, exceptions being in relation to the education of migrant workers and transitions from school to working life – both clearly related to the single market.

With a policy in being, the 1980s saw a continued incremental extension in educational activities, helped by European Court of Justice decisions and the establishment of a Directorate General. However, the focus remained on a limited range of activities, chiefly in support of improved school curricula and quality, though with a marked European content. In a mid-1980s statement on 'The European Community and Education', concern with lifelong learning, as now understood, was limited: limited to school-to-work transitions and 'adult anti-illiteracy campaigns'; even the commitment to education for migrant workers was now cast very clearly in terms of supporting the education of the children of migrants (CEC 1985). In general, the downplaying of lifelong concerns in the Community's education policy in the 1980s mirrored the attitudes of most international organisations: from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, international and inter-governmental bodies 'said relatively little' about lifelong learning, and the notion of lifelong learning as formulated in the early 1970s (most notably in the Faure Report (UNESCO 1972)) 'almost disappeared from the[ir] policy agendas' (Dehmel 2006, 51).

A key characteristic of lifelong education as conceptualised in the 1970s was its humanistic dimension. As many authors have pointed out, when lifelong learning re-emerged in national and international policies in the 1990s, the emphasis was firmly on aiding economic performance, whether individual or societal (Boshier 1998; Field 2006). Within the EU, however, this was in some respects a distinct advantage. The Community's 'competence' in education had always been restricted. The principle of subsidiarity implied that most educational activity should be organised and governed by member states; and any attempt by the Commission (or any other Community body) to intervene in national educational affairs had to be based on the EC's core aims, as expressed in the founding treaties. This implied that advances had to be grounded in how far specific educational measures furthered the common market. Vocational education clearly fitted this aim; but wider desires to create a 'people's Europe' were now 'subservient to economic concerns' (Blitz 2003, 9). Instead, action programmes in the 1980s, such as 'Erasmus', had to be based on the need to strengthen the Community's economic position.

In providing a new foundation for the Community (or as it now became, the European Union) the Maastricht Treaty (1992) provided a new foundation for EU educational policy. For the first time, the Union itself had competence to make 'a contribution to education and training of quality and to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States' (Article G). This general aim was of course circumscribed by the principle of subsidiarity. More specifically, however, a



number of aims of Community action were set out. These related chiefly to initial rather than post-initial education:

- developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States;
- encouraging mobility of students and teachers, inter alia by encouraging the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study;
- promoting cooperation between educational establishments;
- developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States;
- encouraging the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio- educational instructors;
- encouraging the development of distance education. (Article G)

To the extent that the Treaty explicitly addressed lifelong (in the sense of post-school or post-initial) education or learning, it did so again in relation to the economic priorities of the Community. The Community was to 'implement a vocational training policy' which should aim to:

- facilitate adaptation to industrial changes, in particular through vocational training and retraining;
- improve initial and continuing vocational training in order to facilitate vocational integration and reintegration into the labour market;
- facilitate access to vocational training and encourage mobility of instructors and trainees and particularly young people;
- stimulate cooperation on training between educational or training establishments and firms;
- develop exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the training systems of the Member States. (Article G)

Following Maastricht, therefore, those in the Commission who sought to develop lifelong learning policy were both newly empowered and constrained. The EU now clearly had a remit to develop educational policy – no longer could member states object on principle to the Commission's work in this field. Unsurprisingly, initial education or schooling was clearly at the forefront of the Treaty-makers' minds, and for this purpose there was a clear specification of areas of Community activity. A stronger 'European' dimension was also explicitly to the fore. In relation to lifelong learning, it is clear that the Treaty-makers saw the priorities as relating to vocational training.

The Treaty does, of course, provide general authority for the EU, and thus to the Commission, to make a 'contribution to education and training of quality'; and this provides a basis for policy development in areas not specifically itemised in the Treaty. It is, however, a more qualified basis, and inevitably a

very general authority such as this is in practice even more seriously circumscribed by the requirements of subsidiarity.

## Lifelong Learning & the Economy

Given the legal framework within which the Commission had to function, it is hardly surprising that as lifelong learning re-emerged in international policy debates in the early 1990s, the Commission (through its DG Education and Culture) developed and conceived policy chiefly in support of the EU's economic needs. Brine (2006) and Field (2006), among many others, have located the origins of EU lifelong learning policy in the White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century* (CEC 1994). The overarching concern of this document was meeting the challenges of globalisation, information and communication technology, and the competitive threat from Asia and the USA. However, a key theme was the threat of unemployment which would arise if these challenges were not met. In so far as it was a preparation for working life, at least, education could no longer be a single episode, however extended, in the early years of life. Lifelong learning 'and continuing training' were essential.

*Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* was not, of course, an education White Paper. In some respects, however, it was more important for that reason, providing as it did a legitimacy for lifelong learning as entirely consistent with the rationale for EU education policy provided in the Maastricht Treaty. The education White Paper, *Teaching and Learning: Towards a Learning Society* (1995), which followed two years later, was able to work from this starting point and develop a case for lifelong learning which sat firmly within the Maastricht framework. Although often criticised, for example for a 'complete lack of imagination and creativity' (Hake 1999, 66), Dehmel correctly acknowledges 'its crucial role in establishing lifelong learning as a guiding strategy in EU policies' (Dehmel 2006, 53).

From the mid-1990s, Dehmel (2006, 52) argues, the 'primarily utilitarian, economic objectives' which had brought lifelong learning to centre-stage in international policy debates began to be complemented by 'more integrated policies' involving 'social and cultural objectives'. Within the EU, and within the framework offered by the White Paper, a range of programmes (Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.) were launched, in which lifelong learning was at least a strong theme; 1996 was designated the European Year of Lifelong Learning; and so forth. Although not always couched explicitly in such terms, many of these programmes were in effect contributions to building a European identity, and to the construction of European citizenship.

From *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* 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) (Brine 2006, 653). Brine sees two kinds of learner represented in the published texts: the 'high knowledge-skilled' and the 'low knowledge-skilled': 'those that know and those that do not'. During the later 1990s, she identifies two 'discursive shifts' – changes 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 was framed in terms of 'individual needs and responsibilities' – a shift, as it were, from a structural to an individual explanation of disadvantage. And in parallel, there was a second 'discursive shift': '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 (Brine 2006, 652).

By the turn of the century, therefore, lifelong learning had been established as a distinctive feature of EU education policy. It was, to be sure, mirrored in the policies of some member states, and of a range of international organisations, and in that sense was by no means unique; but within the EU it had become an organising theme by which a significant range of educational policy was linked with other policy areas – notably economic policy and social exclusion. It was also the umbrella under which a number of programmes designed to strengthen Europeans' identification with the EU were located.

### **Lifelong Learning & the Lisbon Strategy**

The landscape of EU policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was set by the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council (March 2000). The EU set itself 'a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' (CEC 2000). This was elaborated in relation to a number of areas of work, including a substantial section on 'modernising' the European social model and building an 'active welfare state'. A central feature of this was to encourage Europe's education and training systems 'to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment'. Adults (or more accurately, certain groups of adults) were given a central position, along with young people: specifically, 'unemployed adults and those in employment who are at risk of seeing their skills overtaken by rapid change' (CEC 2000). The document also included a slightly more detailed itemisation of the activities to be undertaken. *Inter alia*, there was to be 'a substantial annual increase in *per capita* investment in human resources'; a European framework for 'new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning' (IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills); more elaborated mechanisms for 'mobility of students, teachers and training and research staff' through Community programmes (Socrates, Leonardo, Youth) and greater transparency and mutual recognition of qualifications (CEC 2000).

The Lisbon strategy was based on the key importance of the ‘knowledge economy’ to the future of Europe. The knowledge economy (and cognate terms such as ‘knowledge-based economy’ and ‘learning economy’) were much in vogue during the later 1990s, not least in EU circles (cf, e.g., Lundvall & Borras 1997), closely locked into discourses of modernisation and change. Brine (2006) has pointed out that not only did the Lisbon statement introduce the notion of the knowledge *society*, to complement the knowledge economy, but it did so with a consistency which suggests strategic intent. The ‘knowledge economy’ was used in relation to the high knowledge-skilled; ‘knowledge society’ in relation to the low knowledge-skilled. Moreover, this was carried through into specific policy concerns: graduate and postgraduate studies for the high knowledge-skilled in the learning economy; recurrent vocational retraining to increase employability for the low-knowledge skilled. ‘[W]ithin the knowledge society there is no reference whatsoever to higher education.’ (Brine 2006, 654)

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 Co-ordination, which had evolved during the 1990s but was now given a clear and approved role in policy development. The OMC has been the subject of extensive discussion (cf Hantrais 2007), but two elements are essential for lifelong learning policy: there was a restatement of the subsidiarity; but more important, the Strategy emphasised the importance of agreed timetables and goals, indicators and benchmarks, and ‘monitoring, evaluation and peer review’ (CEC 2000). The monitoring was part, of course, of the Commission’s activities, but it was also of the EU’s progress: and this implied – despite the emphasis on subsidiarity – 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’ (CEC 2000).

The post-Lisbon years have, therefore, seen a marked increase in the rate of educational (and lifelong learning) policy-formulation, and in its level of detail and specificity. It does not, of course, attempt to organise lifelong learning or education within member states; Hantrais (2007, 71) maintains that the ‘impact of European policy on the harmonization of education and training systems may ... have been much less than anticipated’. In truth, it is very hard to separate the relative impact of the range of factors which influence national governments. The *prima facie* case that the extent of EU policy recommendation, monitoring and evaluation of progress against benchmarks using a developing range of indicators will have had a significant impact must deserve investigation; one of the aims of the LLL2010 research programme is to investigate how far member states’ policies and practices have been shaped by the EU.

## Developing the Lisbon Strategy

Since 2000, the EU – chiefly the Commission – has issued a range of policy documents. These have varying status: they include Commission Staff Working Papers (such as *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (CEC 2000)), Commission Communications (such as *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (CEC 2001) and *Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn* (CEC 2006)), and a Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning (27 June 2002). Together, they significantly raised the status of lifelong learning, though there is no little ambiguity within and between the various documents in terms of what is included within the term. In keeping with the emphasis established for the EU's role in education and training by the Maastricht Treaty, and in line with the predominant thrust of international policy literature, the strong emphasis remained on the role of lifelong learning in relation to economic needs – the knowledge economy (and the knowledge society conceived as a function of the knowledge economy).

The first document, *The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (European Commission, 2000a) is the first official document to set out a detailed strategy for lifelong learning. This document emphasises two important aims for lifelong learning: promoting active citizenship and promoting employability. As explained in Chapter 6, active citizenship is seen as focussing “on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life, the chances and risks they face in trying to do so, and the extent to which they therefore feel that they belong to and have a fair say in the society in which they live” (European Commission, 2000a, 5). Although there is acknowledgement that active citizens are “leading actors” in knowledge societies (European Commission, 2000a, 7), the notion of active citizenship deployed in the *Memorandum* has employability at its core: “the capacity to secure and keep employment” (European Commission, 2000a, 5).

Active citizenship, the knowledge society and employability are therefore posed as interrelated key concepts, and lifelong learning becomes not only an important contributor to maintaining economic competitiveness and employability, but also (mainly because of its role in building employability) “the best way to combat social exclusion” (European Commission, 2000a, 6). Indeed, Brine has described the *Memorandum* as focussing on “the construction of the individualised, pathologised LKS [low knowledge-skilled] learner” (Brine 2006, 655).

The *Memorandum* contains six “key messages” which form the basis for action in the area of lifelong learning: new basic skills for all; more investment in human resources; innovation in teaching and learning; valuing learning; rethinking guidance and counselling; bringing learning closer to home (European Commission, 2000a). Since the Commission considers knowledge

and competences a powerful engine for economic growth, the European Employment Strategy (hereafter EES) was identified as a key vehicle through which, at the European level, coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning could be developed, measured and monitored (Stuart and Greenwood, 2006, 133). The definition of lifelong learning presented in the *Memorandum* was taken from the EES and is formulated as:

all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence (quoted Stuart and Greenwood, 2006, 135).

During the consultation exercise which the *Memorandum* heralded it was agreed that this definition placed too much emphasis on a labour market approach to lifelong learning, while giving little attention to the broader non-work, social and community related conceptions of learning. Rather than focusing merely on a human capital approach, other aspects of lifelong learning, such as personal fulfilment, active citizenship and social inclusion needed to be given more attention (Stuart and Greenwood, 2006, 135).

The *Memorandum* had introduced (though it did not significantly develop) the notion that lifelong learning should be “enriched” by the “newly-coined term ‘lifewide’ learning”, which draws attention “to the spread of learning, which can take place across the full range of our lives at any one stage in our lives” ((European Commission, 2000a, 9).<sup>13</sup> The Commission’s Communication, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (2001), responded to “concerns that the employment and labour market dimensions of lifelong learning were too dominant”, and extended the definition of lifelong learning to include:

all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective (European Commission, 2001, 9).

Despite introducing this new definition, however, *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* “continued to prioritise the relationship between lifelong learning and employability” (Brine 2006, 655). There was the occasional reference to wider lifelong learning needs: for instance, “more resources are called for in respect of non-formal learning, especially for adult and community learning provision” (European Commission 2001, 19), but the main focus was clear.

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<sup>13</sup> Brine (2006, 655) suggests that the Communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (CEC 2001) “introduced the concept of lifewide learning”; it was, in fact, introduced in the *Memorandum* (2000), and is entirely absent from *Making* (other than by being defined in the Glossary (p. 33)).

This is not, however, to imply that *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* was essentially a repeat of the *Memorandum*. Its key contribution was in the development of mechanisms for policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation, in the spirit of the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC). It therefore 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, it proposed that European guidelines should be carried through into national and regional policies, and it suggested periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review. The title of the final chapter (“Driving forward the agenda”) perhaps gives the flavour of this most clearly; but it is by no means confined to the final chapter.

Brine (2006, 655) correctly maintains that *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* proceeded on the basis of (and indeed extended) the notion of “individualisation” in the location of responsibility for lifelong learning. It emphasised the need for recognition and transfer of qualifications, and not only in respect of high-level qualifications. It laid emphasis on quality assurance, and counselling and guidance.<sup>14</sup> She also sees it as continuing and deepening the distinction between high and low knowledge-skilled learners (various categories of the latter are specified (European Commission 2001, 13)), and she argues persuasively that the document sees risk “as lying in the knowledge *society*, not the economy”. “The individualised and pathologised learner was thus simultaneously constructed as ‘at risk’ and ‘the risk’ – the ‘threat’.” (Brine 2006, 656; emphasis in original).

The *Memorandum* and *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* were followed up and essentially endorsed in 2002 by a Resolution of the European Council. 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 encouraged member states “to develop and implement comprehensive and coherent strategies reflecting the principles and building blocks identified in the Commission’s Communication”, and “in conjunction with the European employment strategy, to mobilise the resources for such [comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning] strategies and to promote lifelong learning for all”. This would be achieved, *inter alia*, by “setting targets for an increase in investment in human resources, including lifelong learning, and optimising use of available resources”. There was specific reference to several particular priorities, of which “to promote learning at the workplace” and “to develop strategies for identifying and increasing the

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<sup>14</sup> However, to say that *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* “introduced the notion of quality assurance and the need for guidance and counselling” (Brine 2006, 655) rather understates the importance of the Maastricht Treaty, which delineated the EU’s role as contributing not to education or training *per se* but to “education and training of quality”; and it passes over (e.g.) the 1995 White Paper’s emphasis on “information and guidance” as “the first condition” which is “necessary if individuals are to be able to exercise responsibility in building up their abilities” (CEC 1995, 16).

participation of groups excluded from the knowledge society as a result of low basic skill levels” should perhaps particularly be noted.

## Progress on the Lisbon Goals

A principal theme of the period since 2002 has been the development and elucidation of “benchmarks” and “indicators” which will 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. For several years, therefore, the policy documents have a “heavy” feel: they are dominated by seemingly relatively technical issues in the formulation of benchmarks and indicators. The technical issues have clearly been substantial; but in social policy, technical issues are seldom merely technical. The 2004 Commission Staff Working Paper, *Progress Towards the Common Objectives in Education and Training: Indicators and Benchmarks*, for instance, explains that four of the 42 indicators presented to ‘Spring summits’ of the European Council were “specifically relevant for education and training”. There were: “Spending on human resources”, lifelong learning, science and technology graduates and early school leavers. However, it was apparent that the data available to construct these indicators was often rather imperfect:

Due to the very large number of indicators necessary to cover the full range of policy fields involved in the follow-up to the Lisbon conclusions, efforts have been made by the Commission services and especially DG RTD and DG EAC to develop specific composite indicators on “investment in the knowledge-based economy” and “performance in the transition to the knowledge-based economy”, .... Such indicators can in due time be applied to give an aggregated view of progress towards the Lisbon targets for the European knowledge economy. (CEC 2004, 10)

The construction of indicators is a far from simple process, and the Commission noted that the data available did not permit construction of indicators to cover all the 13 Lisbon objectives. “For example very important areas such as: Access to Information and Communication Technology, Active citizenship, Entrepreneurship or European cooperation are not covered by indicators.” (CEC 2004, 13) In these areas, further work to choose or develop indicators was required; it has proceeded.

It is, of course, one thing for the European Commission to develop indicators and benchmarks; it is quite another to bring about change in member states’ education systems. By 2005 it was apparent that progress toward the Lisbon goals in education and training (as in many other areas) was lagging. The 2005 Report *Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training* (CEC 2005), asserted that meeting the objectives (or more precisely, the benchmarks set against the objectives)



still pose a serious challenge for EU education and training systems. In the fields of increasing participation in lifelong learning and decreasing the proportion of low achievers in school education, the EU has made little progress up to 2003, the last year for which data is available (CEC 2005, 13).

The detailed data on which these conclusions were based – and the detail perhaps needs to be emphasised: is a document of 135 pages – revealed, for instance, that adult participation in education and training in 2004, at 9.4% across the EU, was 1.5 percentage points higher than it had been 2000. However, part of the increase was due to “a break in time series in 2003”; before and after 2003 progress had been “only slow”. The objective of 12.5 per cent 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). Perhaps as a result, there was a new rhetorical emphasis on the “high ambitions” involved:

The onus put on European education and training systems by the institutionalisation of this goal [to become ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’ by 2010] is immense. The very nature of education and training systems has had to be thoroughly reconsidered to accommodate the changing needs and values of society and citizens ... (CEC 2005, 12)

### **Operationalising ‘Lifelong Learning’: Formal, Non-formal and/or Informal**

One of the submerged themes in the EU policy literature since 2000 has been the shifting of terminology. Sometimes, ‘lifelong learning’ appears to be regarded as a subcategory of Education and Training; sometimes it is a synonym for them; sometimes it is a broader concept within which education and training are an important part, but by no means the whole. In this respect, of course, EU literature is far from unique. The 1995 White Paper, though foregrounding the terminology of the ‘learning society’, explicitly linked itself to the 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning: lifelong learning was an inclusive and largely undefined concept. As noted above, the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000) had defined lifelong learning as “all purposeful learning activity, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence” (CEC 2000, 3), while (following the consultation) this was revised in *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (2001) to:

all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences within a personal, civic,

social and/or employment-related perspective (European Commission, 2001, 9).

We have already noted that this extended the definition to include non-work related learning. However, two features of the revised definition deserve attention. First, the phrase “on an ongoing basis” was replaced by “throughout life”: this made the lifelong dimension of learning far more explicit, since it allowed for learning which was episodic, rather than ongoing, over a person’s lifespan. Second, learning no longer had to be “purposeful”, although the learner was still required to have the “aim” of improving knowledge, skills or competences in some way. The implication of these was that lifelong learning included not only formal and non-formal learning, but also *informal* learning.

The notions of non-formal and informal education were originally developed in order to address learning which occurs outside the formal educational system (Coombs 1985; Coombs & Ahmad 1974). The strong policy emphasis in many countries on lifelong learning and on the recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system in recent years has led to modifications of, and attempts to operationalise, the typology, as well as to some important critiques. The fast-moving terrain has clearly presented major problems for measurement. The UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) offers the following definitions:

Formal education (or initial education or regular school and university education): Education provided in the system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a continuous ‘ladder’ of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old. In some countries, the upper parts of this ‘ladder’ are constituted by organized programmes of joint part-time employment and part-time participation in the regular school and university system: such programmes have come to be known as the ‘dual system’ or equivalent terms in these countries.

Non-formal education: Any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the above definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions, and cater to persons of all ages. Depending on country contexts, it may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work-skills, and general culture. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the ‘ladder’ system, and may have differing duration. (UNESCO 1997)

ISCED, issued in 1997, however, offered no operational definition of informal learning. Eurostat, which by and large utilised ISCED definitions, has struggled to address this problem. In its *Taskforce Report on Measuring Lifelong Learning* (Eurostat 2001, 12) it described informal learning as “generally intentional but ... less organised and less structured learning” which

might include “for example learning events (activities) that occur in the family, in the work place, and in the daily life of every person, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially directed basis”.

With rapidly-changing definitions, it was evidently sometimes difficult for all parts of the system to keep up. In a methodological note relating to the Labour Force Survey of 2003, for example, Eurostat stated that

According to the European Union definition, “lifelong learning encompasses all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence”.

This was, of course, the definition amended two years earlier. On this basis, Eurostat noted:

The intention/aim to learn is the critical point for distinguishing learning activities from non-learning activities (like cultural activities, sports activities etc) especially when discussing informal learning. The concepts used in the ad hoc module [of the Labour Force Survey] took into account the discussions on concepts and definitions included in the report of the Eurostat Task Force on measuring lifelong learning (TFMLLL) which was released in February 2001.

By 2007, Eurostat had adopted an example-based definition:

informal learning corresponds to self-learning which is not part of either formal nor non-formal education and training, by using one of the following ways: making use of printed material (e.g. professional books, magazines and the like); computer-based learning/training; online Internet-based web education; making use of educational broadcasting or offline computer-based (audio or videotapes); visiting facilities aimed at transmitting educational content (library, learning centres, etc.). (Eurostat Yearbook 2007, 94)

As we have already seen in Chapter 4 above, definitions are not merely semantic.

### **Social Capital & Equal Opportunities**

Active citizenship, employability, knowledge society and social inclusion are key concepts mentioned in EU and national policy documents. In addition to these key concepts, equal opportunity is a principle underlying the lifelong learning strategy. The European Parliament has strongly supported the view that lifelong learning is the key to ensuring social integration and to achieving equal opportunities (European Commission, 2000a, 6).

The European Social Fund (ESF) is a main initiative that aims to achieve the goals of social integration and equal opportunities. The overall aim of ESF is to ‘promote economic and social cohesion’, which is achieved by adhering to the goals agreed in the *European Employment Strategy* (EES) (European

Commission, 2000b). From 1 January 2007 a new programming round for the Structural Funds began for 27 member states (including Bulgaria and Romania). During this round the links between the ESF and EES are reinforced so that ESF can contribute more effectively to the employment objectives and targets of the ‘Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs’. Particular importance is being placed on the strategy’s three main objectives of full employment, quality and productivity at work, social cohesion and social inclusion (European Commission, 2000b). With regards to the objective of equal opportunities, ESF 2007-2013 will place particular emphasis on

reinforcing social inclusion by combating discrimination and facilitating access to the labour market for disadvantaged people; ... supporting specific measures to improve women’s access to the labour market; ... and supporting equal opportunities between women and men as part of a mainstreaming approach (European Commission, 2000b).

Although ESF activities also include ‘promoting and improving training, education and counselling as part of lifelong learning policy’, the new EU action programme in the field of lifelong learning 2007-2013 comprises several sectoral programmes on different levels of education focusing on European integration and equal opportunities. *Grundtvig* forms part of this action programme. Its aim is to

improve the quality and strengthen the European dimension of adult education of a non-vocational nature by means of European co-operation activities of various kinds, thereby helping to make better lifelong learning opportunities more widely available to European citizens (European Commission, 2006a).

Through *Grundtvig*, the European Commission provides funding to promote exchanges of experiences and the development of a European dimension in all sectors of adult education. However, ratios between the three constitutive parts of the Socrates programme (which *Grundtvig* is part of), presented in the Table 5.1 below, illustrates the scope of *Grundtvig* programmes which promote non-formal learning and other forms of learning activities aiming at “social capital” enhancement; this is much smaller than the other two, which mainly focus on formal learning or educational attainment.

**Table 5.1 Socrates Budget 2004 and 2006**

SOCRATES BUDGET	2004	2006
School education (COMENIUS)	26,7%	25,5%
Higher education (ERASMUS)	52,5%	55%
Other educational pathways (GRUNDTVIG)	8,1%	8%



Source: EU Commission, *Socrates ex ante budget, 2004, 2006*;

Implementing the new EU action programme will be achieved by improving the existing processes, including OMC, coupled with a stronger guiding and coordinating role for the European Council to ensure more coherent strategic direction and effective monitoring of progress. A meeting of the European Council to be held every spring will define the relevant mandates and ensure that they are followed up (European Report).

A final point worth mentioning in relation to equal opportunities, is the EU's initiative to organise "2007 – European Year of Equal Opportunities for All" (European Commission, 2006b). Its aim is "to make people in the EU more aware of their rights to enjoy equal treatment and a life free of discrimination" (European Commission, 2006b). 'Equal access to education' is one of the key aims mentioned on the website.

On the EU level, the most prominent mechanism for assessing and monitoring national developments in the area of lifelong learning is the Luxembourg Process of the EES. This process takes place in the context of an annual round of National Action Plans which are assessed by the Commission and the Council in a Joint Employment Report (hereafter JER) and fed back through National Employment Guidelines (Stuart and Greenwood, 2006, 139).

The Draft JER (2002) notes that *lifelong learning is still far from a reality for all*. The areas most pronounced in terms of 'partial' progress include the focus on disadvantaged groups; overall levels of investment and funding; and cross-cutting aspects. Furthermore, overall rates in participation by the adult population in education and training across all age groups are low and inequalities remain (Stuart and Greenwood, 2006, 139-141). These issues indicate a neglect of general and specific social capital initiatives, which was also addressed by a number of countries involved in the EC Project on lifelong learning (2005-2010).<sup>15</sup>

### **European Qualifications Framework**

In the context of creating a knowledge society, the European Commission places emphasis on establishing a *European Qualifications Framework* (EQF)

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<sup>15</sup> It should be mentioned that, following the revision of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, the European Employment Strategy (EES) was integrated with the European economic policy into the 'new partnership for growth and jobs'. There will no longer be separate employment guidelines, but 'integrated guidelines for growth and jobs'. Three-yearly 'national reform programmes' will be jointly monitored by means of an annual 'progress report', to be discussed at the annual Spring Summit. Among the integrated guidelines, guidelines 22 (expanding and improving investment in human capital) and 23 (adapting education and training systems in response to new competence requirements) refer most explicitly to lifelong learning. Whereas this revised strategy obviously subordinates lifelong learning to economic objectives, it simultaneously acknowledges the indispensable role of lifelong learning at the heart of the EU's common agenda.

(European Commission, 2005b). The development of an EQF is considered an essential contribution towards the Lisbon Strategy, as it meets the need for a continuous updating and renewal of knowledge, skills and wider competences (European Commission, 2005b, 8).

The EQF framework would be developed and implemented on a voluntary basis, not entailing any legal obligations. The objective of the planned EQF is to facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens, by linking qualification frameworks and systems between national and sectoral levels. National authorities are responsible for developing a *National Framework of Qualifications* and link this single national framework to EQF. The EQF framework will function as a translation device and will be one of the main European mechanisms intended to facilitate citizen mobility for work and study, alongside for example, Erasmus, the European Credit Transfer System and Europass (European Commission, 2005b, 4, 5).

### **Adult Learning: Efficiency & Equity?**

Two important EU publications relating to lifelong learning appeared during 2006: the Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament on *Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training Systems* (CEC 2006a) and the Communication from the Commission entitled *Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn* (CEC 2006b). Together, these suggest significant shifts in the rhetoric of EU lifelong learning policy; whether they represent any major change of direction is less certain.

Rhetorically, in neither document are the knowledge economy, or the knowledge society, prominent terms. In *Efficiency and Equity* there are two references to the latter, and one to “knowledge based economy and society”; all are deep in the body of the paper. In *Adult Learning*, neither term appears at all. Similarly, references to the Lisbon objectives, while not entirely absent, are reduced in number and prominence in comparison with earlier policy documents.

*Efficiency and Equity* is concerned to point governments toward the best areas in which to make investments in education and training. It argues that “pre-primary education has the highest rates of return of the whole lifelong learning continuum, especially for the most disadvantaged, and the results of this investment build up over time” (CEC 2006a, 3). It argues against separation of children into separate schools based on ability before the age of 13, as this “exacerbate[s] the effect of socio-economic background on educational attainment and do[es] not raise efficiency in the long run” (p. 7). It argues, however, for differentiation in higher education, free access to which “does not necessarily guarantee equity” (p. 8).

The paper hardly addresses adult learning except through the medium of vocational education and training, where it notes that the less well-qualified “are least likely to participate in further learning and so to improve their

employment prospects” (p. 9) It argues, for “clear and diverse pathways through VET to further learning and employment” (p. 11). It takes the view that courses for “the unemployed and those who have not succeeded in the compulsory education system” are “important” in “equity terms”, and that such people “require access to publicly-funded adult training schemes”. However, it asserts that “the track record of such schemes in improving the employment prospects of disadvantaged adults has been generally poor” (p. 10), and proposes that this situation can be improved by targeted programmes “based on partnerships between business, the public sector, social partners and local third sector organisations”. It also argues that “training must be strongly linked to employers’ skill needs” (p. 10), especially the skills needed in “the regional and local economy” (p. 11). Although the language of the knowledge economy and the knowledge society has disappeared, the distinction between high knowledge skilled sheep and low knowledge skill goats remains.

*Adult Learning* (CEC 2006b) is also situated in the context of educational policy development in an increasingly diverse range of member states. In order to meet Lisbon strategy benchmarks, four million additional adults would have to participate in lifelong learning. Adult learning leads to legion benefits (employability, reduced welfare expenditure, better civic participation and public health, and so forth), but “has not always gained the recognition it deserves” (p. 3). It is posed as relevant to competitiveness, demographic change (chiefly ageing and migration), and social inclusion.

In contrast to initial education, adult learning is characterised by a wide diversity of “learning providers and settings”. “Better coordination and partnerships are vital to improve coherence, avoid duplications and contribute to more efficient spending of scarce resources.” (p. 5) Beyond this, however, it tends to state problems rather than prescribe or suggest solutions. Barriers to participation need to be lowered: several are listed, but how they are to be lowered is not specified in detail – though “public authorities must take the lead” (p. 6). Member states should invest in improving quality of provision: staff, teaching methods, providers, delivery systems, all need to be addressed: but again, there is little detail on what needs to be done. There should be “sufficient investment in the education and training of older people and migrants”, though “above all” they should “ensure efficiency by designing education and training which matches the needs of the learner” (p. 9). The clearest specification are in relation to implementing “systems for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning”, within the European Qualifications Framework (p. 8), and to improved data for indicators and benchmarks. In general, EU documents on adult learning tend to emphasise the importance of recognising non-formal and informal learning, rather than on drawing adults back into the formal sector.

## Summary

Lifelong learning has become a key term in the EU lexicon. In recent years, it has in some respects displaced and stood for “education and training”, though

it has had some success in drawing attention to a wider role for learning in the “learning society”. From the outset, EU policy in education has been constrained by a vocational orientation; this is noticeable in all documents. The economic orientation was reinforced by the Maastricht Treaty, although this itemised certain other issues (e.g., quality); while it did not prohibit developments in other directions, it did set EU educational policy on a particular course. This economic and vocational course was strengthened by the economic framing of lifelong learning discourse in the 1990s. With the growth of the EU, and the need to establish a European identity, a stronger orientation toward “citizenship” would have been desirable; given the shaping of EU education and training discourse, attempts to build the citizenship agenda have met with very qualified success.

Key conclusions from this chapter include:

- EU education and lifelong learning policy have been shaped by the demands of competitiveness, and the requirements of subsidiarity;
- a European dimension in education is becoming increasingly apparent,
- the terminology relating to lifelong learning has evolved rapidly, causing some uncertainty and even confusion;
- the *Memorandum of Lifelong Learning* and subsequent policy documents represent a significant forward movement, beginning to draw together disparate national education policies across Europe,
- active citizenship, knowledge society and employability are interrelated key concepts in EU policy documents on lifelong learning;
- there is a strong differentiation in most EU lifelong learning policies between the needs of the high-skilled and those of the low-skilled, and the strategies required to address their needs;
- lifelong learning is seen as a key way of addressing social exclusion, as well as being a key to economic competitiveness and employability. In recent documents, the focus on social exclusion tends to widen, so as to include equity arguments;
- establishing a *European Qualifications Framework* (EQF) is a key priority.



## 6 Use of Lifelong Learning Concepts in National Policies

This chapter discusses the extent to which national lifelong learning policies and initiatives include a range of key concepts associated with lifelong learning in their policy discourse. The concepts covered are the learning citizen, the knowledge society, learning cities/regions, and learning organisations. It will be apparent that all of these are conceived principally as related to forms of adult learning, rather than embracing the entire lifespan. It will also consider whether concepts that feature in policy have been translated into concrete initiatives.

### Learning Citizens

The idea of the learning citizen is perhaps an inevitable policy evolution, given the EU's parallel concerns with lifelong learning and with active citizenship. As we have seen, the common view of EU lifelong learning policy has been that although formally aiming at improving both competitiveness and social cohesion, competitiveness in the globalising economy has been the dominant motivation (Edwards 2002; Field 2006). At root, the notion of 'learning citizens' has generally been taken to refer to the idea that individuals should – or must – take responsibility for their own learning. So far as educational policy is concerned, this appears to be intended to reduce the requirement that the state must take responsibility for engaging citizens in learning: rather, it is merely to be a *facilitator* offering a range of opportunities. This perspective therefore aligns with a relatively minimalist view of the state and the role of the citizen.

Clearly, however, there are alternative views of citizenship. Very broadly, it is possible to contrast 'thin' views of citizenship – in which relatively privatised citizens are expected to be active in looking after themselves and their families – from 'thick' perspectives on citizenship. In the latter, citizens are expected to play a more active role in establishing and maintaining polity and civil society. The former perspective can be regarded as underpinning the view of the learning citizen described above: in which citizens must learn in order to keep abreast of increasingly rapid social and economic change. The latter perspective has, however, been an important element of adult and community education (Holford 2006). To the extent that lifelong learning and active citizenship have been concerned with strengthening European (and national and sub-national) governance, a 'thicker' view of citizenship and the learning citizen would be implied.

The concept of learning citizen features in the policies of England and Scotland where the development of the learning citizen concept is located in the context of recent policy development, the reform of social welfare, which includes the transformation from welfare to work-fare (Martin, 2003). In line with the definition above, much emphasis is placed on encouraging individuals to take charge of their own learning, with the goals of ensuring they become productive members of society, thus not burdening welfare systems (English Report). The English White Paper *Skills: Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work* (DfES 2005) places emphasis on promoting the *active* citizen, which reflects the view that citizens should be engaged in securing their own social welfare. Governments in both countries consider employment a route to engagement in society, and therefore put an emphasis on making more people employable. Whilst this approach emphasises employability it should be recognised that the policies stress that one way of increasing social inclusion is to ensure and facilitate access to work through skills development.

Likewise, the *Estonian National Plan for Social Inclusion* (2004) states that “a good level education that meets the expectations of the labour market extends everyone’s opportunities for work and self-realisation, promotes independence and well-being, and active participation in society” (supplementary communication from Estonian research team). The learning citizen is defined as a highly qualified person who is thus enabled to participate in all aspects of society and community life (Estonian Report). This view of the learning citizen, in these three countries, could be seen as emphasising the development of human capital.

Instead of using the term ‘learning citizen’, Flemish policy documents refer to the concept of a learning society, which has not been fully developed. The notion of a learning society in Flanders refers to a society where people undertake training activities to reach the aims set by the government. The *Vilvoorde Treaty* states that Flanders should be a learning society by 2010, with at least ten percent of 25-64 year olds participating in lifelong learning. This definition of a learning society resonates with the way that the term learning citizen is being used in the previous examples as it emphasises the participation in training by the working-age population and thus a human capital approach.

The key concept used in Austrian policy documents is *Politische Bildung*, which refers to the provision of education for democratic citizenship or civic education. The law states that “... civic education is a prerequisite both for individual development and for the development of society as a whole” (Austrian report). This term suggests a broader interpretation of the role of education in society and is more akin to the Irish interpretation of the learning citizen. In Ireland the learning citizen is a principle underpinning various lifelong learning strategies and is intrinsically associated with the notion of social capital. The Irish promotion of active citizenship is a policy with the goal of giving skills not just to feed the economy but to ensure skilled analytical

thinking leading to active engagement in society (Irish report). There is a similar interpretation in Norwegian report, where the citizenship dimension is traditionally associated with a variety of study circles transmitting alternative values to those of the formal education system (Norwegian report).

Not all the countries have incorporated the concept of the learning citizen into their policy documents. In Russia, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Hungary it is not used or explained in national policy documents. The Czech Republic explicitly states that there is no national policy for the development of citizenship and civic communities. However, there are private institutions of adult education that offer educational programmes in the field of community education (Czech report) and in Slovenia there have been attempts to develop learning in non-formal settings (Slovenian Report). In Lithuania it has recently emerged in policy documents with an emphasis on provision of information that facilitate learning and the development of computer literacy. Finally, in Bulgaria, unique traditional self-managed units (chitalishta) function as “training fields” for acquiring skills for managing collective activities. The core of their mission is to preserve the national traditions and to cultivate active citizenship by involving people in voluntary community initiatives, as well as to develop people’s cultural interests and to enrich their knowledge. The development of these centres is a policy issue and is regulated by law (Bulgarian report).

From the above it can be suggested that there are differences in the ways countries perceive the term ‘learning citizen’. According to the EU active citizenship focuses on whether and how people participate in all spheres of social and economic life ‘... Active citizens are people that take responsibility for their own actions and their own learning’ (European Commission, 2000, 5, 7). In England, Scotland and Estonia, this has been interpreted in to measures that focus on making people responsible for ensuring they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to take an active part in the workforce, thus increasing their economic productivity and reducing the number of people ‘burdening’ welfare states. The Lithuanian focus on provision of information and emphasis on ICT skills might be viewed similarly.

It should however be noted that these countries do not solely apply a human capital approach, as the contribution of lifelong learning to increasing employment participation is also seen as means to reduce social exclusion. In a country such as Austria there is a strong emphasis on citizenship in the compulsory education system which would seem to promote the development of social capital; but the term ‘learning citizen’ does not feature in relation to any extent in post-compulsory education (Austrian National Report, p. 6)

However, in Ireland, Norway and Slovenia there is more of a focus on people learning for their own personal development and the concept may therefore be more associated with the social capital approach. Finally, in Russia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Flanders and Hungary do not make use of the concept in policy discourse, though Flanders has developed the concept of

the learning society which seems to incorporate features of the learning citizen with emphasis on skills and training.

## **Knowledge Society**

According to the EU's Memorandum of lifelong learning,

the economic basis of the knowledge society is the creation and use of immaterial goods and services. .... People themselves are the leading actors of knowledge societies. It is the human capacity to create and use knowledge effectively and intelligently, on a continually changing basis, that counts most. To develop this capacity to the full, people need to want and to be able to take their lives into their own hands – to become, in short, active citizens (European Commission, 2000, p. 7).

A knowledge society can be defined as a society that creates, shares and uses knowledge for the prosperity and well-being of its people in contrast with one that depends on agriculture or manufacturing industry for its maintenance. The growth in the global economy and the advances of new technologies which allow for rapid communication are central drivers in the development of the knowledge society. As such, this concept features heavily within policy documents, and is often related to the goals of the Lisbon Agenda. High levels of structural unemployment in the 1990s due to the changing economy served to focus on employability. Lifelong learning was seen by the EU as one means of increasing citizens' employability and labour market policies emerged which promoted development of skills and training.

The knowledge society as an idea dates back to the 1960s (de Weert, 1999); however, the term became more widely used in the 1990s. It sees knowledge and knowledge production as the key to a productive society at the expense of previous modes of production such as manufacturing of goods. Although knowledge production has been always been part of society, de Weert notes that current debates focus on 'quantity of knowledge, the acceleration of knowledge production and the extent to which it permeates all spheres of life' (p. 52). He also notes that the definition of 'knowledge' is contentious. One definition sees knowledge as objective and based on facts whilst another describes knowledge as subjective and relational. In relation to lifelong learning and education a definition of knowledge as a set of facts would favour an approach to teaching that is transmission based, whilst the subjective/relational view would link to constructivist and social constructivist views of teaching where the learner has to co-construct his/her knowledge.

The knowledge society has impacted on educational institutions by decreasing the role of universities in the creation of knowledge and an increasing expectation amongst policy-makers that universities have to engage with society in different ways. In some countries there has been a

strong emphasis on developing accreditation systems that are intended to allow learners to transfer between different types of educational institutions and the workplace and educational institutions. There has also been an increase in widening access and providing different routes into education. These changes are fuelled by the belief that lifelong learning is essential in order to develop a knowledge economy.

The influence of the concept of the knowledge society and employability is evident in all the thirteen countries; however, the extent to which it has led to specific policy initiatives differs. There are a significant number of policies in place that are designed to widen access to work-based learning and/or allow the unemployed to gain skills relevant to employers. In England and Scotland the *New Deal* offers the opportunity for the unemployed to gain skills relevant to employers (English report, Scottish report). In Flanders and Austria the concept is also used in relation to economic policy. The Austrian report states that employability is always mentioned alongside lifelong learning (Austrian report).

In Estonia lifelong learning policies are heavily tied to the labour market and EU funds are primarily used to increase labour potential, as employment through skills and training is seen as the best way to tackle poverty and social exclusion. In this context the Ministry of Social Affairs pays for training for jobseekers. However, people in jobs do not benefit from free training and employers have no obligation to provide training for employees. Estonia places emphasis on the creation of “highly qualified and motivated specialists ... and the development of human capital which provides competitiveness of economy and labour and is a source for life quality growth” (Estonian report). Lithuania and Flanders also place strong emphasis on increasing qualification levels for economic purposes. The *Lithuanian Labour Market Training Authority* aims to increase employability by increasing adult education and professional preparation (Lithuanian report).

In both Lithuania and Bulgaria the concept of the knowledge society is used in relation to ICT, which is deemed to be a key element in knowledge society building. At the same time, both countries place a strong emphasis on a human capital view of the knowledge society. The Bulgarian report states that there is a tendency in the official policy documents to adopt a narrow definition of the knowledge society referring only to the knowledge-based economy. An example is the recently developed *National Programme for School and Pre-School education and training 2006-2015*, which “defends the need for re-definition of the aims of education only by referring to the requirements of the global economy” (Bulgarian report). Furthermore, key policy items are primarily concerned with vocational education and training for the unemployed (e.g. the Employment Promotion Law) (Bulgarian report). Similarly, in Slovenia the emphasis on human capital is also present as the report remarks that policy has over-valued job oriented education and learning and tended to

downplay values, attitudes, moral and cultural competencies, tolerance, etc. (Slovenian report).

In Russia the concept has emerged only recently and policy priorities include restructuring systems of primary and secondary vocational training with the aim to solve problems of employment (Russian report).

The concept of the knowledge society does not feature strongly in policy initiatives in the Czech Republic, where there is no clear responsibility for development of the concept (Czech report); however, the development of human resources links to the development of knowledge within the society. In Hungary the *Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper* refers to a knowledge based society without an explanation of the concept (Hungarian report).

Developing quality assurance mechanisms that ensure the quality of learning and training is seen as one key aspect of the development of a knowledge society. Some countries, e.g. Scotland, Ireland and Norway have national qualifications frameworks. In Scotland this covers all assessed learning in formal education institutions and provides for accreditation of learning acquired outside the educational setting (Scottish report). The *National Qualifications Authority of Ireland* has developed a single unified framework of qualifications and established councils that provide a single structure for the accreditation of all non-university education at FE and HE in Ireland (Irish report). Similarly, one of the key issues mentioned in Norway's *Blue and Green Papers* is the validation of non-formal and informal competences (Norwegian report). In the Czech Republic a *National System of Qualifications* is currently being created. The Act that is based on this system specifies the forms of complete and partial qualifications (Czech report).

In other countries there is recognition of informal and non-formal learning, for example, through the accreditation of prior experiential learning, but the qualifications framework is generally less well developed (England, Czech Republic).

The concept of the knowledge society thus features in most countries and is generally geared towards increasing employability through (work-based) training. There is a strong emphasis on providing (vocational) training for the unemployed and reskilling for those in work. Two objectives mainly mentioned by Central and Eastern European countries include increasing qualification levels (Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia) and restructuring educational systems to meet the demands of the global economy (Bulgaria and Russia). Finally, quality assurance mechanisms have been developed by Scotland, Ireland and Norway, and are less well developed in other countries (e.g. England and Czech Republic).

## Learning Cities/Regions

Learning cities or regions features less frequently, being mentioned only in about half of the national reports. Two types of initiatives have been put in place in this area. The first one is learning cities that encourage individuals and employees to upskill. An example is the Norwegian *Blue Paper on the Future of lifelong learning*, which addresses the importance of upskilling employees and a decentralised implementation of this concept at county level (Norwegian report). Furthermore, the Estonian *lifelong learning Strategy 2005-2008* incorporates the notion of a learning community and emphasises cooperation and partnership in creating a learning culture and meeting the needs of organisations (Estonian report).

The second type of initiatives in relation to learning cities are regeneration projects focused on disadvantaged groups. England's *White Paper (2003)* introduced the *Testbed Learning Community Initiative*, which focuses on helping communities to help themselves (English report).

In the Irish context the concept used is of learning regions rather than cities and the virtual community website of the R3L Network (an EU initiative) aims to promote 'Regional Networks in Lifelong Learning'. Additionally, the Department of Education & Science have established regional offices providing information and advice on learning opportunities.

Flanders and Scotland are countries where initiatives concerning learning cities/regions have had limited impact. The Slovenian report addresses the need to have regional development agencies in order to realise the learning region. The government seeks to ensure more effective co-ordination between regional and national levels. The lack of national co-ordination has resulted in a lack of development of programmes at the local level (Slovenian report). Likewise, the Austrian report notes a lack of co-ordination at the national level, although a number of discrete projects operate in this country. The Czech Republic and Lithuania do not cite any initiatives or national policy in this area.

In Russia the concept of learning cities does not feature, but there are similar initiatives. One example is the '*naukograd*' or 'scientific city'. This initiative is based on state support for scientific, technical, educational and innovation activities, exploratory developments and tests as well as personal training (Russian report). Similarly, the concept of the learning city has not been very well developed in Hungary, but the concept is known and there are some local initiatives related to the development of e-government (Hungarian report). In Bulgaria there are some initial attempts towards building learning regions. The country operates so-called 'lifelong learning Days', in which diverse institutions related to education meet to exchange best practice and discuss common initiatives (Bulgarian report).

The concept seems to be well developed in Norway, Estonia, England and Ireland, whereas in Russia, Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Lithuania the concept has not been incorporated in (many) policy documents. In Flanders and Scotland initiatives concerning learning cities/regions have had limited impact. Slovenia and Austria mention the need for greater coordination between regional and national levels; though its incorporation into national policy is a key factor in its successful implementation. Overall, the initiatives mentioned place little emphasis on personal and community development issues, with the exception of Ireland and England.

## Learning Organisations

Most countries understand the concept in relation to the role that individual organisations can play in encouraging learning (England, Flanders, Norway, Scotland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria).

In Flanders different measures are taken to improve education and training in enterprises and organisations aim to enhance participation in training within the work context (Flemish report). Similarly, in England there is much emphasis on improving economic performance (English). In Norway the term often refers to how learning processes are designed in order to stimulate learning among employees, transfer of knowledge and the codification of tacit knowledge. In this context the *Blue Paper* outlines the public role in developing learning enterprises, public or private, primarily in terms of improving framework conditions for enterprises. The *Basic Agreement between the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions and the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry* states that:

Each enterprise must present its objectives for future development as a basis for charting the qualifications needed.....Charting must normally be updated once a year. Whenever there is a gap between existing competence in the enterprise and its future needs, this should be covered by appropriate training measures or other means (Norwegian report).

By contrast, although the Scottish Executive encourages businesses to become 'learning organisations', only 39% of Scottish businesses have training plans, and these are particularly rare in small and medium enterprises (Scottish report). Similarly in Bulgaria and Hungary learning organisations are mostly related to the workplace of big international companies. In Hungary the results in practice are modest with little available information on the actual learning activities taking place (Hungarian report).

The concept enjoys wide usage and practical implementation in the Czech Republic. A number of initiatives have been introduced in this area, involving employers and private adult education institutions (Czech report).



In other countries the focus is on institutional structures for promoting and coordinating learning across organisations in different areas. In Ireland and Lithuania there are a number of such organisations that coordinate initiatives across the lifelong learning sector. In both countries there are several nationally co-ordinated learning organisations that offer education and training in various areas, including labour market training for the unemployed, (school) community development and education, adult informal education and literacy training (Lithuanian report; Irish report). In both England and Scotland, the Investors in People (IIP) scheme has been used as a means to promote learning organisations.

In Austria the learning organisation is mainly used in connection with informal learning and the concept does not play a significant role in lifelong learning policy. The Russian report does not mention the concept. In Estonia the concept is used in a wider context and no policies are regulating the public role in developing learning organisations (Estonian report).

Slovenia has not yet developed the concept of the learning organisation, but the *Institute for Learning Organisations* has been established to promote this concept (Slovenian report).

In most countries the concept of the learning organisation is used, and the focus is generally on learning in organisations. However, there are differences in the strategies used to develop the learning organisations with some focusing on individual companies having learning plans and others focusing on structures that enable businesses to provide learning opportunities for their employees.

## Summary

There are differences in the extent to which the various concepts appear in national policies. The knowledge society features strongly in all thirteen countries. Most of the country policies also include the mention of learning organisations. There is less evidence for the learning citizen and learning cities/regions feature least in policies.

The interpretation of the concepts vary across the countries, and it would seem that Scotland, England, Estonia and Lithuania stress the human capital aspect of the *learning citizen*. In contrast Ireland, Slovenia and Norway focus more on the social capital and personal development aspect. However, where the human capital is emphasised, it is also noted that this can be a means to social inclusion.

There is less variation in interpretation of the *knowledge society*. Generally the focus is on the development of human capital. The less used concept of *learning cities/regions* has been interpreted in two ways: providing the individual with access to learning (Norway); or as community regeneration

where the focus is on disadvantaged groups (England). Overall there is a sense that when this concept features it is linked to development of regional or decentralisation of learning opportunities. Finally, the concept of the *learning organisation* is in evidence in most countries but there is a difference between the emphasis put on individual organisations and their duty to provide education and training for their employees and putting nationwide structures in place that support companies in offering training for their employees.

In examining the way that these concepts are being used in different countries there is no clear divide between 'old' EU countries or Western democracies such as Norway and the new member states and post-communist states. For example, Lithuania, Scotland, England and Estonia seem to have a strong emphasis on human capital in their use of the concept the learning citizen, whilst Ireland and Norway stress social capital more. It is not possible to provide a general explanation for this; however, it does suggest that the local conditions in the post-communist countries vary along a range of dimensions and the way that, for example, EU policy measures will be implemented will vary. Whilst there is likely to be variation in interpretation it is clear that EU definitions of the concepts have had an influence on all states and that this is perhaps specifically so in some of the new member and accession states where the definitions have been adopted with limited discussion.

Some of the main conclusions concerning concepts at national level are:

- the significance of the concepts associated with lifelong learning varies across the countries,
- by and large, concepts associated with lifelong learning are viewed as associated with adult or post-compulsory learning,
- the knowledge society is probably the most widely understood concept,
- there is also less variation in understanding of the knowledge society concept,
- understanding of the knowledge society is strongly tied to a human capital model and thus does not fully reflect the EU definition of lifelong learning (see pp. 37-38),
- there are no clearly distinguishable differences in the way the concepts are used between 'old' EU countries or Western democracies and post-communist countries.

## 7 The Role of Lifelong Learning in National Policies

This chapter examines the extent to which different policy areas focus on lifelong learning. It attempts to address two research questions:

- Which national policy measures focus on lifelong learning? How significant is lifelong learning in national policy rhetoric?

Across the countries studied, lifelong learning has been primarily articulated through the policy areas of education, the labour market, social security and social policy, and it is therefore within these fields that the bulk of national policy measures focusing on lifelong learning are to be found. It will be shown that a key aspect of lifelong learning initiatives in the countries is to ensure that populations have the necessary skills to be active participants in the workforce, and that they have been very closely associated with labour market imperatives. This is seen as an important way of maintaining or increasing a nation's economic performance and competitiveness, as well as being a significant tactic for tackling social exclusion. In many cases, educational policies in relation to lifelong learning have similar objectives and therefore are closely associated with labour market policy. Where social policy focuses on lifelong learning, many initiatives also appear to be directed by economic considerations, though this may of course also be important for promoting social cohesion and addressing disadvantage.

### Labour Market

In post-communist countries, there is focus on increasing people's employability in an attempt to close the economic gap between themselves and countries with more established market economies. As such, labour market policies are a central driver for lifelong learning. For example, "the key policy items on lifelong learning in Bulgaria have been connected with further vocational education and training", with the *National Strategy on Further Vocational Training 2005-2010* being particularly important (Bulgarian report). In many cases, it appears that lifelong learning is mainly viewed as an addition to labour market policies. For example, in the Czech Republic, provisions are made as part of other legislative measures: the *Labour Code*, for instance, compels employees to engage in vocational training.

It appears that in most of the countries with longer-standing EU membership (Austria, England, Flanders and Scotland), and also in Norway, a key emphasis of lifelong learning policies is to maintain economic competitiveness by ensuring populations have the necessary skills to be actively engaged in labour markets. For example, in Austria the *Austro-Keynesian* policy (combating unemployment by anti-cyclical enlargement of public spending) has largely lost its influence. Today, active labour market policies focusing on

the employability and activation of the unemployed are key, increasing links between learning and the labour market. In Scotland, indicators in place to measure success of the lifelong learning strategy “seem to have a heavy emphasis on education that is relevant to employment and work training” (Scottish report). Furthermore, in Norway a key driver for lifelong learning has been the training of the workforce from the early 1990s “against the backdrop of economic recession and rapid technological and social changes” (Norwegian report).

The Irish example is particularly interesting, in that lifelong learning policies are seen as one way in which recent rapid economic growth can be sustained, but at the same time there are many projects with much wider goals. There is a strong sense in Irish lifelong learning policy on promoting culture, identity and well-being, for example, the White Paper on Adult Education: *Adult Education: Learning for Life* (2000).

Norway, along with the longer-standing members of the EU (Austria, England, Flanders and Scotland) all have some provision for paid educational leave, although there is variation in the extent of this. For example, although there is some provision in the UK, “no comprehensive legal framework for educational leave exists” (CEDEFOP, 2005). Ireland appears to have less provision in this area than other ‘old’ EU states, where it was noted by the *Statutory Committee on Educational Disadvantage* (2005) that they lag behind other industrialised countries and that this disproportionately affects educationally disadvantaged young people. This highlights an important issue, that paid leave can be a means of introducing equality into learning, by giving people a ‘second chance’ to learn (CEDEFOP, 2005). There are some developing trends in this direction in other countries however: in Estonia, for example, local municipality workers may get paid time off to study and paid educational leave is available to all depending on the level of education undertaken. This contrasts with Bulgaria, where “little or no attention is given to the rights of employees to negotiate paid educational leave” (Bulgarian report).

### **Social Security**

There is some evidence of a move towards linking welfare benefits to attending vocational training and, as noted earlier, this element of compulsion introduces a social control dimension to lifelong learning policies. For example, unemployed persons in Bulgaria could face sanction if they do not agree to participate in vocational training, whereas in England and Scotland those who claim welfare are required to make themselves more employable (with the intent that they find jobs and cease claiming benefit). *Jobcentre Plus* employment programmes, which include New Deal initiatives targeted at groups such as 18-24 year olds, disabled people, lone parents and older workers, strengthen the link between learning and social security provision in England and Scotland. In Flanders, it is considered that employment rates

must grow “in order to secure the social security system” and that lifelong learning is an important way of achieving this (Flemish report).

In Norway, social security policy is seen as an important driver for lifelong learning measures. A recently established body, the *New Administration for Work and Welfare* aims to “offer integrated services to the citizens according to a “one-stop-shop” principle, including training for unemployed and for those exposed to social exclusion” (Norwegian report). It is hoped that this will result in improved provision of lifelong learning for those who are in receipt of social welfare, and will therefore combat social exclusion.

## Education

The post-communist countries have experienced radical and rapid transformations of their educational systems and many related legislative changes, since the early 1990s. However, within this group of countries there are marked differences in the degree to which educational policy measures specifically focus on lifelong learning. For example, “no complex policy exists in the Czech Republic in the field of lifelong learning” (Czech report) and there is no specific law dealing with adult education or lifelong learning, whereas an *Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2005-2008* is already in place. In Slovenia, the Adult Education Act has been important in regulating the normative basis of the adult education system, and a range of other legislation exists that promotes lifelong learning through education polices. In Hungary, the way that lifelong learning is being driven by both educational and labour polices is exemplified by the fact that the key lifelong learning document, the *National Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper*, was jointly prepared by the Ministry of Employment and the Ministry of Education.

For those countries with longer established market economies, there is a range of evidence that lifelong learning is being promoted through educational policies. For example, it was noted in the OECD Report (2004) “that Ireland has an impressive legislative framework for dealing with adult education and lifelong education” (Irish report) and an objective of the Universities Act (1997) was to ‘facilitate lifelong learning through the provision of adult and continuing education’. In HE in Norway “adults without formal competencies allowing them to be enrolled, can have their prior learning assessed in order to receive this admission”, and “7-8 % of the students are now being enrolled according to the new procedure” (Norwegian report). However, in Austria the key agency responsible for implementing lifelong learning within education policy, the Adult Education unit of the Ministry of Education is relatively small and has a highly limited budget. This is indicative of the fact that the labour market “has developed as the main field of state activity in further education and training within the last three decades” (Austrian report).

The development of standard qualifications frameworks is seen as an important way to introduce principles of lifelong learning into education policy. In Ireland, “the National Qualifications Authority is currently working to standardise qualifications so that transfers between institutions and the recognition of prior certified learning can be facilitated” (Irish report). However, in most cases accreditation of learning is not currently recognised outside the formal education system and in many countries attempts to introduce standard frameworks are in their very early stages. In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Russia, for example, no current framework exists. Standard frameworks seem to be generally viewed as advantageous within national policy discourses, and are seen as an important way of introducing quality assurance to lifelong learning.

There is however some recognition that development of standard qualification frameworks may have negative consequences: in Scotland, for example, standardisation is viewed as an attack on liberal education and the idea of education for its own sake. In general terms, such moves are seen as matching education with the needs of the labour market. Indeed, this sense of closer ties between educational and labour market policies is a strong theme of all the national reports.

## Literacy

Initiatives designed to address perceived problems of illiteracy are seen as an important focus of lifelong learning in the countries studied. There are social and economic dimensions to literacy initiatives in relation to lifelong learning, in that they may be primarily designed to enable people to enter the workforce, or be more geared towards enhancing social cohesion. For example, in England the Skills for Life Strategy is effectively geared towards making people more employable and in Bulgaria literacy is largely linked to getting the unemployed into work, primarily through the national programme, *Overcoming Poverty*. In Norway, attempts to increase literacy levels have been inspired by OECD and EU reports indicating higher macro-economic pay-off “when investing in low-skilled learners” (Norwegian report). In Ireland however, which has strong voluntary and community traditions, an important goal of literacy programmes is to facilitate engagement with wider society. For example, the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) aims to “enable learners to develop skills and become more confident in participation in decision-making, group work and facilitation and engagement in wider society” (Irish report). This is seen as an important means of providing wider opportunities for adult learners, and a key way in which lifelong learning can address the needs of disadvantaged groups. This is not to imply that there is a simple dichotomy between the economic and social goals of literacy initiatives, as the two are of course closely interrelated. Rather, there appears to be variation between countries in the extent to which each is emphasised.

Austria provides an interesting example, as there “is possibly a much larger problem of low-literacy adults than Austria has acknowledged” (OECD, 2003, p. 38). This is so, as it is said that “illiteracy has long been a taboo subject in Austria, and data regarding illiteracy still does not exist” (Austrian report). As such, there is a lack of basic literacy programmes for adults in Austria and so it has not been an important part of lifelong learning in that country. Furthermore, accurately judging levels of literacy is notoriously hard as people may feel a sense of stigma in admitting they are unable to read or write. In Norway, despite the fact that 6.1% of GDP is spent on education and training (the OECD average being 5.5%), the country still “scores modestly in international tests on acquired skills” (Norwegian report). This has provoked debate regarding *input* versus *output* in lifelong learning, and serves to highlight that the level of funding alone does not guarantee desired outcomes.

## Ethnicity

In post-communist Central and Eastern Europe lifelong learning is seen as a key way of addressing social disadvantage among the Roma population. This is particularly so in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovenia. For example, in Lithuania 31.3 per 1000 of the Roma population are illiterate and in Hungary they are the largest minority and “the group with the most social disadvantages” (Hungarian report). Lifelong learning measures aimed at decreasing the social exclusion of the Roma people emphasise getting them into employment and this is an important driver for policy in this area. For example, the Slovenian ‘*Strategy for Education and Training of Romas*’ (2004) and in Bulgaria, Roma Cultural Centres provide literacy training and professional guidance to people from minority groups. In the Baltic countries (Estonia and Lithuania), another key policy issue relates to members of the Russian-speaking minority populations. Many members of such groups do not speak the national language of the country in which they live and this is seen as an important barrier to accessing “professional training and find[ing] a suitable job” (Lithuanian report).

Lifelong learning is also seen as a way of integrating refugees and asylum seekers, primarily in the Northern European countries, with England, Flanders, Ireland, Norway and Scotland reporting specific initiatives. In Ireland, a Refugee Language Support Unit has been established in Trinity College, Dublin to co-ordinate language assessment and tuition on a national basis. In Norway “immigrants and refugees with less than 5 years of residence are covered by ‘introductory programmes’ that include qualification, above all in the Norwegian language” (Norwegian report). The Scottish Pathfinder projects also focus on developing literacy for speakers of other languages, particularly asylum seekers and refugees, whilst the Flemish integration policy makes it compulsory for different groups of immigrants to learn the Dutch language to remove barriers for participation in educational activities.

## Gender

Lifelong learning is (to an extent) being used to address gender equality in some countries. For example, in Hungary the particular needs of women on childcare are the focus of various policy papers. As a result, flexible working and childcare have become important issues. In England, the Women and Equality Unit promotes equality in work, education and everyday life, and the Irish Gender Equality Unit was established in 2001. The Estonian Measure 1.3 of the National Development Plan (NDP) includes initiatives for inclusion and re-integration of women into the labour market. Furthermore, in Bulgaria specific measures under the National Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2005 and the Employment Strategy 2004-2010 include the introduction of gender education into the high school curriculum and dissemination of existing gender education programmes, thus strengthening the link between gender and lifelong learning. However, in Russia, there is no specific policy relating gender and lifelong learning, and issues regarding gender and access to education come under general socio-economic policy. Similarly in Norway, gender equality is mainly addressed by the streamlining of public education policy and in Austria, there is a central unit co-ordinating gender mainstreaming, although it does not specifically focus on lifelong learning.

There seem to be two main issues in relation to gender. Whilst women generally participate more and have higher levels of education they have less access to higher paid work; this could possibly be attributed to social welfare policies rather than lifelong learning policy. There are problems with the gender difference in particular subject areas (perhaps linked to access to higher paid work) as women tend not to go into areas such as science and engineering, but these are areas that tend to lead to higher paid work.

## The Significance of Lifelong Learning in National Policy Rhetoric

Across the countries, national policy rhetoric is often closely associated with the EU. Although EU lifelong learning policies have been a major influence in the understandings of the concept within all the countries, this is especially marked in the case of post-communist countries. In these countries, before the collapse of communism the concept of lifelong learning as now understood was not known, although there were highly developed systems and traditions of lifelong and adult education. Given the major historical break with communist approaches, understanding of the concept has often been closely tied to EU policy documents. The EU is the main policy driver in Bulgaria, but there is concern that “European initiatives are accepted without critical assessment” (Bulgarian report). In Lithuania, the understanding of the knowledge society corresponds to EU regulations. It may also be the case



that the European Structural Funds are also seen as more fundamental to the development of lifelong learning policies in the former communist-led countries, and provide significant help and guidance. This is however some evidence that such funds are important in the Northern European countries.

Lifelong learning policy rhetoric across Europe is strongly tied to a modernising agenda as well as to the economic and social conditions within the countries. This is of course closely associated with globalisation, increased competitiveness within economic markets, and the need to promote social cohesion within rapidly changing societies. For example, in Flanders “economical competition, individualisation together with the need for social cohesion, ecological problems, the development of a service economy, problems of employability, were seen as challenges to which continuous learning was the answer” (Flemish report). As such, lifelong learning has been seen as a key way in which a number of contemporary social and economic issues can be addressed. A contrast is the Russian Federation, where although the concept is mentioned in several discussion papers, it is still not used in official policy documents. Furthermore, Russian policies may not go as far as lifelong learning in other countries, in that the establishment of a system of learning through life is not apparent as a policy direction in education.

## Summary

There is a general trend across the countries of lifelong learning policies focusing on labour market issues, but there are differing reasons why this is the case. Post-communist countries tend to see lifelong learning as a way to enhance their economic development, whilst countries with established market economies place greater emphasis on maintaining economic performance and meeting necessary skills shortages. Increasing the employability of marginalised or disadvantaged groups is also viewed as enabling people to function more fully in society, and lifelong learning is seen as an important way of achieving this.

It is important to highlight that in practice these policy areas are often not mutually exclusive. Policies on education may appear to be geared towards economic outcomes, and social policies such as those on gender are often closely tied to the education system. Whilst recognising this interconnection, this chapter has illustrated the ways that different policy areas have focused on lifelong learning in the countries to show variations in emphasis.

Some key aspects of the role of lifelong learning in national policies include:



- the key policy areas for lifelong learning across the countries are education, the labour market, social security and social policy,
- a central theme is developing and enhancing the employability of populations,
- addressing social exclusion has also been identified as a key goal for many lifelong learning initiatives,
- national policy rhetoric on lifelong learning is often closely tied to EU initiatives.

## 8 Public Sector Educational Policies & Initiatives

This chapter focuses on policies and initiatives in the post-compulsory sector, though there is a brief mention of compulsory education measures that specifically relate to social inclusion or development of lifelong learning. It addresses the research question

- What concrete initiatives and public sector policies have been implemented at each level of the education system?

The compulsory system is clearly important in fostering lifelong learning, and is considered part of lifelong learning by the European Commission (see [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/life/what\\_islll\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/life/what_islll_en.html)). However, the compulsory education systems in each of the partner countries have a long tradition and are not expanding in the same way as post-compulsory/tertiary education (OECD, 2005, p. 13). For that reason there will only be limited mention of initiatives at the pre compulsory and compulsory stage and the main focus will be on post-compulsory initiatives.

### Pre-school & Compulsory Education Level Issues & Initiatives

Post-communist Central and Eastern European countries have experienced considerable change since the 1990s; this includes changes to the welfare system. In the context of this report, one of the key effects has been that low-cost universal pre-school childcare has become means tested and there are some indications that this may lead to increased social inequality (Hantrais, 2002). It is too early to know whether this will impact on engagement with learning across the lifespan; however, it is worth noting that in Hungary pre-school education is regarded as vital and year 0 (ISCED 0) is now compulsory.

In general the countries studied treat lifelong learning as a ‘cradle to grave’ experience – reflecting the EU position. The Norwegian report refers to the 2004 White paper which calls for reform of primary and secondary education. This, it is stated, will have implications for lifelong learning strategies; presumably one aspect of this is to facilitate transfer to continuing education and encourage children to become lifelong learners. Changes, or intentions to make changes to the compulsory school system, are in evidence in all the countries except Lithuania (see Table 5, Appendix C). In addition, Ireland reports on measures for primary (ISCED 1) and secondary (ISCED 2) aged children. The ‘Home School Liaison’ Scheme and ‘Youthreach’ both aim to maximise participation of children in education with specific emphasis on those at risk of failure or educational disadvantage. In the UK, the ‘Sure Start’ programme has aimed to foster the development of a range of skills in families and young children to ensure effective engagement in the education system.

An evaluation of the Scottish initiative has suggested positive effects (Scottish report); however, it is too early to know whether it has long-term effects in relation to engagement with post-compulsory education. In Russia, the compulsory education system is seen as vital in developing critical thinking skills that will provide the basis for further and continuing education.

The pre-school and the compulsory system is of vital importance in relation to developing the lifelong learning. There are measures in some countries that are aimed specifically at those most vulnerable in society. An overview of the educational systems in each country, except Russia is available at [www.eurydice.org/index.shtml](http://www.eurydice.org/index.shtml).

### **Post-compulsory/Tertiary Education & Training**

Whilst the compulsory education system plays an important role in lifelong learning, the main emphasis in government policies and strategies in relation to lifelong learning is on post compulsory education and training. In the majority of countries the compulsory education system ends at the age of sixteen. This section will overview policies and initiatives in the 13 countries, for a comprehensive list please see Appendix C.

The term lifelong learning does not feature in the policies of all countries and the term itself is not used in Russia. However, all the partner countries have policies which relate to the development and improvement of provision of further education and training. There are differences between the countries in terms of what aspects of education and training are emphasised. In Bulgaria vocational training is stressed with the relevant policy focusing on employment and vocational training which starts from the age 16; a similar situation exists in Russia, Hungary, the Czech Republic. In the latter three countries there are a number of acts specifically relating to education, although lifelong learning policy (and/or strategy) for the post-compulsory stage focuses on training. In addition, the Russian report comments on under-representation of non-institutionalised learning. All countries have had a range of initiatives to develop these aspects of lifelong learning. In Bulgaria examples of effective initiatives include 'national days of lifelong learning' which bring together all stakeholders to share experiences and good practice, and the development of centres for professional education and training. The Czech Republic also provides opportunities for representatives of HRD councils to meet and share good practice. In Russia new educational institutions have been created and in Hungary there has been emphasis on developing access to ICT training in the regions and on raising awareness in society of the importance of science.

The position in Ireland is different with an emphasis on a much wider interpretation of lifelong learning as outlined in the Green paper: 'Adult education in an era of learning (1998): providing learning opportunities over the lifespan'. This approach includes active citizenship, personal

development and employability in line with the Lisbon strategy. There have been a considerable number of initiatives in Ireland some focus on literacy development (see below) others on education in prisons and return to work (FAS). The policies in the Slovenian report also suggest an emphasis on lifelong learning in the broader sense including social cohesion or active citizenship as a key part as do the report from Flanders, Austria, Estonia, Scotland and Lithuania. Slovenian concrete initiatives include Study Circles to develop local democracy. In Austria there is a focus on providing opportunities for those in work to access higher education and Estonian initiatives make use of radio broadcasting, libraries and bookshops to provide access to learning. Scotland has developed an organisation called Learndirect which provides information to potential learners about course availability. In Flanders, a similar initiative to Learndirect called 'Word wat je wil' (Become what you want) offers potential learners access to information about all available education and training.

In Ireland, as well as in England, Scotland and Norway there are initiatives which have a strong emphasis on the role of higher education in developing lifelong learners and inclusion of non-traditional learners. Norwegian examples of good practice includes a scheme which allows for the development of competences through a non-academic route. These countries have emphasised widening access to higher education by providing non-formal routes into higher education. In both Scotland and England, the statutory councils which fund HE require HE institutions to gather data on participation of traditionally underrepresented groups. The Irish National Office for Equity in Access to HE performs a similar function.

In all of the countries apart from Ireland and Lithuania, policies on labour, employment and unemployment are also linked to the development of lifelong learning policies and initiatives. For example, in Estonia, learners are entitled to deduct the cost of learning from their income tax, while Austria has developed tax incentives for companies and the self-employed, to encourage participation in education and training. In England and Scotland, there are UK wide initiatives to encourage particular groups of citizens into work, for example community regeneration projects. Norway has a strong tradition of informal learning initiatives that link to lifelong learning.

The development of programmes to enhance literacy skills also features in some country policy. In Flanders, Scotland and Slovenia there are specific policies. Actual initiatives within these countries differ in that Flanders stresses literacy skills development in relation to recent immigrants whilst the policies in Scotland and Slovenia are more general. There are concrete initiatives in Scotland in the form of a literacy training pack. In Ireland, where literacy forms part of the more general education policy, there is a quality framework for evaluating literacy provision and standardised records for literacy learners: the NALA Development Plan (2005-2006) and the Evolving Quality Framework (EQF). In Bulgaria there are programmes for the

development of literacy, particularly in relation to the development of competitiveness and employability which reflects this country's emphasis on the importance of lifelong learning in relation to the development of employability. Slovenia has a special programme, 'Reading and Writing for the Roma community'.

Another area that features in some of the policies and initiatives is the development of skills in using ICT and the role of ICT in learning. Russia has a policy for the development of remote training technologies. In Hungary access to ICT training is provided in rural areas through the use of Telecottages. These are staffed mainly by volunteers. In Bulgaria there is a national strategy for the introduction of ICT in schools and the government programme in Austria includes strategic emphasis on the development of e-learning. Estonia provides another means of accessing learning at a distance through the use of weekly radio programmes.

Finally one particular group, unqualified young school leavers, are currently the focus of measures to encourage them to stay in education. In Flanders the measures include changes in the curriculum to a more modular system, time-out projects, measures to combat truancy and funding for classes for non-Dutch speaking pupils. In Scotland a similar focus has led to the introduction of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which pays low income students an allowance to stay on in school beyond the compulsory leaving age. As in Flanders, changes are also being made to the curriculum to make it more flexible and relevant to early school leavers. It is worth noting that the UK overall has a relatively high proportion of early school leavers compared to the other countries (see Chapter 4, Fig 4.12).

### **Accreditation of Learning**

A key strategy to develop quality assurance mechanisms in lifelong learning is the implementation of a qualifications framework.<sup>16</sup> Linked to a qualifications framework is the development of accreditation of learning that has been acquired in a different institution or through non-formal or informal learning. In Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications and Credit framework assigns levels and credit to all formally provided education from school level through to doctorate level. Most of the other countries also have accredited formal education but do not link compulsory education with post-compulsory formal education to the same extent. The Czech Republic report comments on problems as there is no coherent, legally enforced system of accreditation, while Estonia states that it has no National Qualification framework. Clearly then the formal education systems in all countries have recognised qualifications. However, in most countries, including those that have relatively well established formal

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<sup>16</sup> The European Union, through the Bologna process, has of course developed the European Credit Transfer System which a number of countries are now adopting for their higher education.

education recognition, there is very limited development of qualifications for non-formal and in particular informal learning.

Qualification frameworks that include all levels of formal education allow for easier transfer from one level to another. Accreditation of learning also provides the potential for a comparison of learning that has been acquired in different settings and thus can make 'second chance' learning more accessible. Initiatives to encourage participation in formal learning include the recognition of prior learning as a means of accessing further education. This can either be accreditation of learning achieved in a different formal education setting (known as Accreditation of prior learning (APL) in the UK) or as accreditation of prior non-formal or informal learning (Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) in the UK). It is clear that most of the countries have considered the development of systems that allow for recognition of different forms of learning. This is particularly well developed in Norway which has developed a system that allows for the recognition of competences.

However, other partner countries report that this type of system is not used to any great extent; for example, the Estonian report states that there is very limited access to APEL. In Hungary accreditation of prior experience and learning is available in theory but not in practice; the Austrian report notes that there is a strong emphasis on external examination and access to higher education is through a new exam (Berufsreifepprüfung). In Flanders, recognition of APEL is at an 'experimental stage'; however, here there is a development of a system to recognise workplace competences.

## Summary

There is strong emphasis on policies and strategies in relation to employability in all countries. A smaller number of countries also show evidence of strategies that focus on active citizenship or personal development. Development of literacy skills and ICT only feature in a number of instances. There is evidence that most countries are working on accreditation frameworks or have adopted in ECTS in higher education. However, these frameworks are only well developed in a few countries and access to accreditation for learning achieved in a range of different settings is also limited.

Some key themes of public sector policies and initiatives are:

- the compulsory system is important in fostering lifelong learning, but is not expanding in the same way as post-compulsory/tertiary education,
- lifelong learning is generally viewed in a 'cradle to grave' sense,
- There are some moves towards encouraging children to be lifelong learners,



- post compulsory education and training is the main area of education systems where lifelong learning policies have been focused,
- in many cases education is closely tied to professional training,
- some countries however emphasise wider concepts of lifelong learning,
- accreditation of learning and development of qualifications frameworks are seen as important ways of ensuring quality in lifelong learning.



## 9 Lifelong Learning & Policy Co-ordination

This chapter addresses the issue of how far policies relating to lifelong learning are co-ordinated across government, and in particular how far they are co-ordinated with the key areas of the labour market and social security. It addresses the following research question:

- To what extent is lifelong learning policy coordinated with labour market and/or social security policies?

There is a strong relationship between labour market policy and education. Mass compulsory education systems stem largely from the growth of an industrialised society that requires a literate and numerate workforce. The growth of the knowledge society is similarly premised on the need for an educated and skilled workforce but it also requires a workforce that is flexible and willing to reskill. Lifelong learning initiatives, whilst recognising the vital importance of the compulsory education system in providing basic skills and fostering a positive attitude to learning, generally focus on learning in post-compulsory education. In some countries lifelong learning is also seen as a means to develop the employability of those currently not in the labour market in order to reduce the demand on social welfare. It could be argued, given the links between these three areas of policy-making that coordination between them would be an advantage. However, coordination between policy areas may bring an increased centralisation and stifle the opportunity which can arise in decentralised approaches to lifelong learning.

This chapter will examine where the responsibility for coordinating lifelong learning policies lies in each country and examine the extent to which this is coordinated with labour market policy and/or social security policy.

### Responsibility for Co-ordination of Lifelong Learning Policy<sup>17</sup>

The Ministry of Education<sup>18</sup> has the main responsibility for lifelong learning policy in Austria, England, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Russia and Slovenia. Scotland and Bulgaria differ with the responsibility falling to the Department of Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong learning in Scotland and the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training in Bulgaria. In Flanders, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Hungary the responsibility is split between two departments. Whilst the titles of these departments vary in the different

<sup>17</sup> For more specific information on the division of responsibilities for lifelong learning in the different countries please refer to Appendix C, Table 6 “Responsibility for Lifelong Learning”

<sup>18</sup> The term Ministry of Education is used here as a generic term, in some countries the term Department is used and in others the actual ministry also includes responsibility for science, research or sport. See Appendix C, Table 7 for detailed information.

national contexts the two main departments in these four countries are Education and Labour/Employment.

Although Ministries of Education have overall responsibility in a number of countries, there are often strong links to Ministries of Labour/Employment and in reality most of the lifelong learning policy is co-ordinated by different departments that do not necessarily have intentions to shape lifelong learning policy. For example, in Austria departments coordinating finance, economics or labour policy often have an impact on lifelong learning (Austrian report).

Several of the Central and Eastern European countries report that the division of responsibility is unclear or that there is a wide range of governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in lifelong learning policy (e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Estonia). However, the most influential actors involved often seem to be state agencies or NGOs concerned with labour policy. In Slovenia the Ministry of Labour is the main promoter of lifelong learning in practice, although official responsibility in fact lies with the Ministry of Education and Sport. In Russia, problems arising from the country's high unemployment levels define the interaction between the Ministry of Education and the other ministries and federal services (e.g. Federal Service on Labour and Employment).

### **Co-ordination of Education Policy with Labour Policy in Relation to Lifelong Learning**

Increasing employability and employment levels are key goals in all the countries, which may explain the significant influence of labour/employment agencies and/or ministries in the area of lifelong learning. This state of affairs has a strong influence on the relationship between education, employment and lifelong learning policies.

It can therefore be argued that, in most countries, education and lifelong learning policies are strongly influenced by employment policy. In Austria, labour market policy has developed as a main field of state activity in further education and training (Austrian report). In England and Scotland several initiatives have been put in place in order to enable people to receive training in preparation for entering the labour market (English report, Scottish report). Furthermore, Norwegian lifelong learning policy highlights the need for a better dialogue between industry and academia in order to provide further and continuing training (FCT) courses. However, Norway does not have a tradition of close collaboration between public education and employment services. The "New Administration for Work and Welfare" will try to establish a better framework for further development of education and training policy aimed at increasing employability (Norwegian report), which implies that co-ordination structures between these policy areas are under development.

In Flanders policy development and implementation concerning lifelong learning are co-ordinated by the Ministerial Committee 'Education, Training and Work', the Interdepartmental Steering Committee and the Service for Information, Education and Harmonisation. This threefold structure was established by the Minister of Work, Education and Training and the Minister of Culture (Flemish report). Again, this example indicates a strong relation between education and employment policies.

When considering the Central and Eastern European countries, the influence of labour market policies on lifelong learning is equally clear. In Estonia the first priority of its National Development Plan is described as "Measure 1.1: *Educational System Supporting the Flexibility and Employability of the Labour Force and Providing Opportunities of lifelong learning for All*" (Estonian report). The economic aspect, especially vocational training is a "constant and strong element of all policy documents ... and is considered an important tool for reintegration of unemployed people into the labour market" (Hungarian report).

Continuous vocational training in enterprises is an emerging policy theme in many countries. The main emphasis in Austria has been on retraining for those in employment and the unemployed; whereas the training budget for the unemployed has increased over the years, the funding for those in general adult education has not changed. The Austrian report therefore outlines the definition of lifelong learning as 'training for the unemployed' (Austrian report). This definition applies to most other countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe; however, this may in part be due to the generally higher levels of unemployment linked to lower than EU average levels of GDP per capita (see Appendix C, Table 1). In Estonia the Ministry of Social Affairs only pays for training for jobseekers: people in work do not benefit from free training, as employers are responsible for financing training for their employees, though they are not obliged to do this (supplementary communication from Estonian research team).

In this context the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs published a decree, 'Labour Code' (2004) which states that "the right to retraining relates not only to registered job seekers, but also to registered people interested in jobs" (Czech Report). In Ireland, part-time students, many of whom are engaged in the labour force, still have to pay third level education fees, while full time students do not (Irish report).

Throughout Lithuanian and Bulgarian lifelong learning policy the emphasis is on labour market, rather than social welfare policy. This human capital agenda is apparent even in initiatives ostensibly concerned with social welfare and inclusion. For example, in Lithuania the *Social Innovation Fund* was created in 1994. Despite the socio-cultural breadth of its goals, the banner motto of this organisation is starkly economic: 'better a job than the dole' (Lithuanian report). Likewise, the Bulgarian report states that one of the main aims of the

*Employment Strategy* (2004-2010) is “overcoming the existing disproportion and achieving a balanced and stable development of all regions, by means of different initiatives, with the lifelong learning practices included” (Bulgarian report). Several measures have been put in place in order to achieve this goal, including literacy courses and vocational training for unemployed people (Bulgarian report).

Similar patterns are visible in other Central and Eastern European countries and would appear to indicate that public and private sector lifelong learning strategies are firmly oriented to the goal of increasing employability.

### **Co-ordination of Education Policy with Social Security Policy in Relation to Lifelong Learning**

Those at the margin of society often suffer early educational disadvantage and are unable to secure work, or are to be found in low skill and low pay jobs. Lifelong learning opportunities are increasingly seen as a means of engaging these particular groups. It is argued that education and training will enhance life opportunities in a society where paid work allows for access to goods and resources. Social policy in a number of countries has been shaped by this view. This means that social policies, including those in relation to gender, social disadvantage, ethnicity and age, are often strongly linked to labour market policies.

The links between social and educational disadvantage is noted in the Irish report and it emphasises the important role of lifelong learning in addressing poverty and disadvantage (Irish report). The Irish *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* acknowledges lifelong learning as a key feature of sustained economic growth and social development (Irish report). In Scotland there is a major focus on re-engaging disadvantaged communities with the labour market. A range of strategies are used to encourage disengaged workers back into lifelong learning and employment (Scottish report). In Flanders the *Degree of Competence* has been developed to increase the chances of unqualified people on the labour market (Flemish report).

The Czech policy of social inclusion is based on strategic EU directions. The Ministry of Labour aims to realise the EU goals by using the Operational Programme Human Resource Development, financed by ESF. Within this programme, the Czech Ministry of Labour supports a number of projects which develop and ratify various tools and approaches to removing barriers in education for disadvantaged groups (Czech report).

An interesting example of the human capital approach within social policy is the Estonian *Measure 1.3: Inclusive Labour Market*. This measure is a main priority of the *National Development Plan* and aims to re-integrate at-risk

groups into the labour market by supporting in-service training and re-training of the unemployed; enhance the employability of at-risk groups; and develop measures for the inclusion of and re-integration of women into the labour market. Both the Labour Market Board and the Ministry of Social Affairs are responsible for the implementation of Measure 1.3, which reflects the strong relationship between these two policy fields (Estonian report).

Similarly, Russian employment policy and social policy introduced a number of measures that facilitate access to education for socially deprived groups, including orphans and disabled citizens. However, in the practice of educational institutions, programmes for disabled people, ethnic and religious minorities are not widespread and depend on funding provided by NGOs (Russian report). Likewise, in Slovenia specific measures have been put in place aimed at improving participation in lifelong learning for different groups of people (e.g. older workers, ethnic minorities, disadvantaged people) who need to upgrade their competences to remain in the workforce (Slovenian report).

In Bulgaria social policy is also strongly related to labour market policy. The policy areas of community development and poverty reduction promote the importance of vocational training centres and NGOs whose activities are dedicated to meeting the particular economic needs of a given region (Bulgarian report).

Many of these initiatives see lifelong learning as a means of increasing employability, which in turn is seen as the means of reducing social exclusion. It can therefore be argued that employment policy acts as a strong driver and creates a link between lifelong learning and education initiatives and social policies in most countries.

The fact that this seems to be especially the case in many Central and Eastern European countries can perhaps be explained by relatively high unemployment levels in some countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Lithuania) as well as by the lack of a governmental or central lifelong learning strategy (e.g. Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic). If there is no separate policy for lifelong learning, this means that lifelong learning has to be integrated into other policy areas in which it is often used as a measure to increase employability.

Several countries mention a link between lifelong learning policy and immigration policy (Flanders, Ireland, Scotland, Austria, Lithuania, Norway). By integrating lifelong learning aspects into immigration policy, countries aim to increase social cohesion and enhance employability of ethnic minorities. For example, the Flemish government introduced a decree on integration (2006), which states that residents with a native language other than Dutch and who want to live in a social housing complex, are obliged to learn Dutch. It is believed that the knowledge of the Dutch language will simplify

communication and increase social cohesion (supplementary communication from Flemish research team). Similarly, the Austrian integration law (2006) requires immigrants to acquire a basic knowledge of the German language aimed at enhancing their participation in social, cultural and economic life (Austrian report). Scotland and Norway have similar policy measures in place (See Chapter 6). Lithuania also offers Lithuanian language courses for foreigners, though any other support to minorities is in the sphere of the labour market (supplementary communication from Lithuanian research team).

## Summary

In theory lifelong learning policy comes within the remit of ministries of education in the majority of countries; however, there is dual responsibility between that ministry and labour/employment ministries in a small number of countries. In practice it is clear that employment policies act as a strong driver on shaping the lifelong learning strategies as lifelong learning is seen as a means to achieving a highly skilled workforce that can adapt to requirements of the knowledge society. The overall impression is that in several of the post-communist countries, the division of responsibility between different agencies is unclear, and this leads to some confusion in the formulation and implementation of policy.

The importance of employment policies can also be discerned in how relates to lifelong learning and social policy. In this area lifelong learning strategies are considered of importance in enabling social inclusion. In some Northern European countries, e.g. Ireland the emphasis on lifelong learning as a mechanism for dealing with disadvantage is clearly expressed; in other countries such as England and Scotland it is considered a means of moving those on social welfare into work through developing relevant skills. In general, social policies are often linked to labour market policies, this link is also noticeable by the mention of projects that focus specifically on social inclusion through skills development that enhance employability which have been supported by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Some key issues concerning policy co-ordination include:

- education is often strongly tied to the labour market,
- the development and maintenance of literate and numerate workforce is seen as a key goal,
- flexibility and the ability to re-skill are also viewed as key concerns,
- ministries of education and labour/employment are generally the key government departments for co-ordinating lifelong learning,



- unclear division of responsibilities in some countries acts as a barrier to successful implementation of policies.

## 10 Barriers to Implementation of Lifelong Learning

As has become clear from the previous chapter, there are often several governmental and non-governmental actors involved in lifelong learning. This is in part because lifelong learning is seen as a means of achieving a range of different policy goals such as enhancing or developing skills in the workforce, providing access to work for marginalised groups, promoting social cohesion and providing personal development. If all of these are to be achieved, it could be argued, there is a need for some form of coordination across the different actors and agencies. This chapter therefore addresses the following research question:

- What are the barriers to successful implementation of the lifelong learning goals and strategies?

However, as noted in the previous chapter, we should approach this question with some caution. There are tensions between providing centralised coordination which brings together all the agencies and allowing for decentralised development of initiatives that are suited to particular regional contexts. A centralised approach may provide a more efficient use of funding resources and prevent duplication of effort in certain areas but may reduce the scope for in-depth understanding of responses to specific needs.

The different chapters in this report highlight instances of uneven implementation of the six key messages outlined in the *European Union Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* as well as more specific initiatives such as *Grundtvig* and *ESF*<sup>19</sup>. This suggests that it is worth examining what the barriers are to implementing in full all the goals in such a way that lifelong learning is available for all irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity or disability. As the key players are to be found in education, labour and social security departments and agencies the chapter will focus on the extent to which these three areas coordinate to achieve the goals, or how far their interpretations of the role of lifelong learning differ. While there is a strong case to be made for diversity, if it differs then that is likely to become a barrier to promoting lifelong learning in the manner envisaged in the Lisbon Strategy.

### National Implementation of Lifelong Learning

The previous chapter has demonstrated that in all countries lifelong learning policy is heavily influenced by other policy areas, by labour and social security policy in particular.

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<sup>19</sup> For more specific information on these initiatives please refer to Chapter 5.



In some countries, such as Austria the primacy of labour policy is clearly evident and there is limited coordination with lifelong learning policy. This has led to initiatives such as tax reduction for companies that provide training opportunities for employees. No educational policy makers or experts have been involved and no evaluation of the impact of this measure on lifelong learning participation has been carried out. Since there is no (effective) lifelong learning co-ordination structure in place, this initiative is solely based on negotiations between employers' organisations and the government (Austrian report).

Although effective co-ordination does not necessarily imply a single body, the lack of such a body often leads to problems in many Central and Eastern European countries. There are often too many actors involved and no legislation in place to co-ordinate lifelong learning activities. In Estonia, recommendations outlined in the document *Priorities of National Adult Education, Recommendations 2003-04*, have not been implemented due to the lack of any overarching body with responsibility for such matters (Estonian report). The Hungarian report states that efforts to get the most disadvantaged groups into adult education have had very modest results, partly due to a lack of co-ordination among the various stakeholders. It is therefore argued that better support is needed for civil organisations, leadership and direction (Hungarian report).

Likewise, the Slovenian lifelong learning strategy comprises partial approaches. Some of the stakeholders involved (e.g. trade unions) sometimes neglect the idea of implementing lifelong learning initiatives in general and education in particular. The Slovenian report therefore also stresses the need for a clear co-ordination and lifelong learning strategy, shared by all stakeholders (Slovenian report). Similarly, the Bulgarian report states that a coherent lifelong learning strategy is needed and that lack of co-ordination is probably caused by the fact that there is no clear vision of lifelong learning (Bulgarian report). These are all new member (or accession) states that have experienced considerable changes to their governments in the past fifteen years. Adopting EU measures in a top-down manner may not always fit in with existing structures and can at times prevent the development of more contextualised, bottom-up, approaches.

By contrast, in Flanders and Scotland overarching bodies or co-ordination systems for lifelong learning are in place. Flanders has a threefold co-ordination structure established by the Minister of Work, Education and Training and the Minister of Culture (please refer to Chapter 9). In Scotland lifelong learning policy is co-ordinated by the Scottish Executive's Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department. However, whilst Scotland has a single coordinating department, another department is responsible for the social regeneration projects which are aimed at marginalised groups in society. There is also a clear emphasis in the Scottish lifelong learning

strategies on employability and it could be argued that this has led to a relative neglect of the personal development aspect of lifelong learning.

### **Tensions between Central & Decentralised Co-ordination**

In Russia, the lack of a clear lifelong learning strategy is associated with the size of the country, as the great number of separate initiatives from across the Russian regions lead to a fragmentary pattern of lifelong learning provision at the national level. Regional initiatives reflect concrete regional needs, which makes it difficult to transform such initiatives into a coherent national lifelong learning strategy.

By contrast, Ireland is a relatively small country with a significant number of local lifelong learning initiatives in place. Both the Irish Green and White Papers on adult education and lifelong learning proposed the provision of national and local structures (Irish report). A concrete example of a lifelong learning initiative managed on a local level is Youthreach, a key education programme directed specifically at unemployed young early school leavers aged 15-20 with no formal education or training qualifications. While Youthreach is a national programme, centres are locally managed, and programmes reflect the particular social, economic and cultural environment in which they operate (Irish report). Although the regional dimension receives significant attention in Ireland, there are still concerns that it overly stresses the advantages of a centralised model (supplementary communication from Irish research team). In this context the report illustrates the need for local and regional structures to have more autonomy regarding budgets, as this could increase the effectiveness of local lifelong learning initiatives (Irish report).

While educational programmes such as Youthreach are effectively co-ordinated at a national level in Ireland, this appears to be a problem in some other countries. For instance, the Scottish report mentions adult literacy as an area where co-ordination structures could be improved: “certain findings indicate that further development of adult literacies in Scotland will require clearer direction at both national and local levels in order to improve progress and good practice” (Scottish report).

In England, the Learning Skills Council (LSC), along with 47 local Learning and Skills Councils, is responsible for co-ordinating all publicly funded post-16 education and training, excluding higher education. There is however some confusion between local LSC’s and the national body regarding responsibilities (English report).

In Norway tensions arise due to unclear responsibilities, budget constraints and general administrative inertia in setting up arrangements at local level. The report therefore states that “the main challenge is to ensure that the devolution of responsibility in the implementation of lifelong learning policies,

particularly statutory rights, is well coordinated between local, regional and central levels” (Norwegian report). Similarly, one of the policy recommendations outlined in the Bulgarian report expresses the need for “a strategy, which observes the complex character of the principle of lifelong learning and anticipates ways and means of coordinating the efforts at national, regional and institutional levels” (Bulgarian report).

From these examples various reasons for tensions between the central and local level emerge: the fragmentary character of policy co-ordination due to the size of the country; concerns about over-representation of the centralised model; lack of co-ordination at a national level; confusion regarding responsibilities of national and local bodies; ineffective arrangements at the local level; and a lack of an effective co-ordination structures in general.

Overall, countries show a great commitment to introducing and enhancing lifelong learning initiatives on a regional level. However, these initiatives are not always effective due to co-ordination problems. While an improved Open Method of Co-ordination may ensure smoother co-ordination and co-operation in lifelong learning policy on a European level (see Chapter 5), it is may be that a (similar) structure that enhances policy co-ordination between the national and local level would be appropriate. However, measures developed at one level may not translate into effective structures at a local level.

### **Weaknesses in Co-ordination between Administrative Levels**

Although in most countries a wide range of governmental and non-governmental agencies are involved in lifelong learning policy, the following countries specifically address the problem of unclear responsibilities and/or lack of effective co-ordination between different administrative levels.

In Norway it is a great challenge to co-ordinate the administrative levels (central, regional and municipal) that have to be called upon when providing individuals with statutory rights to education. Directorates and services at regional and municipal levels support the two ministries that have the strongest input in lifelong learning: the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. However, the proposed increase in collaboration between public education and employment services (as part of the Competence or Lifelong Learning Reform) has yet to be realised in practice, due to the long-standing separation of the two ministries (Norwegian report).

In the Czech Republic, the allocation of responsibilities between central authorities, regions and cities, between central authorities and representatives, as well as between employee and employer organisations are not clear (Czech report). There is no effective co-ordinating structure in place, which significantly decreases the effectiveness of policies and decrees in practice.

Similarly, in Hungary, frequent changes in government, several alterations in responsibilities for lifelong learning, and weak interdepartmental co-ordination have hampered lifelong learning development. The structure of governmental institutions has changed constantly since the beginning of the nineties and this has had a rather negative effect on policy development and implementation (Hungarian report).

Finally, no central agency for lifelong learning exists in Austria. “Important developments in lifelong learning are actually initiated in other policy areas such as finance, economics or labour policy without deliberate intentions to shape lifelong learning policy. Certainly, the Ministry of Education later quotes these measures as part of their lifelong learning policy. This makes it extremely difficult to judge from the official policy documents whether an initiative stems from deliberate concern for lifelong learning or from other areas not actively co-ordinated or linked with lifelong learning policy” (Austrian report).

The lack of effective co-ordination and unclear responsibilities between different administrative levels has different levels of impact in the countries discussed above. While in Hungary alterations in responsibilities for lifelong learning have resulted in constant change of focus of lifelong learning policy (Hungarian report), in the Czech Republic unclear responsibilities between different administrative levels form a significant barrier to creating a complex lifelong learning policy (which is currently not in place).

Although problems in this context occur in Norway and Austria, they do not seem to have the same consequences. Despite the fact that a lifelong learning initiative does not always stem from an area co-ordinated with lifelong learning policy, the Austrian report states that “lifelong learning has now become a motive within social security and employment policies” (Austrian report). Furthermore, although the long-standing separation of the two Norwegian ministries responsible for lifelong learning certainly forms a barrier to effective co-ordination, there are sufficient ‘back-up’ co-ordinating structures or documents in place that ensure effective implementation of lifelong learning initiatives (e.g. a Blue Paper on co-ordination of policy areas linked to competence development) (Norwegian report).

The contrast between Norway and Austria on the one hand and Hungary and the Czech Republic on the other is likely to reflect differences between long-standing market economies and ones that have had to change rapidly from a centralised to a market-led economy. In Norway and Austria structures are in place that will allow for coordination whilst in the other two countries this seems more problematic. However, this is not a sufficient explanation for lack of coordination as other post-communist countries have not stressed the lack of coordination to such an extent. Different local contexts appear to lead to

varying and not easily predictable interpretations and implementations of goals and strategies in a range of different ways.

## **Competing Policy Areas**

In most countries a range of government bodies have an interest in lifelong learning, which sometimes results in competition for power rather than a common search for an effective lifelong learning strategy. Although in some countries this may be a deliberate policy to increase competition between public and private bodies, the following countries report problems in this context. In these countries some conflicts between such bodies may hinder initiatives being successful rather than governments or policy makers not trying to do anything.

The Czech report, indicates competition between elements of the bureaucracy is often more apparent than a search for real solutions between central authorities (Czech report).

In England, the Department for Education and Skills, the Department of Health, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Social Exclusion Unit and Regional Government all have an interest in lifelong learning. Each of these has, to some extent, their own agenda to pursue, and thus competing actors and institutions add to the problems of coherence, with the potential for competing bureaucratic powers to influence the direction of policy, possibly in unintended ways (English report).

In Norway, there are occasional tensions between different bodies and agencies involved in the area of lifelong learning. An example of such a tension is that employers have feared that the introduction of schemes for validation of non-formal and informal competences could entail claims for higher wages. However, although a few of these mild tensions exist in Norway, few objections are raised against the main direction of lifelong learning reform (Norwegian report).

While in the Czech Republic competing powers do not enhance the process of finding solutions for problems, in England there is the problem of actors pursuing their own and probably different agendas. In these countries competing powers appear to be a main barrier for achieving a coherent lifelong learning policy. Establishing coherence and convergence is not possible if the actors involved pursue different or even contradictory purposes.

## **Summary**

It is clear that in some countries there is some confusion over responsibility for the development of lifelong learning and/or lack of a strategy, and that is

causing a barrier to its implementation. This seems to be a particular issue for the Czech Republic, Hungary and Russia – all countries that have recently developed market economies. In other countries, coordination seems to be weak between different key agents and this is leading to different interpretations of how lifelong learning should be implemented. However, whilst, the first case – confusion over responsibility/lack of strategy – seems to lead to lack of policy initiatives or limited development, the second case – weak coordination – leads to initiatives but within specific areas. Austria provides an example here where a number of initiatives have been focused on employability and the development of human capital, rather than on broader personal development.

Overall, it can be suggested, that where there are competing demands between the three agencies the strongest players are labour policy makers as many of the initiatives (see e.g. Chapter 9) are focused on the development of human capital. However, two countries in particular seem to have developed mechanisms that allow for development of initiatives both in relation to work and social cohesion – Flanders and Ireland. Both are small countries, one is at ‘the centre of the EU’ and a founder member, the other is a more recent member state, one has centralised coordination, the other stresses the need for decentralisation. This would suggest that a clearly developed lifelong strategy which sets out the responsibilities of key agents is a prerequisite for the development of lifelong learning but that the coordination of those responsible need to be sensitive local contexts.

Issues concerning barriers to the implementation of lifelong learning policies include:

- a large range of governmental actors can sometimes impact upon the effectiveness of lifelong learning initiatives,
- the need for better co-ordination across different bodies and agencies was often highlighted,
- there is some evidence of uneven implementation of the key messages on lifelong learning articulated by the EU,
- the specific aims of some lifelong learning are not clearly defined enough,
- there are often competing demands between the key agencies involved in lifelong learning.

## 11 Lifelong Learning in National Policy: A Residual Role?

This chapter of the report will examine the extent to which lifelong learning across the countries has been used rhetorically, rather than resulting in concrete policies. It will also explore the extent to which lifelong learning actually addresses all the issues espoused within policy discourses. The research question to which it relates is:

- To what extent is lifelong learning allocated a merely residual role in national policy-making?

The focus can therefore be seen as concerning the potential contrast between *rhetoric* and *reality*. Rhetoric may be a mirror reality, or be an important driver of change. Rhetoric may be intended, but fail due to problems in policy implementation. Colebatch (1998) has shown how there may be a large number of players involved in implementing policy, with a diverse range of goals, and that this can influence whether the stated aims of policy are achieved. Throughout the process of policy implementation, there are a number of points at which progress needs to be ‘cleared’, and at such points the direction of policy may become slightly altered (Colebatch, 1998). As such, there may be a range of reasons why espoused policy aims are not always successfully implemented.

### Developing Concept

Judgement of how successfully lifelong learning policies have been implemented is complicated by the fact that the promotion of the concept within many of the countries is in its infancy. As such, much of the content of the national reports focuses on *intentions*, as opposed to *outcomes*, making it difficult to judge if lifelong learning has been allocated a merely residual role, or if it is just still in the early stages of development. This is especially true of post-communist countries. In Slovenia, with the exception of the *Adult Education Master Plan* and the Programmes for the unemployed, “it is too early to say [if the initiatives are having an effect] since they have been introduced quite recently” (Slovenian report). Furthermore, in Estonia the *Lifelong Learning Strategy* was only established in 2005, as was the *National Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper* in Hungary. Likewise in Norway, it was mentioned that it was too early to make judgements on some initiatives, and thus in some instances it may be unfair to say that concrete policy on lifelong learning has not been implemented, as the process is in the early stages. These examples highlight the importance of ongoing monitoring and assessment, as well as further research.

## Laws or Policy Statements?

The authors of the national reports often commented that although lifelong learning was promoted as important within policy circles, this was not always followed up by implementation. For example, it was said that “Austria is very keen to adopt EU lifelong learning policy rhetoric; but, on the other hand, there is no implementation of this policy at the national level” (Austrian report). Furthermore, the government highlighted in the *Regierungsprogramm 2003-2006* (“government programme 2003-2006”) the importance of a national steering group for lifelong learning, but this has yet to be instigated. In the Czech Republic, policy documents exist, but there has been no realisation of the statements and in Russia, reforms in lifelong learning are seen as having a basically ‘*virtual character*’ (Russian report). In Flanders, some key concepts associated with lifelong learning have had no real effect on policy and have only been used by the government rhetorically.

In some instances where there were signs of developing policy, there may be grounds for questioning how much progress has been made. For example, in Ireland there is recognition at policy level that the formal education system is fundamental to lifelong learning; but there is “little evidence of a more fundamental rethinking of this distinct role of formal educational settings which there should be to meet the challenge posed by lifelong and lifewide learning” (Irish report). Also in Ireland, although the National Adult Learning Council (NALC) was established following the White Paper, *Learning for Life 2000*, it was suspended in 2003 without having ever met. In Hungary, the government are behind the schedule of enhancing learning opportunities and basic skills provision set out in *the National Strategy of Government (2005)* and there “is a marked discrepancy between the slogans on importance of e-learning and the modern learning media and the rate of Hungarian population profiting of this opportunity” (Hungarian Report).

## Narrow Focus?

Previous sections of this report have highlighted how in many of the countries there has been a narrow focus within lifelong learning policy on human capital approaches. Despite this, a rhetorical emphasis on the wider benefits of lifelong learning, for example on issues such as personal development, remains. For example, in Austria broader EU principles are not really seen in policy detail, “although on a rhetorical level, European lifelong learning policy, together with arguments coming directly from the EU employment policy, is used to argue for increasing public spending for unemployment training” (Austrian report). Furthermore, some initiatives do not in reality focus on the areas that they purport to, such as the *Bildungsfreibetrag*, by which employers can claim tax-free reductions of costs they have spent on training. This initiative was negotiated between employers’ organisations and the government and seems to be more regarded as a general tax reduction for



companies, rather than a serious attempt to widen participation in learning (it was also implemented without consultation with policy makers or experts within education).

In Norway, the key national lifelong learning reform, the *Competence reform*, largely addressed labour market issues and “was stamped with an employability perspective that has not really been challenged” (Norwegian report). The ‘movement of popular education’ has a reduced influence in Norway and this has further lessened competition from opposing perspectives on lifelong learning. In Scotland, with regards to the lifelong learning strategy, “many of the government initiatives designed to meet key challenge 2 [Target provision for those with the greatest needs] in effect serve the human capital agenda behind key challenge 1” (Scottish report). It is perceived in Bulgaria that “national policies are not informed so far by a global and clear vision of lifelong learning” and that there is a clear “vocational bias” (Bulgarian report).

This is not to imply that economic imperatives are the only driver for lifelong learning across the studied countries. As is shown below, there are a range of initiatives that focus attention on disadvantaged groups and addressing inequality. There is, however, evidence that suggests that in some countries the authors of the national reports believe that wider goals of lifelong learning have not been given as much attention as economic, or labour market ones.

### **Disadvantaged Groups**

There is though no absolute dichotomy between social and economic purposes in lifelong learning. There have been attempts to address issues of inequality within the lifelong learning agenda and developments may be driven by the belief that employment is a principal means to combat social exclusion. As argued in the Scottish report, “people are far less likely to experience social exclusion if they are engaged with the labour market” and thus social and economic factors are intertwined (Scottish report). Although there is some evidence that economic concerns predominate, this is not entirely the case.

There is some evidence that policy rhetoric directed towards equality has not always had the desired result in practice and may even contribute towards further inequality. In Norway, policy rhetoric has advocated equal access for all, as well as social inclusion, although there is evidence “that high-educated Norwegians are the most motivated for continuing and further training (CFT)”, although there is now apparently a political will to address this (Norwegian report). In Slovenia, those with lower educational levels, older adults and adults of lower occupational status are less likely to participate and inequality is growing. Also, in Slovenia, access to education has become highly selective and participation is lowest amongst the already disadvantaged, a particular problem as “up to 77% of the adult population in Slovenia, are by their literacy achievements *under the standards* that are necessary to understand and use

written information in everyday activities” (Slovenian report). In Scotland disadvantaged and excluded groups often only get poorly paid work, and may have less chance to develop, as the focus is on human capital than those who make larger contributions to the economy. The Estonian report contends that the *Income Tax Act* had led to a focus on individuals having to pay for their own training, which “increases the inequality in training as people with lower incomes have difficulties in participation” (Estonian report).

As was suggested before, there may be a complex range of reasons for problems in policy implementation (Colebatch, 1998). The fact that there is more to be done to address inequality throughout the countries may result from poor planning or inappropriate initiatives; but there has been significant investment in this area, and attempts at addressing disadvantage through lifelong learning at both EU and national levels. For example, the EU’s Social Fund aims “to promote a high level of employment, equal opportunities for men and women, sustainable development and economic and social cohesion” (EU report). At national levels, Irish initiatives such as *Senior Traveller Training Centres*; *Youthreach* and the *Education Adult Guidance Service* have been initiated and had some success in increasing the participation of, for example, Travellers. In Hungary, the *National Development Plan* included measures to combat social exclusion, whilst in Lithuania, the *Social Innovation Fund’s* “learning courses address socially disadvantaged groups” (Lithuanian report). In Scotland, “institutions also receive premium funding (additional funding) based on the number of students from disadvantaged background” (Scottish report). Furthermore, intensifying of some inequality is a feature of the current phase of globalised capitalism; the fact that social and lifelong learning policies have not eliminated it is not in itself a sign of their failure.

### **Priority on Youth**

One of the key elements of lifelong learning rhetoric is a focus on learning throughout life, with the EU’s Memorandum on Lifelong Learning emphasising “provision of easy access to good quality information and advice about learning opportunities for all ages” (EU report). However, there is evidence from the national reports that priorities in education are in some cases largely aimed at younger age-groups. In Austria, parts of the *ESF budget period 2000-2006* “which were envisaged to be used in the promotion of lifelong learning, have primarily been spent on school and university projects” whilst “less than 20 percent of this budget was spend on adult learning” (Austrian report, BMWA, 2004). In England the majority of publicly funded skills training remains focused on those entering employment for the first time, and in Russia the vast majority of innovations are on education of the youth, specifically those who go straight from school to HE. It would appear that within Russia, the concept of lifelong learning is primarily used in relation to the first level of education (ISCED 1), in connection with the development of

children's critical thinking. In Slovenia, adults aged over 49 were amongst the least active groups in educational activities. Furthermore, in Ireland only approximately 10% of full-time students entering HE in 2005 were over the age of 23 and in Scotland, training in the workplace is often confined to highly qualified young people, excluding older groups.

## Summary

Throughout the countries, lifelong learning has been promoted as a key way to address large-scale economic and social changes. In many cases, however, the reality is that lifelong learning has been implemented with a narrow focus, and broader principles espoused within policy discourses have not always been followed by concrete measures. This narrow focus makes it very hard for all the objectives of lifelong learning to be achieved.

This does not to imply that there is no evidence of the successful implementation of lifelong learning policies, or of it addressing broader concerns. Previous sections of this report have outlined areas where policy-making has indeed focused on various aspects of lifelong learning. This section has attempted to critically assess some discrepancies between rhetoric and reality.

Issues concerning the residual role of lifelong learning include:

- specific examples have been provided showing that rhetoric on lifelong learning was not always fully matched within policy implementation,
- there are a range of complex reasons for this including diverse goals, administrative problems and poor planning,
- in some Post-communist countries, the concept of lifelong learning is in the early stages of development and it is too early to make judgements on some recently implemented strategies,
- there are some examples of policy being developed, but not being implemented fully,
- although lifelong learning policies were often seen to have a narrow labour market focus, there are also examples of lifelong learning being used to address the needs of, for example, disadvantaged groups.

## 12 Developing a Typology of Approaches to Lifelong Learning in Europe

### Introduction

One of the objectives of the first sub-project of the Sixth Framework project LLL2010 was to develop a typology of lifelong learning systems in the thirteen countries of study. In this paper we provide some ideas of how countries may be characterised and grouped, with a view to developing this thinking further as the project progresses. The development of typologies is a fraught business, beset with problems relating to which countries are assigned to particular groupings in terms of their commonalities and differences, reliability of statistical and policy data and the tendency to over-simplify complex social systems. Nonetheless, typologies may be useful in terms of throwing into high relief the similarities and differences between particular systems. In particular, it enables us to view critically the variants on the European socioeconomic model which are emerging in the context of globalisation, and, more specifically, the way in which capitalism is evolving internationally (Hall and Soskice, 2004).

Lifelong learning is clearly a key aspect of social policy, linking education, social security and employment. It is therefore useful to begin with a brief overview of existing typologies of social welfare regimes, considering their applicability to the field of lifelong learning. Most of these typologies have been developed in relation to the EU-15, and one of the major challenges of this project is to begin to understand the directions in which the new member states are moving.

It should be noted that a number of typologies have been developed of, for example, models of lifelong learning (e.g. Schuetze, 2007, see Chapter 3), models of national education and training systems with regard to transition;

<sup>20</sup>and of individual approaches to lifelong learning (Field, 2006). Some of these typologies may be employed in later stages of the project, for example, Field's typology may be applicable to analyses in sub-projects 2 and 3. However, the objective of this sub-project was to develop a typology of national approaches to lifelong learning, so they have not been utilised here.

## Existing Typologies of Welfare States

The best known typology of welfare states is Esping-Andersen's 'three worlds of welfare capitalism' (Esping-Andersen, 1989). This is a theoretically founded typology which divides capitalist welfare states according to welfare regimes as follows:

- the 'liberal' welfare state which has a limited social insurance plan and means tested benefits. The beneficiaries are usually low-income and from a working-class background (e.g. United States and United Kingdom);
- the 'conservative-corporatist' regime which aims to retain existing difference in status within the particular society. There is a strong emphasis on social insurance (e.g. Belgium, Austria); and
- the 'social-democratic' regime that has its aim to promote equality and to provide universal benefits. It normally has a universal insurance scheme but uses some means-testing in provision of benefits (e.g. Norway).

Esping-Andersen's approach has been criticised on the grounds that even some of the countries for which it was originally developed do not fit neatly into one of the categories, and that it does not fully take into account gender issues. An alternative, developed by Castles, refers to 'families of nations', implying looser groupings than the more rigid notion of a typology. Each 'family' is based on shared cultural, linguistic, geographical and/or historical traditions which, it is assumed, lead to the development of particular welfare policies. Castles identifies four 'families' and in relation to Europe these are:

- an English-speaking family consisting of Ireland and the UK;
- a Nordic family consisting of the Nordic countries;
- a continental Western European group consisting of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands; and
- a Southern European group consisting of Greece, Portugal and Spain.

More recently, following the expansion of the EU, challenges have arisen in terms of incorporating new member states into existing social welfare models. Aiginger and Guger (2006), drawing on the work of Esping-Andersen and others, look at the differences between the European welfare model and the

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<sup>20</sup> E.g., the CATWE project <http://mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/catwe/papers/chapter3.pdf>.

new model now emerging in much of Europe, most specifically in the successful Scandinavian countries. They argue that the new European model, characterised by welfare and sustainability on the one hand and efficiency and economic incentives on the other, differs from the old welfare state model and from the US model, even though Anglo-Saxon countries are trying to combine some elements of both. Large continental countries (Italy, Germany and France) have been less successful than the Nordic countries in developing this new model. They also argue that the education system and institutions of the knowledge economy are playing an increasingly important role in the new European socioeconomic model, as well as the traditional components of welfare societies such as the social security and taxation system. They suggest that there are three key dimensions, responsibility, regulation and redistribution, which characterise the European socioeconomic model and which are reflected in different ways in a variety of European countries. **Responsibility** refers to the activities which the state undertakes on behalf of its citizens, including providing welfare, health and social care services, housing, education and so on. In some European countries, individuals are expected to accept a greater degree of responsibility for the procurement of social support than in others. **Regulation** refers to the way in which labour relations are institutionalised and the labour market is regulated, as well as other administrative systems which control social relations. **Redistribution** refers to the way in which financial support is transferred to those in need and the extent to which social services are available to all. The taxation system is clearly of great importance in determining the extent and nature of distribution which occurs within a society. Overall, the European socio-economic model, as interpreted in different nation states, influences and is shaped by every aspect of life, including employment, production, productivity, cultural institutions and behaviour, learning and the creation and diffusion of knowledge.

The typology of countries suggested by Aiginger and Guger draws heavily on the Esping-Anderson model, and, despite emphasising the importance of education and lifelong learning, strongly reflects traditional economic indicators such as annual growth, GDP pre capita, employment rate and unemployment rate. It includes the following groupings:

- Scandinavian Model (e.g. Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway)
- Continental Model (e.g. Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Austria)
- Anglo-Saxon Model (e.g. Ireland, United Kingdom)
- Mediterranean Model (e.g. Greece, Portugal, Spain)
- Catching-up Model (e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary)

The **Scandinavian model** places a great deal of emphasis on redistribution, with social benefits financed by high taxation. Social partnership is also stressed, with employers, trade unions and educationists/trainers contributing

to the sustenance of a knowledge society. The model is characterised by active labour market policies and high employment rates.

The **continental model** emphasises employment as the basis of social transfers, but places much less emphasis on including those who are outwith the labour market or the education system, with little emphasis on redistribution. Industrial relations and wage-bargaining are centralised and education systems are relatively static and hierarchical.

The **Anglo-Saxon model** is economically and socially liberal, emphasising the importance of individuals adopting responsibility for their own education, training and social welfare. Social transfers are smaller, more targeted and means tested. There is less regulation of the labour market and freedom of movement within the education system.

Within the **Mediterranean model** social transfers are small and the family takes a major responsibility for providing support and care to its members. Employment rates, specifically those of women, are low.

The **catching-up model** is characterised by de-regulated labour markets and low taxes on individuals and companies. New EU member states are relatively much poorer than old member states, and whilst the old socialist forms of social support have disappeared or diminished, new forms of welfare such as those in the Scandinavian countries have not as yet emerged. Key features of the catching-up model have yet to be elaborated, and there is clearly a need to investigate existing and emerging differences between these countries.

Given Aiginger's and Guger's emphasis on the centrality of education and knowledge creation and diffusion systems in the creation of a particular country's socio-economic regime, these models seemed to be a good starting point for the development of our own attempt to characterise lifelong learning systems, and in the sections which follow, we explore the applicability of Aiginger's and Guger's models. However, we begin by explaining the variables we decided to focus on, the sources used and the difficulties in constructing the typology.

## **Methods Used in Developing the Typology**

### *The nature of the variables gathered*

Following Aiginger and Guger, the variables selected for inclusion in the table reflected key features of the national economy such as GDP and the proportion spent on education, employment rate, poverty risk and the extent of support for disadvantaged groups through social institutions and social transfers. The organisation of the compulsory education system was noted, and the proportion of young people attaining at least upper secondary education (ISCED 3) was used as a broad indicator of the general success of

the school system. In relation to the system of lifelong learning, we noted the proportion of 25-64 year olds in formal education and also the proportion in undertaking any form of lifelong learning, which might be formal, informal or non-formal. Finally, we drew on the national reports produced as part of Sub-project 1 to identify the emphasis within national lifelong learning systems on the generation of human capital, social capital and the fostering of personal development. We also attempted to include an indicator of the extent to which participation in lifelong learning was used as part of an active labour market policy, in particular as a qualification for the receipt of social transfers. However, we were unable to obtain this information from a significant number of countries and therefore were forced to abandon it. Clearly the selection of these variables and not others was somewhat arbitrary; the aim was to include broad indicators which provided some insight into multiple aspects of a country's social welfare system without ending up with a set of variables which was too long to be manageable.

The following sources of information were used: (i) the National Reports produced by LLL2010 team members, and (ii) statistics and policy reviews compiled by bodies such as Eurostat and Eurydice. Every effort was made to obtain data from one source for all countries to try and ensure comparability, however, this was not always possible particularly for the new member states. In addition, it was sometimes difficult to disaggregate Scottish and Flemish data from the broader UK and Belgian data. The glossary to the table provides technical information on the meaning of each variable and its source.

## **Difficulties Encountered**

### *General problems with welfare state typologies*

Questions arise as to whether it is feasible to develop a typology which makes assumptions using the nation state as the basic unit of analysis. Clarke (2005), for example, has questioned the validity of assuming that welfare states equate to nation states. In the past, he argues, nation states consisted of people who were united by their residency, culture and were governed by a sovereign state that was responsible for the legislation in that country. This is shifting to more multi-level governance, influenced both by regional and trans-national processes. It could be argued that this is particularly evident in some of the new EU member states where independence led to a move away from communist social protection to one that not only had to take account of the capitalist market, but also, after EU accession, had to demonstrate that social protection was in line with EU demands based on the social model (Hantrais, 2002).

### *Including the new member states*

For the purposes of the LLL2010 research, existing typologies have significant limitations. Neither includes any of the previously communist European countries, having been developed prior to or around the period of transition



from the communist to capitalist regimes. Cousins includes the Czech Republic in his analysis of European countries and notes in relation to the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries that: 'One could not, at this time, argue that the CEE countries make up a coherent world of welfare or even, in any strong sense of the term, a family of nations' (Cousins, 2005: 123).

#### *Consistency and reliability of data*

Problems of reliability and consistency existed in relation to the European statistics which were gathered as well as the national reports. In relation to the statistics, this was particularly apparent in the context of the measurement of rates of participation in lifelong learning. The 2003 Labour Force Survey data were particularly unreliable, including all forms of informal learning for some countries and not for others. This, for example, suggested that 89% of people in Austria (96% of those who were economically inactive) were participating in lifelong learning, compared with 11% in Hungary and 76% in the UK. Having examined these data carefully, we discovered that the 2004 data appeared to be rather more consistent, having tightened up the definitions of lifelong learning employed and harmonised the questions asked in different countries.

Difficulties also emerged in drawing data from the national reports. These were compiled in a two-stage process; first, team members reminded to a questionnaire about their country and secondly wrote a report under pre-specified headings. However, the information provided in the reports was patchy and tended to reflect the perspective of the individual or team writing the report. For example, some team members from an education background had little knowledge or understanding of the relationship between lifelong learning, employment and social transfers. As noted above, this became particularly clear when we asked people to comment on the extent to which participation in lifelong learning was a condition of receiving some or all social security benefits including unemployment or incapacity benefit.

#### **Analysis of the data: similarities and differences between European countries**

Table 12.1 includes some key data on country characteristics and rates of educational participation. In this section, we briefly review some of the messages on similarities and differences between countries, before considering how well they fit into the Aiginger/Guger model. The glossary in the Appendix provides details of how particular measures have been calculated and which sources of data have been used.

It is evident that there is a clear divide in terms of the wealth of the old and new member states, with Norway the richest as a result of its small population and plentiful natural resources, in particular North Sea Oil. Ireland has a

higher GDP than Scotland and the UK which are close to Austria and Flanders. The EU 25 average is set at 100 and all the older member states are above this average, whilst the newer states are all below it. Of the newer states Slovenia is the wealthiest among those included in this study. There is a gap between Bulgaria which has the lowest GDP and is a very recent accession state, and the more established of the new member states. Countries vary in the percentage of GDP spent on education, with Norway and Scotland spending a relatively high proportion compared with Flanders, Austria and Ireland. The new member states in general spend a slightly lower proportion of GDP on education than the old member states

Countries differ with regard to the proportion of their working age population in employment, with Norway having the highest proportion followed by Scotland. New member states, particularly Bulgaria, have lower employment rates, than the old member states, although Slovenia and Ireland are very similar. Employment protection also varies, with the UK and Ireland having less regulated labour markets than all other countries, including the new member states. Norway, Flanders and Austria have the highest level of employment protection. The risk of poverty is greatest in Ireland and the UK, and lowest in the Czech Republic and Norway. In terms of support for disadvantaged groups, Norway and Slovenia are identified by the EU as providing adequate support in terms of social inclusion initiatives and measures for those at risk of social exclusion, whilst support in all other countries is seen as partial.

As noted above, the school system is seen as playing an increasingly important role in socioeconomic development. Most of the old and new EU states have comprehensive school systems for the compulsory states of education. Austria and Flanders have stratified systems, where entry to particular sectors is on the basis of academic selection. At least in Flanders, this is associated with low levels of educational attainment, as shown in the percentage of the population having completed at least upper secondary education (see Figure 12.1 below). Whilst the countries are grouped fairly

**Table 12.1. Data contributing to typology of lifelong learning**

	NOR	UK - Sco	UK - Eng	UK	IRE	BEL- Flanders **	AUS	SLO	HUN	CZE	EST	LIT	BUT	RUS
<b>GDP* (% GDP spent on ed.)</b>	153 (7.6%)	118.6 (7%)	:	119 (5.4%)	139 (4.4%)	120.5 (5.6% in 2001)	122 (5.5%)	78 (6%)	61 (5.9%)	72 (4.6%)	50 (5.7%)	48 (5.2%)	30 (4.2%)	:(3.7% 2002)
<b>Employ. Rate</b>	74.8	71.5	:	71.7	67.6	64.3	68.6	66	56.9	64.8	64.4	62.6	55.8	65
<b>Employ. protection</b>	2.6	:	:	1.1	1.3	2.5 (B)	2.2	2.9	1.7	1.9	2.6	2.7	:	:
<b>Poverty risk</b>	11	:	:	18	21	15 (B)	13	10	12	8	18	15	14	:
<b>Support for disadv. groups</b>	Adequate	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Adequate	Partial	:	:	:	Partial	No info in NR
<b>Compulsory ed.</b>	Comp	Comp	Comp	Comp	Comp	Stratified	Stratified	Stratified	Comp	Comp	Comp	Comp	Comp	Comp
<b>% with upper sec ed</b>	95.3	70.6	:	76.4	85.3	69.8	85.3	89.7	83.4	90.9	82.2	86.1	76	70.7 (2002)
<b>% in any LLL</b>	34.7	:	:	39.8	48.9	41.9 (B)	89.2	82	11.7	28.7	31.4	27.8	16.1	:
<b>% in formal LLL</b>	3.9	:	:	8.4	5.4	4 (B)	3	7.6	2.9	1.4	3.7	3	1.2	:
<b>% in formal and non-formal LLL</b>	17.8	:	:	27.5	7.4	9.1	12.9	15.3	3.9	5.6	5.9	6	1.3	:
<b>% in LLL by work status</b>	:	:	:	Em: 23.1 Un: 20.5 In: 13.9	Em: 6.1 Un: 5.5 In: 6	Em: 11.4 Un: 12.6 In: 5.2	Em: 12.7 Un: 14.9 In: 8.1	Em: 18.3 Un: 15.4 In: 9.5	Em: 4.5 Un: 3.2 In: 3.2	Em: 6.6 Un: 2.2 In: 3.7	Em: 7.2 Un: 4.6 In: 4.2	Em: 6.8 Un: 3.8 In: 3.4	:	:
<b>% in any learning by ed att</b>	Low: 15 Med: 30 High: 51	:	:	Low: 12 Med: 37 High: 61	Low: 35 Med: 51 High: 66	Low: 23 Med: 42 High: 67	Low: 87 Med: 89 High: 95	Low: 67 Med: 83 High: 97	Low: 4 Med: 11 High: 27	Low: 10 Med: 26 High: 63	Low: 10 Med: 25 High: 52	Low: 6 Med: 21 High: 60	Low: 2 Med: 12 High: 45	:
<b>Emphasis on HC</b>	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
<b>Emphasis on SC</b>	High	High	Medium	High	High	Low/Medium	Low	Medium/High	Low	Low/Medium	Medium/High	Medium/Low	Low/Medium	Low

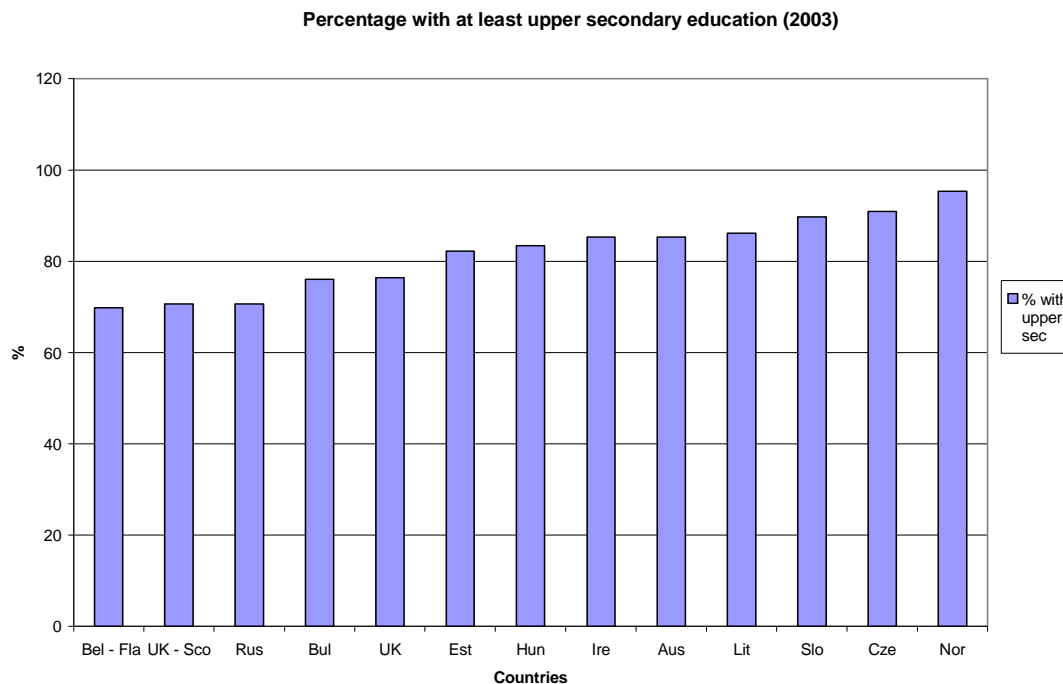
\* 2004 figures



\*\* Belgium = 119

closely together, Scotland appears to perform relatively badly on this measure and Norway, which spends the most in absolute and relative terms, has the highest success rate in terms of completion of upper secondary education.

Figure 12.1

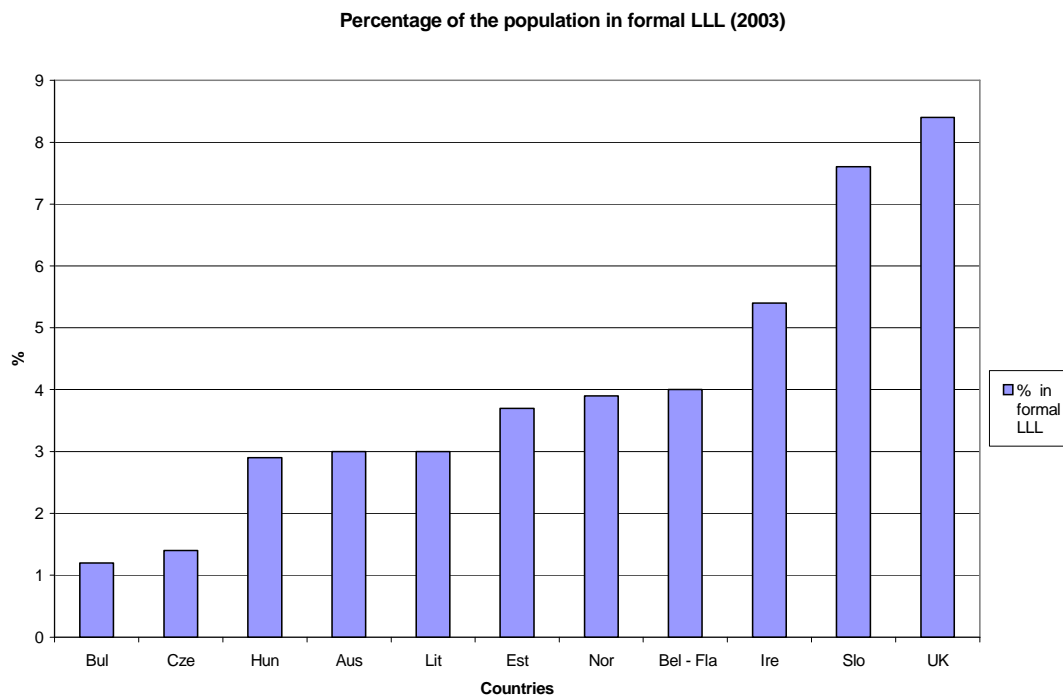


Source: Eurostat.

Moving on to consider participation in lifelong learning, Figure 12.2 below shows participation in formal lifelong learning (i.e. certificated courses delivered in school or college) drawing on 2003 Labour Force Survey Data. It is evident that the UK has a particularly high proportion of the adult population in formal education, followed by Norway and Slovenia. In the UK context, this is attributable in part to the development of non-traditional routes into further and higher education such as part-time study and distance learning, and open access arrangements so that students without formal qualifications may be admitted to higher level courses. This also reflects the relatively high proportion of young people in the UK who leave school without qualifications and therefore need to seek educational credentials at a later point. Of the old member states, Austria has a relatively low proportion of adults in formal education, with Estonia and Lithuania having higher proportions of adults in formal education. Austria has a particularly rigid system of higher education, with students requiring formal qualifications for course entry and having to follow strictly pre-specified courses with no modularisation. As a result, many undergraduates who go straight from school to university do not graduate until they are nearly thirty, and the system is very difficult for adults without formal qualifications to access. Norway does not lead the field on this measure, possibly reflecting its success in helping young people to gain formal qualifications in the compulsory states of schooling. However, Norway is

developing particularly innovative forms of non-formal education, with trade unions and employers working closely with educationists on work-based learning.

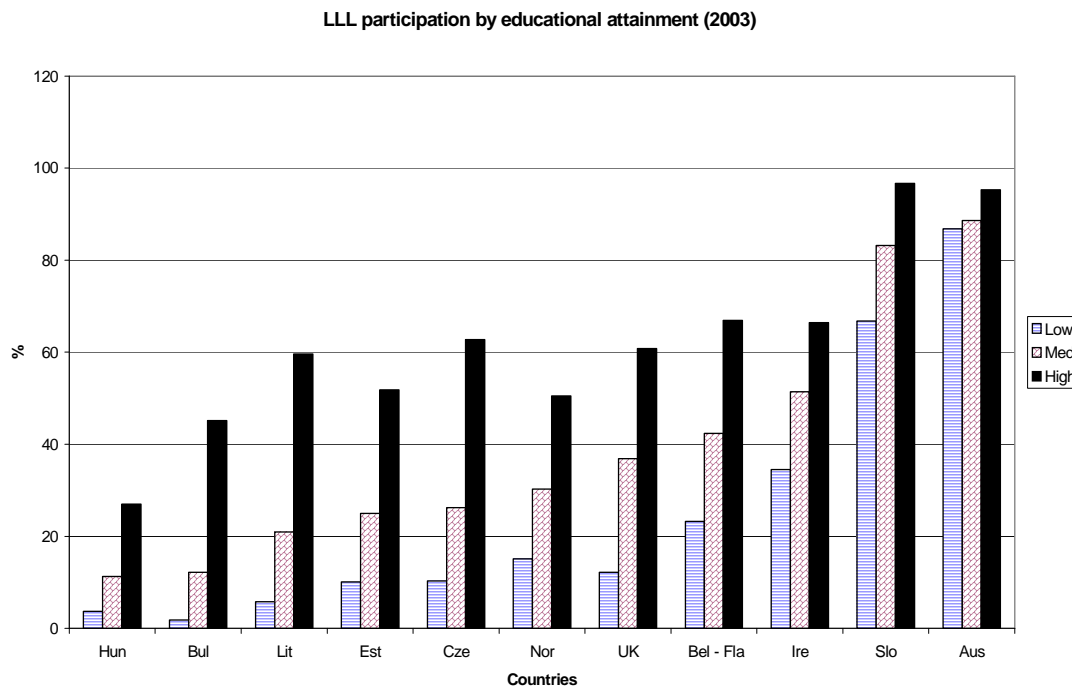
**Figure 12.2**



(Source: Labour Force Survey 2003)

Figure 12.3 below shows participation in any form of lifelong learning (formal, non-formal and informal) by educational attainment. The broad pattern to emerge here is that in all countries, those with higher levels of educational attainment are most likely to be involved in any form of lifelong learning. In terms of the relative position of the countries, the data should be treated cautiously because of the inclusion of informal learning in some countries such as Austria and its exclusion from other countries. This problem was rectified in subsequent sweeps of the Labour Force Survey.

Figure 12.3



Source: Labour Force Survey 2003.

Finally, we were interested in the relative emphasis within different countries' lifelong learning policies on the creation of human and social capital and on personal growth. It was clear that policies in all countries reflected the view very strongly that the development of lifelong learning was the key to future economic prosperity. However, the way in which this was done, and the institutions engaged in this enterprise, varied enormously. For example, in the UK and Ireland, flexible entry into higher education was prioritised. In Norway, work-based learning involving partnership arrangements was emphasised. Austria and Flanders had strong and well-developed (if somewhat rigid) systems of vocational education and training, and in the Nordic and Central and Eastern European countries, networks of adult education colleges were involved in the delivery of a variety of forms of lifelong learning. On the other hand, measures to promote social capital and personal growth were much less emphasised, although Norwegian policy appeared to place roughly equal value on lifelong learning as a means of developing a knowledge economy, creating socially cohesive communities and encouraging its citizens to engage in personal growth and development.

**Applicability of Existing Typologies of Welfare to Lifelong Learning**

On the basis of the discussion above, the countries in the study appear to fit, at least to some degree, into the following categories.

#### *Scandinavian model*

Norway has high GDP and high investment in all forms of lifelong learning, which are seen as contributing to human capital, social capital and personal growth. Systems are highly flexible and efforts are made to include those at risk of social exclusion, contributing to a relatively low poverty risk. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon model, labour markets are fairly tightly regulated. Norway exemplifies the new European socioeconomic model, combining economic efficiency and effectiveness with strong social inclusion measures, and in both these areas lifelong learning plays a central role.

#### *Anglo-Celtic Model<sup>21</sup>*

England, Scotland and Ireland fall under this heading, with relatively high GDP, but low employment protection and relatively high risk of poverty, reflecting the wide spread in household income. There is relatively high participation of adults in formal education, and a major stress on lifelong learning as the means of generating economic prosperity for the future. In line with Ireland's traditional emphasis on education, lifelong learning, rather than social transfers tend to be seen as the means of tackling social exclusion.

#### *Continental model*

Austria and Flanders exemplify the continental model, with fairly rigid and stratified systems of compulsory and post-compulsory education, highly regulated labour markets but fewer efforts to include socially excluded groups through lifelong learning or social transfers.

#### *Catching Up Model*

Within this grouping of countries, there are some similarities, but also very wide variations. Lifelong learning is valued in terms of its potential contribution to economic growth. There is less emphasis on using lifelong learning to combat social exclusion and the collapse of earlier social protection systems which existed in the Soviet era means that there is high risk of poverty (although the Czech Republic appears to be an exception here). Slovenia stands out from other Central and Eastern European countries and appears in many ways to be much closer to the old member states in terms of investment in compulsory and post-compulsory education, participation rates in lifelong learning and attention to the needs of groups at risk of social exclusion through access to adult learning opportunities and social transfers. However, it should be noted that the political situation in Slovenia is volatile, and a more right-wing government has been elected, with

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<sup>21</sup> Note that we prefer to use the term 'Anglo-Celtic' rather than 'Anglo-Saxon' as used by Aiginger and Guger. We suggest that this term describes the three countries included here more accurately.



a commitment to enhancing economic growth and curtailing redistributive measures.

The organisation of compulsory and post-compulsory education in the Central and Eastern European countries still shows some influences from the Soviet legacy, but it is also possible to discern commonalities in education and lifelong learning systems which pre-date the Soviet era. For example, aspects of the education system in Hungary and the Czech Republic have certain commonalities with the Austrian system, with which there were clearly strong historical links. However, while data is limited, it is clear that the educational systems are changing in these countries. Tertiary education expanded considerably in the 1990s but the expansion was slower in Estonia than in Slovenia and Hungary (Kogan & Unt, 2005). Estonia's education system is now characterised by a high level of standardisation and a medium level of stratification (Saar, 2005). The Estonian project team states that the system is now similar to countries with liberal markets.

## **Conclusion**

Lifelong learning is clearly playing a major role in the development of the new European socioeconomic model, with its emphasis on economic efficiency and social inclusion. Within this overarching frame, there are key differences between particular country groupings, and the typology refined by Aiginger and Guger from earlier models appears reasonably applicable. Representing the Nordic approach, Norway, at one end of the spectrum, combines a regulated labour market with high social transfers and a flexible education system emphasising lifelong learning as a vehicle for economic development, social inclusion and personal growth. Countries within the Anglo-Saxon/anglo-Celtic model have less regulated labour markets and less generous social transfers, and lifelong learning is used to combat social exclusion and promote the growth of a knowledge-based economy. Post-compulsory education is extremely flexible and provides opportunities for individuals to move between employment and education. Countries within the continental model are much less flexible and provide lifelong learning and other forms of protection and welfare to those within the labour market, rather than those who are outside it. The grouping together of Central and eastern European countries within a catching-up model is clearly inadequate. The indicators presented here point to significant differences between Slovenia, Estonia and Lithuania and Hungary and the Czech Republic. Antecedents of the Soviet era, including cultural features of the Austro-Hungarian and Baltic states, are still reflected to some extent in the educational systems of these countries, and may emerge as even more important in the future.

## 13 Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations

This chapter provides a brief overview of the issues discussed in the various chapters of this Report, then makes some provisional recommendations relating to policies of lifelong learning, and points to issues on which further research is required.

### Theoretical Perspectives

Lifelong learning in Europe has developed recently in the context of late modern trends in global capitalism. This has created new opportunities for some, but also social and economic exclusion for other social groups. In this context, lifelong learning has been viewed as a generator of human capital, of social capital, and as providing opportunities for individuals to develop both economically and personally.

Understandings of lifelong learning within the countries studied in this research have been shaped by specific historical, economic and social developments. The post-communist societies tend to view lifelong learning more as a way to enhance economic growth, whereas in countries with longer traditions of market economies it is seen as a means to build upon development in the face of increasing global competition. There is also a social control dimension to lifelong learning, and this may be exacerbated by tendencies to make learning compulsory in various ways.

We have not yet been able to identify a comparative typology which adequately reflects the diversity of approach in lifelong learning. The welfare models developed by Esping-Andersen and Castles have proved inadequate for various reasons, as discussed in Chapter 4. Those typologies that have been developed do not generally cover Eastern and Central European countries, while Björnavåld's (2001) typology on lifelong learning focuses narrowly on non-formal education with an emphasis on methods of assessment. This leads to the danger of developing a typology focused on the human capital aspect of lifelong learning.

### Population Trends, Labour Market & Participation

The analysis of published statistical data on population, the labour market and participation in lifelong learning served to contextualise the more qualitative evidence obtained by the national research teams (see Chapter 4). It is clear that employed people with higher levels of education are likely to participate more in further learning and training than those with lower levels of education. There is regional variation in access to education between cities, towns and

rural areas. It is clear that those employed in the public sector are more likely to be able to access training than those in the private sector – despite the fact that, *prima facie*, the private sector is likely to be more affected by global market forces, and its workforce therefore in greater need of training to meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy. Employed people have greater access to education and training than the unemployed and the economically inactive; however, unemployed people are more likely to participate in longer, more intense levels of training than those in employment.

Post-communist countries seem to have witnessed increases in inequality of access to education since their transition to market economies. Although women are more likely to participate in formal education broadly speaking, within vocational training programmes there are greater numbers of men. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that younger people are significantly more likely to participate in education and training than older age groups.

As in all the countries, the lifelong learning concept that prevails in EU policy documents is that of the knowledge society which depends on learning citizens being required to engage in a continual process of re-skilling in order to contribute to economic development. Overall, learning objectives are primarily treated as means for enhancing employability and combating unemployment.

However, current and forthcoming initiatives such as *Grundtvig* (2006), *ESF* (2007-2013), and the *European Year of Equal Opportunities for All* (2007), show a great commitment of the EU to address the areas of equal opportunities and social capital more generally. Areas related to social capital enhancement receive significant attention in policy documents, though this attention is not always reflected in funding resources available for these areas (e.g. *Grundtvig*). Furthermore, in most countries learning opportunities are still more accessible for the young and highly qualified.

Greater policy co-operation and co-ordination between the EU and national levels, facilitated by the EQF framework and an enhanced OMC, will contribute to moving the slogan “lifelong learning for all” towards reality.

### **Application of Key Lifelong Learning Concepts**

There are differences in the extent to which the various concepts related to lifelong learning (*learning citizens, learning cities/regions, learning organisation*) feature in national policies. The knowledge society features strongly in all thirteen countries. Most of the country policies also mention learning organisations. There is less evidence of the learning citizen and learning cities/ regions. For an overarching EU definition of lifelong learning

see Chapter 5 (pp. 37-38). By and large, the concepts associated with lifelong learning are viewed as associated with adult or post-compulsory learning.

The interpretation of the concepts varies. Scotland, England, Estonia and Lithuania stress the human capital aspect of the *learning citizen*. Ireland, Slovenia and Norway focus more on the social capital and personal development aspect. Where human capital is emphasised, this is also seen as a mechanism for social inclusion (though later data raises questions as to how effectively it serves this role).

There is less variation in interpretation of the *knowledge society*: the focus is generally on development of human capital. The less used concept of *learning cities/regions* has been interpreted in two ways: providing the individual with access to learning (Norway); or as community regeneration where the focus is on disadvantaged groups (England). When this concept features, it is typically linked to development of regional provision, or decentralisation of learning opportunities. Finally, the concept of *learning organisation* is found in most countries, but emphasis varies between individual organisations' duty to provide education and training for their employees and nationwide structures to support companies in offering employee training.

In examining how these concepts are used, there is no clear divide between 'old' EU countries (and Norway) and the new member states, post-communist, states. For example, as mentioned above, Lithuania, Scotland, England and Estonia seem to have a strong emphasis human capital in their use of the concept the learning citizen, whilst Ireland, Norway and Slovenia stress social capital more. We have not yet found a general explanation for this; however, it does suggest that the local conditions in the post-communist countries vary along a range of dimensions, so that the way EU policy measures (for example) will be implemented will vary. Whilst there is likely to be variation in interpretation, EU definitions of the concepts have clearly had an influence on all states; this is perhaps especially so in some of the new member states where the definitions have been adopted relatively uncritically.

### **Focus of National Policy Measures**

There is a general trend across the countries of lifelong learning policies to focus on labour market issues, but there seem to be differing reasons for this. Post-communist countries tend to see lifelong learning as a way to enhance their economic development, whilst countries with established market economies place greater emphasis on maintaining economic performance and overcoming skills shortages. Increasing the employability of marginalised or disadvantaged groups is also viewed as enabling people to function more fully in society, and lifelong learning is seen as an important way of achieving this. In several countries, the receipt of welfare benefits is increasingly being tied to participation in training programmes.

In practice, of course, policy areas are often not mutually exclusive. Policies on education may appear to be geared towards economic outcomes, and social policies such as those on gender are often closely tied to the education system. However, there are variations in emphasis in how different policy areas have focused on lifelong learning in the various countries studied.

Several countries lack a national qualifications framework (see Chapter 8) and there is an overall lack of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Further, systems to encourage the acceptance of prior learning as a means of accessing further education are generally not well developed or implemented in practice.

### **Initiatives & Policies at Different Levels of the Education System**

With regard to different levels of educational systems and lifelong learning, there is strong emphasis on policies and strategies in relation to employability in all countries. A smaller number of countries also show evidence of strategies that focus on active citizenship or personal development. Development of literacy skills and ICT only feature in a number of instances. There is evidence that most countries are working on accreditation frameworks or have adopted in ECTS in higher education. However, these frameworks are only well developed in a few countries and access to accreditation for learning achieved in a range of different settings is also limited.

### **Co-ordination of Lifelong Learning**

In theory lifelong learning policy comes within the remit of ministries of education in the majority of countries, though there is dual responsibility with labour or employment ministries in a small number of countries. In practice employment policies are a strong driver in shaping lifelong learning strategies, which are seen as contributing to a highly skilled and adaptable workforce for the knowledge society. It appears that in several of the post-communist countries division of responsibility between different agencies is unclear and that this leads to some confusion in the policy formulation and implementation. Lack of a clear lifelong learning strategy is seen as a barrier to effective co-ordination in many countries.

The importance of employment policies can also be discerned in the way it relates to lifelong learning and social policy. In this area lifelong learning strategies are considered of importance in enabling social inclusion. In some Northern European countries (e.g. Ireland) the emphasis on lifelong learning as a mechanism for dealing with disadvantage is clearly expressed; in other

countries such as England and Scotland it is considered a means of moving those on social welfare into work through developing relevant skills. In general social policies are often linked to labour market policies; a number of countries mention that projects focussing specifically on social inclusion through skills development to enhance employability have been supported by the European Social Fund (ESF).

### **Barriers to Implementation of Lifelong Learning**

In some countries there is clearly some confusion over responsibility for the development of lifelong learning and/or lack of a strategy. This seems to be a particular issue for the Czech Republic, Hungary and Russia – all countries with recent transitions to market economies. In other countries (see Chapter 10 for examples), coordination seems to be weak between different key agencies, leading to different interpretations of how lifelong learning should be implemented. However, whilst confusion over responsibility (and lack of strategy) seems to lead to lack of policy initiatives or limited development, weak coordination may lead to important, but more piecemeal, initiatives.

Overall, where there are competing demands between agencies, the strongest players are generally labour policy makers as many initiatives (see e.g. Chapter 9) are focused on the developing human capital. However, Flanders and Ireland seem to have developed mechanisms to allow for development of initiatives in relation both to work and to social cohesion. Both are small countries, one is at 'the centre of the EU' and a founder member, the other is a more recent member state, one has centralised coordination, the other stresses the need for decentralisation, with a strong focus on local community development strategies. This suggests a clearly developed lifelong learning strategy which sets out the responsibilities of key agents is a prerequisite for the development of lifelong learning but that the coordination of those responsible needs to be sensitive to local contexts.

### **Lifelong Learning: A Residual Role?**

Throughout the countries, lifelong learning has been promoted as a key way to address large-scale economic and social changes. In many cases, however, the reality is that it has been implemented with a relatively narrow focus, and that the broader principles espoused within policy discourses have more seldom been followed by concrete initiatives. This narrow focus makes it very hard for all the objectives of lifelong learning to be achieved. However, in many countries, the development of lifelong learning policy – and therefore many specific initiatives – are very much in their infancy.

This does not imply that there are no examples of successful implementation of lifelong learning policies, or of its addressing broader concerns: previous chapters have outlined areas where policy-making has indeed focused on various aspects of lifelong learning.

## **Conclusions & Recommendations**

In this section, we make a series of recommendations which arise from the research. It should be stressed that these are made at the outset of a major research programme, and are based on formal documents; therefore many, if not all, should be regarded as provisional rather than firmly established. The role of the remaining LLL2010 sub-projects will be to investigate these further, on the basis of deeper primary empirical research.

### *Typologies of Welfare & Lifelong Learning*

Well-established models and typologies of welfare regimes do not provide a sound basis for distinguishing the characteristics of lifelong learning regimes. Their weaknesses in this regard relate both to their failure to provide a clear account of variety in post-communist social policy regimes, and from the specific character of lifelong learning at the interface between social policy and market.

### *The Importance of National Contexts*

Our research strongly suggests that the diversity of national context means that a single model of lifelong learning across the EU is unlikely to be achieved. While a common policy may be encouraged by the Commission, and may lead to significant national policy developments, these will be strongly influenced by national context: institutional, political, social, ideological. Although many countries will be strongly influenced by the EU, they will – consciously or unconsciously – ‘pick and choose’ between different EU priorities.

### *Balance between Vocational & Non-vocational Lifelong Learning.*

In general, we found that lifelong learning policies are more strongly orientated toward vocational than non-vocational aims. There was some criticism of the effects of this across several countries, and we would argue for the importance of lifelong learning in the development of social as well as human capital.

### *Diversity of Approach in Post-Communist Countries*

There is significant diversity in approaches to lifelong learning in post-communist regimes. Although a tentative explanation may be sought in

different educational traditions, institutional arrangements, and socio-economic developments, we have no settled view at present on how this may best be explained.

#### *Impact of Globalisation*

It is clear that the increasing reach of the global market-place is placing intense pressures on many economies and societies. Among its effects are intensified disparities of income, wealth and power. Lifelong learning is often seen as providing a mechanism for addressing some of these problems. However, in general, patterns of lifelong learning appear to reflect, rather than challenge, these inequalities.

#### *The Importance of Labour Conditions*

It is clear that labour market conditions are central in defining the nature of lifelong learning in any particular country.

#### *Strategy & Administrative Co-ordination*

Several national reports commented on the lack of a coherent strategy for lifelong learning, and viewed this as a key weakness. In some countries, the establishment of a lifelong learning 'task-force', or coordinating body has been on the political agenda, but has yet to be realised. In general, however, one of lifelong learning's attractions (its relevance to a range of policy domains) also presents inevitable problems of co-ordination and overlap between ministries and agencies, official and unofficial. Problems of co-ordination may be made more complex by the involvement of private sector concerns in an often highly marketised sector, and there is some evidence that it is especially problematic in large countries, countries with different systems of education between regions, or countries with marked differences in economic situations or learning opportunities between urban and rural areas.

Better and more integrated involvement of social partners and stakeholders, and an effectively articulated lifelong learning strategy, may play a role in overcoming problems of co-ordination.

#### *Lifelong Learning & Social Inclusion*

There is widespread acceptance, at least rhetorically, of the need to address problems of social exclusion through creating (and ensuring wider access to) better learning opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalised groups. However, there are significant differences in approach. Some governments and policies seek to address social exclusion through community-related lifelong learning, but the more common approach is to assume that the key to overcoming exclusion is to ensure the excluded have the capacity to return to employment. The evidence is that insofar as the latter strategy is intended to address inequalities, it has limited success.



There is clear evidence that new opportunities to learn are accessed disproportionately by the already better-educated. This tendency may be exacerbated by increased private sector basis of lifelong learning provision.

Efforts should be made to achieve greater consistency and reliability in gathering and reporting of data on social inequality. Few countries currently gather and report such data in relation to access to lifelong learning.

### *Lifelong Learning & Ethnic Minorities*

Lifelong learning clearly has a particular relevance to ethnic minorities, who are often disadvantaged by reason of linguistic and other culturally-based sources of exclusion. While we found evidence of concern about exclusion of ethnic minorities, and policies designed to address the needs of particular minorities in various countries, we were also struck by the absence of robust quantitative data about learning provision for these groups, and about its take-up.

### *Lifelong Learning & Gender*

Although women are relatively more successful in much lifelong learning as well as in formal education systems, they appear to be unable to maintain this advantage in the labour market. We suspect this may be because welfare regimes are relatively ineffectual in supporting women's involvement in employment.

### *Recognising Non-formal & Informal Learning*

It is clear that, in many countries, arrangements of recognising informal and non-formal learning are weak. Connections between institutions of formal, non-formal and informal education need to be enhanced, effective qualification frameworks developed. (There is, however, a need to consider whether accreditation discourages some from entering learning; and whether this applies disproportionately to specific social groups.)

### *Workplace Learning*

Evidence is that learning in the workplace tends to be accessed disproportionately by the already relatively highly skilled, and by public sector employees. We would endorse the need for stronger official support and promotion of learning in the private sector, and efforts to ensure that this is not disproportionately restricted to highly skilled workers. The development of effective mechanisms for paid educational leave is also important.

### *ICT & Lifelong Learning*

Many countries recognise that they lag behind international levels of IT literacy, and see overcoming this as important in the quest for economic competitiveness and personal development. This requires not only developing better ICT structures, but also ensuring equity in access to such training.

### **Issues for Further Research**

The research in this first Sub-project has provided a substantial volume of evidence about lifelong learning policies in a number of countries. Some conclusions appear clear. However, it has also raised a number of issues for further inquiry, and it is to be hoped that these can be addressed during the remainder of the project. These include, for example:

- The development of a *robust* typology of lifelong learning policies and practices that includes all aspects of lifelong learning and all countries covered by this project.
- The impact of national history, and institutional structures, on patterns of lifelong learning.
- The extent to which the size of a country affects the ability of its governments to develop, maintain and manage a strategy for lifelong learning.
- What lifelong learning strategies could contribute most effectively to addressing a range of types of social exclusion.
- Whether, and if so how, lifelong learning can contribute to the construction of a European identity.

### **Issues for LLL2010 Research**

The LLL2010 project comprises five sub-projects; the present report relates to the first of these (Subproject 1). Later Subprojects will investigate adults' participation and non-participation in formal learning (Subproject 2), the characteristics of adults studying in the formal education system (Subproject 3), the role of SMEs in lifelong learning (Subproject 4), and how institutional strategies develop or hinder lifelong learning (Subproject 5).

One function of Sub-project 1 has been to establish a groundwork for the later work of the entire LLL2010 project, and it is clear that later subprojects will permit more in-depth investigation and analysis of issues raised, or only partially investigated, in Sub-project 1. Thus, for example, the development of a robust typology of lifelong learning policies and practices is one to which all sub-projects must contribute, since it requires an understanding not only of policies, but more importantly of how these are operationalised and negotiated by the range of institutions and organisations, public and private, which contribute to lifelong learning provision. In this respect, the interviews with

SME managers in Sub-project 4, and with school and university managers, officials and other stakeholders in Sub-project 5, should provide valuable evidence on how such organisations interpret official policies, and construct their own policies and practices.

Similarly, the relationship between lifelong learning and social exclusion will be a principal concern of Subprojects 2 and 3, which focus on the adults' participation in various forms of study and learning. These sub-projects have an explicit focus on inequalities in, and barriers to, participation by various social groups. Sub-project 5 is explicitly concerned with educational measures and strategies designed to address social exclusion, and how they are being developed and carried through by various organisations concerned with the education of adults.

Inevitably, a major research project such as LLL2010 will raise many issues beyond what it was designed to address. In relation to some of the wider questions mentioned in the previous section – those which did not form part of LLL2010 aims, and which its methodology is not designed to address – it is no doubt unrealistic to expect rigorously-based answers; the project should, however, permit some useful critical discussion and theories and hypotheses which can inform further inquiry.

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