



FEASIBILITY STUDY ON NATIONAL LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORMS



Lifelong Learning Platform
“Feasibility Study for National Lifelong Learning Platforms”, September 2018

Editor in chief: Brikena Xhomaqi
Editors: Ulla-Alexandra Mattl, Pauline Boivin, Andrew Todd, Alen Maletic, Simona Pronckute, Peter Hunor
Design and illustrations: Andrea Lapegna

This study was conducted and written in consultation with LLLP Members and partners during a two-year project carried out by the network in six pilot countries

With the financial support of the European Union



Abstract

The study, conducted by the Lifelong Learning Platform in 2016-2017, investigates the cross-sector cooperation at national level and analyses existing national cultures related to lifelong learning and the extent to which they are in line with EU policies and recommendations in five European countries. There is a specific focus on cross-sector cooperation, consultation of civil society by policy-makers and understanding of the lifelong learning concept by national, regional and local organisations.

Results show that **there is no shared meaning of lifelong learning at local and national levels as perceived by the responding organisations**, and lack of awareness of EU policies (ET2020 and youth policies in particular). Most organisations within the same country disagree on the existence or not of national lifelong learning strategies while there should be one according to the European Commission and ASEM LLL-Hub data. Even if a strategy is in place, organisations say that it does not fully cover all dimensions of lifelong learning and sometimes the policies and political reforms are very 'sector-focused' instead of being integrated and comprehensive (e.g. adult education focus). Moreover, **stakeholders feel that there is limited consistence between the strategy written in papers and the implementation in reality**.

Cross-sector cooperation practices vary a lot depending on the target country where they are applied. This difference in national consultation cultures and traditions is reflected in the survey's answers and other research studies on the topic. The cooperation mostly focuses on the "core business" of the respective organisations in education and training, as for example training, learning materials, labour market cooperation, rather than cooperation in order to frame the national political agenda, reforms or policies in education.

Overall, educational institutions and civil society organisations are not satisfied with the current level of cooperation with public authorities and regret the lack of communication on national policies which results in weak dialogue with policy-makers. The respondents consider that this is a consequence of a widespread disinterest of the authorities for such cooperation and dialogue. In addition, this is also due to the limited human and financial resources of the various education stakeholders' to engage in policy-making. A large majority of respondents would be interested in having lifelong learning platforms at national or regional level in order to exchange best practices, develop new partnerships and be more informed about local, regional, national and EU levels in the field of education.



Table of contents	
Abstract	2
Table of contents	3
Part 1/Background of the study: enhancing lifelong learning at national levels	4
1. Update of the 2012 study	4
A. From the 2012 study to the 2017 study.....	4
B. Commonalities and differences in terms of methodology.....	5
C. EU and national context changed but the relevancy of lifelong learning platforms remained.....	7
2. Education in the EU (legal, policy and funding frameworks)	10
A. ET2020: A strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training.....	10
B. Erasmus+ programme: funding EU added value projects in education and training.....	12
C. The Future of Europe scenarios	13
3. Responding to the needs for creating a genuine area for lifelong learning	15
A. The state of play for education and lifelong learning in target countries	15
B. Cross-sectorial dialogue between education stakeholders, including policy-makers	19
C. A multilevel framework (from grass-root levels to the European level)	23
Part 2/Methodology of the study, results and limits	25
1. Respondents, process and objectives of the study	25
A. Target countries, participating organisations and respondents.....	25
B. Steps and methodology of the survey	28
C. Objectives.....	28
2. Survey results, their interpretation and limits	29
A. Survey and interview results.....	29
B. Interpretation of the results.....	46
C. Limits of the study.....	50
3. Comparison with 2012 study results	51
A. Limits of the comparison.....	51
B. Comparison of results.....	51
Part 3/ Outlooks and recommendations	56
1. The setting up of lifelong learning platforms	56
A. Pre-stages for the setting up of a platform	56
B. Function of national platforms	59
C. Key success factors and challenges for the establishment of national lifelong learning platforms	62
2. Recommendations in EU and national contexts	64
Conclusions	65
Table of figures	67
Bibliography	68
Annexes	71
Annex 1 - Survey questions	72
Annex 2 - Qualitative interviews for the feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms	82



Part 1/Background of the study: enhancing lifelong learning at national levels

Update of the 2012 study

A. From the 2012 study to the 2017 study

The European Stakeholders' Forum organised by DG EAC and EUCIS-LLL in September 2011¹ gave rise to the idea of National Stakeholders' Forums to improve the participation of grass-roots stakeholders in the implementation of the Education and Training 2020 strategic work programme (ET2020) and its objectives. This idea led to the first Feasibility study titled "*Survey and Feasibility Study on National stakeholders' Forum*". It was conducted between 2011 and 2012 by the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) which changed its name in 2015 to become the Lifelong Learning Platform (LLL). The present study is an update of the previous study published in May 2012 and was disseminated through various EUCIS-LLL channels.

The feedback EUCIS-LLL gathered from the dissemination of the study results was positive. The study was presented at some events such as during the Education and Training Forum (Brussels, 18-19 October 2012) which replaced the 2011 stakeholders' Forum. This was a good opportunity to show the European Commission how civil society can support Member States and national stakeholders in their modernisation of education systems. However, it is difficult to measure subsequent impact at national level since this would require for the same organisations that answered the interviews in 2011 to be contacted again.

At the time of the publication, EUCIS-LLL was planning the following exploitation of the study results:

- Appoint a contact person in each of the pilot countries' consortiums to organise a national lifelong learning forum;
- Encourage the consortiums to do research on the implementation of lifelong learning policies in their own country;
- Encourage them to take steps towards active communication and fundraising strategies to find additional human and financial resources.

The 2012 study was published one year after the publication of another 'Feasibility study on a European Institute for Lifelong Learning'², that later led to the 'LLL-Hub'. Both study results fed into the submission of a European Project under the LLL-HUB appellation. This was the first 'pilot project' for the concrete exploitation, implementation and setting up of such forums and a community of diverse

¹ EUCIS-LLL website, <http://www.eucis-lll.eu/events/past-et-forums/fourth-stakeholders-forum-on-priority-areas-of-the-second-et2020-cycle/>

² EUCIS-LLL (March 2011), *Feasibility Study on a European Institute on Lifelong Learning* (EILL); Paper written by Antonio MOCCI, independent researcher, on behalf of EUCIS-LLL http://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EUCIS_Study_EILL.pdf



stakeholders to exchange practices and discuss lifelong learning at national level. This network was to reunite the contact persons that participated in the survey on national stakeholders in 2011. The issue of the sustainability of the national networks (or LABS) after the project ended is still prevalent and this is why more initiatives are expected, as encouraged by this new study. The LLL-HUB project generated a number of key outcomes, such as the 'LLL-HUB methodology' and field evidence of successful implementation of such cross-sector networks in the field of lifelong learning at national level.

Four years later, the Platform decided to update the 2012 study. The decision was taken in April 2016 when LLLP Steering Committee agreed that the Feasibility Study from 2012 would be updated in order to *“better grasp the need of civil society and potential for cooperation at national level in EU Member States”*. The foreseen form of organisation for the groupings of experts has changed from 'forums' to 'platforms' in order to push the ambition forward. Forums are generally more or less regular events depending on the country, and therefore are less institutionalised than platforms, they represent a looser structure and interrupted activity, whereas platforms are meant to last and establish long-term relationships among stakeholders as formal and structured networks. For these reasons this new study aims at going further than the previous one. An intermediary solution is to set up a network of educational stakeholders.

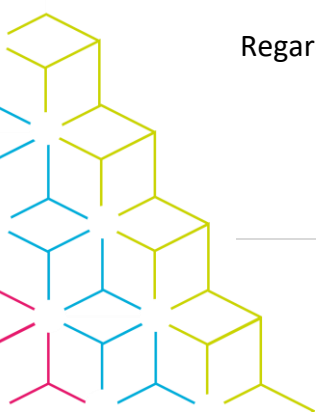
The survey leading to the new study was launched online and was open from September 2016 to February 2017. The report was written at the end of 2017 and reviewed in 2018.

B. Commonalities and differences in terms of methodology

The overall methodology and processes of both studies were roughly the same. During the first phase it consisted of a quantitative survey that was spread through the Platform's networks and it was followed by qualitative interviews during the second phase. The 2012 study targeted all EU27 countries (before Croatia joined the EU in 2013), and respondents came from all EU countries. The geographical coverage of the 2012 study was wider whereas this new study was restricted to organisations and individuals based in 5 EU countries. Portugal, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Sweden had been pre-selected due to good contacts the Platform already had in these countries and to ensure a balanced geographical representation within Europe.

To reach out to organisations, the process in 2012 consisted of mapping and identifying “flagship organisations” in each country that had potential for launching the survey in their country. The promotion of the survey in the 2012 and in the 2016 studies was done by LLLP secretariat and member organisations.

Regarding the structure of the questionnaire of both studies, it was quite similar:



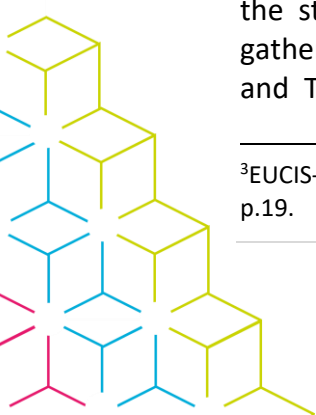
2012 Study	2016 Study
Basic questions: network's name, country of origin, and sector of activity	General questions: profile of respondent
Their concepts of lifelong learning	Understanding about lifelong learning
Their knowledge about European and national education and training policies	Knowledge about EU and national policies in education and training
Their feeling about European and national consultation cultures	Cooperation activities (cross education sector & other relevant stakeholders)
Their perception of existing consultation and cooperation mechanisms in their country	Relations with public bodies
Their willingness to be involved in national forums and platforms	Relevance of a LLL Strategy at national level in your country

The 2012 survey collected answers from 293 respondents while the 2016 survey received answers from 129 respondents. Respondents were not obliged to answer all questions, which makes the response rate drop depending on the question and the advancement in the survey. Out of the 293 participants of the 2012 study, the representation of the 5 target countries is more limited. There were 8 respondents from Austria, 10 from Portugal, 9 from Sweden, 4 from Slovakia and 2 from Hungary which does not make it possible to compare the results for these specific countries with the results of the 2016 study.

The first survey was composed of 30 questions and the new one of 29 questions. If questions seem very alike at first glance, it is important to note that the slightest change make the results difficult to compare and to interpret. For instance, the question regarding the type of organisation to which the respondents belong was absent in the first survey, and the name of the EU network they belong to was only asked in the first survey. Some other examples of slight differences in the formulation of question will be provided further along in this study.

The 2012 study was initially directed to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in education only, but after being solicited by other stakeholders, EUCIS-LLL agreed to open the survey to organisations that were not part of the network or that were coming from non-EU countries. Out of the 293 stakeholders who responded to the 2012 survey, 26 respondents came from external organisations to the EUCIS-LLL network. The added value of collecting responses from various types of organisations was a better cross-sectoral representation, thus fulfilling the aim of the study and better reflecting a lifelong learning dimension. In 2012 they also gathered responses from non-EU countries, such as “candidate countries” (Croatia and Turkey), and neighbouring countries (Norway, Switzerland)³. The new study

³EUCIS-LLL (May 2012), *Feasibility study on National Stakeholders' Forum*; Figure 1: Country of origin, p.19.



survey was open to a wide range of stakeholders from public administration or institution to private companies and civil society organisations. The representativeness of the stakeholders' answers was more important due to the fact that the survey only focused on a restricted geographical area.

In the Figure 2 of the 2012 study regarding European network membership, results show that most respondents belonged to EU networks that were members of EUCIS-LLL at the time. There were two student networks and one teacher network among the three most reactive respondents: ESN, Euroclio, and AEGEE. As a consequence, they represented mostly the higher education sector (49.8%)⁴. The question had multiple choice possibility and more than two third of respondents declared to cover two or three different areas. This is the reason why the non-formal education sector represented 74% of respondents. It was seen in the 2012 study as evidence of the lifelong learning dimension of these organisations.

The main limit that arose from the 2012 methodology and that EUCIS-LLL identified was the issue of translation of the survey into EU country languages. EUCIS-LLL said it could have helped to collect more responses, but the organisation did not have enough resources. Indeed, both studies are auto-financed. This limit is also present in the new study. The results of both studies will be presented under a comparative perspective in the second part of this report.

C. EU and national context changed but the relevancy of lifelong learning platforms remained

Education systems and context at EU and national levels are steady as well as changing. At EU level, it changes with the renewal of priorities, programmes, and strategies. The “Lifelong Learning Programme” (2007-2013) of the European Commission⁵ disappeared as such in 2013 and was replaced in the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) by the “Erasmus+ programme” (2014-2020). But the strategy for the decade (Europe2020 and Education and Training 2020) remained the same. The future EU budget will be impacted by the cut in funding resulting from Brexit. Education systems are steady at national levels because it is very uncommon that governments implement systemic education reforms. Such reforms are very complex, and most of the time policy-makers choose to change the system step by step or at the margin according to the EU agenda and their national priorities or specific challenges. The ranking of countries in terms of quality education, or school results is not changing a lot over time, though some countries have handled the crisis better than others. This results in different trends.

⁴*Ibid.* Figure 3: Sector of activity (multiple choices), p.21.

⁵ European Commission website, Lifelong Learning programme, http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme_fr



Generally speaking, public expenditures as a proportion of GDP in education have been decreasing since the 2008 crisis⁶. If this does not necessarily mean that all education systems have suffered from those cuts and that it is reflected in diminished learners' achievement and learning outcomes, this has had, or will have in the long term, important implications for the provision of quality education. From a lifelong learning perspective, it is also worth mentioning that financing for Non-Governmental Organisations has dropped as a consequence of austerity measures after the 2008 crisis and accompanied by the stagnation of wages, it had an undeniable impact on the accessibility to non-formal and informal sources of learning (e.g. youth work, sports, outdoor activities, leisure...).

Furthermore, the European Commission's country recommendations and policy reforms guidelines in fields like social inclusion, entrepreneurship education, flexible pathways, higher education, adult education, or secondary schools, are often only implemented by a limited number of countries. For instance, the Education and Training Monitor found out that only "half of EU Member States have recently introduced policies to ensure that children and youths acquire social, civic and intercultural skills" (2016). This was recommended in the Paris Declaration (2015) and in the Conclusions of the European Commission's first annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights (2015)⁷.

Results of the ET Monitor also show that 'reaching the EU target of having 15 % of adults participating in lifelong learning is proving difficult'. The average adult learning rate stood at 10.7 % in 2014 and did not increase after 2015. Furthermore, in a number of EU Member States, the gap in accessing learning between the average population and adults with a disadvantaged status persisted or even increased. This challenge can be considered as steady while EU Member States are very close, on average, to meeting the other ET2020 objectives. This genuinely shows, on the one hand, the importance of engaging all civil society actors, and education stakeholders in dialogue and cooperation at national level because it is the only way of adopting lifelong learning reforms of education systems as a whole.

On the other hand, the context of cross-sector cooperation and dialogue between policy-makers and CSO is changing a lot before and after each election because of its high dependency on the party and ideology of governments and political priorities that have won the elections. For instance, some countries used to have a lifelong learning strategy, but they do not anymore, which is often due to a change of governments.

⁶Euractiv website (September 2017), *Europe's investment in education keeps dropping*, article by Paola Tamma <http://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/europes-investment-in-education-keeps-dropping/>

⁷European Commission (October 2015), *Outcomes of the first Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights: Joining forces against anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hatred in the EU* http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/colloquium-fundamental-rights-2015/files/fundamental_rights_colloquium_conclusions_en.pdf



All in all, even if some countries have reformed their education systems, it does not mean that they have improved their cooperation and dialogue with civil society. It is very hard to measure if a country's culture in that regard has changed in recent years. In some countries, some organisations may have been created or have developed their relationships with policy-makers, but it is safe to say that there are still very few national organisations that can be considered to fit the lifelong learning paradigm as promoted by the EU institutions and LLLP.

That is why, it is today as relevant as ever to launch a new Feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms to show their added-value by acknowledging the very (s)low development of such practices in EU countries. To a certain extent, it has been possible to compare results from the survey results of the 2012 study and of the new study, to see if there was any improvement or regression in that field, and to compare the situation between target countries and results in all EU countries. By focusing on 5 countries only, results allow a better representation for observing the existing situation in those countries⁸.

The goals of this study are:

- To identify the potential for establishing LLL networks or platforms at regional or national levels;
- To raise awareness among a wide range of stakeholders about the added value of such platforms and cross-sector cooperation in the field of education;
- To reach out to policy-makers in particular, at EU and national levels. The EC will receive the study results, and it will be discussed what we can do with them.

The objectives of lifelong learning platforms are:

- By ensuring a sustainable and regular dialogue in the form of a network, a platform or similar entity between regional- or national- level stakeholders (including policy-makers) with a long-term perspective, enabling **structured trans-sectorial multi-stakeholder debate on LLL** at the national level;
- Ensuring better **collaboration between different levels** - local, national, regional and European, and **raising awareness** of EU policy frameworks and programmes. Stimulating national campaigns, activities and research that feed into work carried out at the European level.
- There is a lack of awareness and shared understanding of the LLL concept. The national lifelong learning network or platform would be an opportunity to **convey the European definition of lifelong learning to set a similar scene** for a national debate in every Member State and ensure **better implementation of EU strategies** at the national level (important for a number of initiatives, e.g. European Semester).

⁸ The average number of answers per country in 2012 study is 11 (293/27) while it is 26 in 2017 study (129/5).



Education in the EU (legal, policy and funding frameworks)

A. ET2020: A strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training

a. Policy guidance in the field of education

“Education and training have a fundamental role to play in achieving the ‘Europe 2020’ objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, notably by equipping citizens with the skills and competences which the European economy and European society need in order to remain competitive and innovative, but also by helping to promote social cohesion and inclusion.”⁹

Education and training, however, remain areas which fall within the competence of the Member States and the implementation of European strategies is highly correlated to their political will via the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The intergovernmental method provides a framework for cooperation between the Member states, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives. According to the Article 165 of the Lisbon Treaty, *“The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.”*

In 2009, the ET2020 strategy set four common EU objectives to address challenges in education and training systems by 2020:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promoting equity, social cohesion, and active citizenship;
- Enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

Five benchmarks have been set up to monitor the progress made towards those objectives:

- At least 95% of children (from 4 to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education;
- Fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science;
- The rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 should be below 10%;
- At least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education;
- At least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning;

⁹ Council Conclusions (March 2011) on *The role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy*, (2011/C70/01)



- At least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34-year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad;
- The share of employed graduates (aged 20-34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago) should be at least 82%.

To follow-up with the progress made in achieving those objectives, the European Commission has set up the “Education and Training monitor”. It is published every year. The publication says that in order to reach the 2020 targets on lifelong learning and increase employability, Member States would have to take measures starting from assessment, validation and certification of existing skills. These measures would then have to be followed by other steps to improve learners' willingness to learn, encourage employers to be more proactive, support disadvantaged groups, and ensure quality, relevance and effectiveness of adult learning systems.

National level lifelong learning platforms are better equipped than EU networks to help Member States to meet EU2020 and ET2020 objectives. By working closely with the Lifelong Learning Platform at European level, national stakeholders can be better informed about EU policies and objectives in the field of education and training and can help to contribute to their own overall success by reaching out to national, regional, and local levels.

b. Contribute to a resilient and competitive Europe

Even though the particular role of education as a driver for responding to current challenges has been acknowledged by most policy-makers, policies and funding often poorly reflect this position. Public budget costs are progressively and sometimes non-visibly leading to ‘lost generations’, a term that in education is translated to people lacking basic skills, low qualifications or civic competences. Inequalities keep on increasing in Europe, and this divide results in worrying socio-political contexts for the future of Europe such as populism, radicalism, social exclusion, and extremism. Behind the banner of ‘cost-effectiveness’, the purpose of education is often reduced to meeting labour market needs. This has been reinforced by the crisis and the main focus on economic and financial aspects in an austerity context. Links between education and the world of work are still lacking and there are wide disparities in Europe and a huge skills mismatch. Links with research and innovation are not well-established, and European countries show wide disparities in terms of innovative economies. As for building knowledge economies and societies, this is dependent on the level of public and private investment in innovation and research.

For all these reasons, education policies are not meeting the targets of building a resilient and competitive Europe. As reflected in LLLP’s position papers, education should not only aim at increasing learners’ employability, but fulfil their needs in



terms of personal development. Education is an investment in future generations and not a cost.

c. The lack of awareness, access and participation of grassroots level actors in EU policies

Too many actors in education and training are not even aware of EU policies in the field of lifelong learning. The European Commission also identified this challenge in numerous reports and praised a partnership approach including all the actors that put European policies from “EU committees, to national parliaments and national, local and regional authorities, to social partners and to stakeholders and civil society so that everyone is involved in delivering on the vision”¹⁰ into action.

Civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the field of lifelong learning have thus been accredited as legitimate partners of the institutions for the implementation of the policy agenda on education and training in the Member States from a perspective of multi-governance. From its embryonic stages in the Treaty of Amsterdam to the recognition of a regular dialogue Enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon, the European consultation culture towards ‘those affected by the policy’¹¹ has evolved over the past years to make them the essential links in the chain of implementation.

But sometimes, this is not enough to truly engage civil society actors in policy-making. Their lack of human and financial resources is one of the main barriers in doing so. Even when they have the capacity to act at EU levels, they have restricted information about key processes and documents that are elaborated in the EU institutions. There are many limits for the real involvement of civil society organisations in EU policy-making.

B. Erasmus+ programme: funding EU added value projects in education and training

a. The programme’s key actions

It is relevant to mention the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) here because it fosters cross-sector and transnational cooperation. It may as well have a positive influence on infra-national cooperation, by increasing cooperation culture of beneficiary organisations. What is done at the EU level can be a model for local, regional and national cooperation frameworks. However, the lifespan of such projects does not always lead to sustainable cooperation frameworks. It is often depending on the willingness of the involved actors to carry on with the actions implemented in EU projects. The programme mainly funds mobility experiences (Key

¹⁰European Commission (3 March 2010), Communication on *Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, COM(2010) 2020 final

¹¹European Commission (11 December 2002), Communication *Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission*, Brussels, COM(2002) 704 final



Action 1), but also strategic partnerships for the exchange of best practices (KA2) and peer-learning, capacity-building, and policy reforms (KA3). The two latter are worth mentioning here because they show interesting results in terms of cross-sector cooperation, exchange of good practices, etc.

An example of such projects in the field of education is the LLL-HUB Project. It was co-funded under the previous programme, the Lifelong learning programme (2007-2013), and ran from 2013 to 2016, that is to say from one year after the results of the 2012 study were published. The LLL-HUB aimed at fostering a shared meaning of lifelong learning across Europe by encouraging cross-sectoral cooperation and dialogue at national level on the European agenda. The partners involved in this project are still communicating regularly, meaning that the project is showing good results in terms of sustainability after it ended. As the third part of this study, the project will be examined as a first pilot project experience for the implementation of national lifelong learning platforms. The LLL-HUB was mentioned as an example of how EU funded projects can help to enhance the establishment of platforms at national level.

b. Innovation and good practices

The Key Action 2 “Innovation and good practices” offers opportunities for organisations to share new approaches in education and training through “strategic partnerships”, “knowledge alliances”, “sector skills alliances”, “capacity building” in higher education, and “capacity building” in the youth sector.

c. Peer-learning, capacity building and policy reforms

In the new EU funding programme for education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020, “Erasmus+, the action “Support for policy reform” was narrowly linked to the participation of European stakeholders: *“Support for policy reform action shall include the activities initiated at Union level related to (a) the activities related to the implementation of the Union policy agenda on education, training and youth (Open Methods of Coordination), as well as the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and the structured dialogue with young people; [...] (c) the policy dialogue with relevant European stakeholders in the area of education, training and youth”*¹². The Key Action 3 budget has not been increased in the 2018 programme. That makes it even more relevant to foster such transnational cooperation at local, regional and national levels.

C. The Future of Europe scenarios

a. Austerity context undermines education systems

At national levels, the budget for education is decreasing since the crisis according to the public expenditures in education as a percentage of GDP. It is 11% lower than its

¹² Regulation (2011) of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing “Erasmus for all”, the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, Brussels, COM (2011) 788/2



level in 2009¹³. Creating a ‘genuine area for lifelong learning at national levels’ would therefore help to counteract and advocate against these worrying trends.

What is true at national level for spending cuts in education is even more true in the European context. Education being a sole competence of Member States, they do not see the value of having a framework for cooperation at EU level, thus are less inclined to allocate a budget for it. For this reason, the future of EU policies for education and training is threatened. This reinforces the need for stressing the advantages of having a European framework for education. Over the years, the Bologna Process has for instance led to the facilitation of mobility of millions of learners.

b. EC White paper and negotiations for next MFF

After the ET2020 strategy comes to an end, there is a danger that the education portfolio will be handed over to the national level completely, which means that there is a need to ensure that lifelong learning remains a priority across Europe for the period 2020-2030. The creation of lifelong learning platforms represents crucial support for the lifelong learning paradigm at national levels. At the State of the Union 2017, Juncker launched the “Timmermans’ task force” aiming to review the Open Method of Coordination which is at risk of disappearing in the next MFF. The “Subsidiarity and Proportionality Task Force” was set up to take a very critical look at all policy areas to make sure EU policy-makers and institutions are only acting where the EU adds value. In such a scenario, the necessity of setting up lifelong learning platforms at national levels is of the utmost importance.

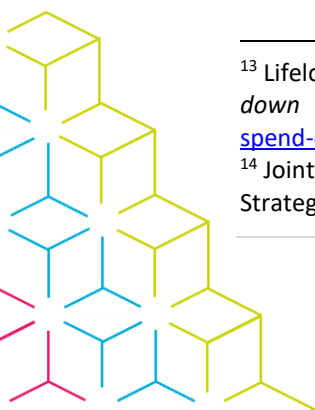
The issue of Brexit under current negotiations also raises some questions about the future of cooperation in the EU, and in particular on how to compensate funding cuts in the Erasmus+ programme. Whatever the final scenario is, it is key to stress the importance of safeguarding cross-sector cooperation at EU level, because if not encouraged, there is little chance that Member States stop designing “silo policies” or change their national consultation cultures with civil society organisations.

c. An alternative scenario for making lifelong learning policies a reality

As the 2012 Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on ET2020 shows “cuts in education budgets risk to undermine the economy’s growth potential and competitiveness”¹⁴. In the 2012 Annual Growth Survey, the Commission confirmed its conviction that, when consolidating their public finance, Member States should prioritise expenditure on growth enhancing policies, such as education

¹³ Lifelong Learning Platform (31st August 2017) *Worrying trends in financing education in Europe: down by 11% since 2009!*, Press Release, <http://lllplatform.eu/news/much-european-countries-spend-education-lets-compare-data-throughout-years/>

¹⁴ Joint Report (8 March 2012) of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), 2012/C 70/05



and training. LLLP (EUCIS-LLL) warned against these trends at several occasions¹⁵. LLLP and its partners are advocating for the recognition of its role, as an organisation representing civil society at EU level toward the policy makers.

Responding to the needs for creating a genuine area for lifelong learning

A. The state of play for education and lifelong learning in target countries

a. Countries' challenges in education and to meet ET2020 objectives and Country Specific Recommendations

The situation of the target countries of the study is very diverse, it is therefore interesting to see if survey results reflect this diversity. As it is not easy to find comparable and recent national data on the current situation of EU countries, this study will mostly use data that is available at EU level, in particular, that has been displayed in the monitoring of their advancement regarding the ET2020 objectives. Each country has its own particular challenges in education. Most of them are highlighted by the ET Monitor and then translated into Country Specific Recommendations by the Council.

Hungary: the main challenge is the improvement of Hungarians' basic skills (cf Council recommendations¹⁶). The results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2015 show that there is a decline in educational performances. Overall, there is a skills shortage in the country, which is due to low enrolment and completion rates in tertiary education and high rates of emigration (Education and Training Monitor 2017, European Commission).

Austria: the main challenge is the integration of migrants in education (cf Council recommendations, 2017¹⁷). Austria has already exceeded its national Europe 2020 targets for education. However, education outcomes depend considerably on socioeconomic background, as confirmed by the PISA results. Furthermore, the educational results of pupils with a migrant background are considerably worse than those of pupils without. In 2016, foreign-born pupils were 2,7 times more likely to leave school before completing upper secondary education than native-born pupils. Austria faces challenges in integrating a large number of asylum seekers and refugees into its education system. Another challenge lies in the recruitment of teachers, since the country will have to replace about half of its teaching force during the next decade (Education and Training Monitor 2017, European Commission).

¹⁵ EUCIS-LLL (February 2011), *Austerity measures, lifelong learning and social cohesion*, Position paper.

¹⁶ EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Hungary <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2816%29>

¹⁷ EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Austria <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2819%29>



Portugal: The main challenge for Portugal is preventing their highly qualified individuals from emigrating. It is one of the European countries with the highest rate of highly qualified individuals who emigrate (11%). It remains one of the countries with the highest grade repetition, which is proven to increase the risk of early school leaving and weighs significantly on education costs. Following the Council recommendations of 2016, Portugal took action to increase cooperation between universities and business sector¹⁸, in particular in the field of research.

Slovakia: Slovakia faces many challenges in the field of education (early childhood education, skills education, etc.), being one of the lowest achievers among OECD countries. Other challenges are unemployment, Slovakia has the highest unemployment rate of low-qualified people in the EU (34.4 % compared to the EU average of 16.3 % in 2015); low education and skills levels, especially of minorities (Roma, women...); and weak attractiveness of the teacher profession because of low wages and insufficient provision of practical training¹⁹. Low results in Slovakia regarding the ET2020 objectives can be explained by the fact that they also have one of the lowest general government expenditures on education. It was 4.1 % of GDP in 2014, much lower than the 4.9 % EU average²⁰.

Sweden: It is a country that invests heavily in education and training, with general government expenditures on education being among the highest in the EU. School education outcomes in terms of basic skills proficiency declined continuously over the past decade. Main challenges of the Swedish education system are results in basic skills²¹; the increasing performance gap between foreign-born and native-born students; the integration of newly arrived students (in 2015 Sweden was the largest recipient of asylum seekers per capita in the EU); and the deteriorating working conditions of teachers. Transition between different training forms and paths, i.e. between upper secondary school, adult education, the apprenticeship system for adults and training for the unemployed, remains as well a challenge²².

In general, there is a challenge in providing lifelong guidance services in the EU (EC, 2015) for lifelong learning opportunities to reach out to low-skilled and disadvantaged groups. Re-igniting lifelong learning strategies addressing the transition phases within school education is needed (flexible pathways), as is promoting transitions to and between vocational education and training (VET), higher education (HE) and adult learning (AL), including non-formal and informal learning, and also from education and training to work.

¹⁸ EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Portugal <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2821%29>

¹⁹ EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Slovakia, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2824%29>

²⁰ Eurostat, General government expenditure by function (COFOG) database, table gov_10a_exp.

²¹ Sweden experienced the sharpest decline in the educational performance of 15-year-olds of any OECD country over the past decade in the PISA survey, and is now performing below both the EU and OECD averages.

²² EUR-Lex, 2016 Council Recommendations, Sweden http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2016.299.01.0053.01.ENG



b. Huge divergences in the participation of adults in lifelong learning

The EU average of adults participating in lifelong learning in the 28 Member States was at 10.8% in 2016 while the EU target for 2020 is 15%. So far, 6 countries out of 27 have reached the EU targets. In addition, the trends since 2015 are not promising for the rest of the decade.

Hungary: According to the European Commission, the rate of adult participation in lifelong learning in Hungary is with 6.3% amongst the lowest in the EU²³ (compared to an EU average of 10.8% in 2016).

Austria: The participation rate of adults in lifelong learning in Austria is one of the highest in the EU. Since 2010 the rates were gradually increasing from 13.8% to 14.9% in 2016, thus almost reaching the ET2020 objectives. However, in Austria, participation in Lifelong Learning strongly depends of the education level of individuals (secondary or higher education).

Portugal: The participation rate of adults in lifelong learning in Portugal is a little bit lower than the EU average, plus the trends are not showing any improvement. The participation rate is steady since 2011 and was 9.6% in 2016 (while EU average improved). One of the possible explanations is the decrease in university enrolment and decrease of the education budget as consequences of the crisis.

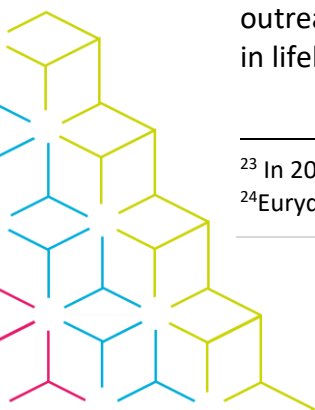
Slovakia: The adult participation rate in Slovakia is one of the lowest in the EU (Eurostat). It has been quite steady since 2008, when it was 3.6% and now it is 2.9%. Only two other Member States record lower participation rates.

Sweden: Sweden has the highest participation rate in the EU. In 2016, it was 29.6%. The country has a well-established tradition in lifelong learning that dates back to the 19th century when efforts were made to organise learning opportunities through folk high schools and the creation of study circles in communities. The structurally supported easy access and active outreach to people has built a strong culture of learning. This tradition shapes the Swedish approach to lifelong learning that very much looks at empowering people through all forms of learning where non-formal and informal learning occupies a significant share (Cf Solidar, *Building Learning Societies*). Cooperation with education and training providers, sectoral organisations, social partners, universities and regional representatives is an essential part of the recognition of prior learning although the 2016 edition of the ET Monitor pointed out some inconsistency and limited cooperation of schools between national, regional and local levels.

Overall, each Member State faces the same barriers to adult learning. Motivation, outreach, access and participation remain the key challenges for adults to participate in lifelong learning²⁴.

²³ In 2014 it was 3%, the current rate of 7.1% results from break in time series.

²⁴Eurydice (2015), *Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning opportunities*.



c. National frameworks, strategies and policies in lifelong learning

The European Union has widely contributed to the implementation of lifelong learning strategies in the Member States, although, there are still huge discrepancies between countries. There is a lot of work that remains to be done to institutionalise sustainable strategies that are continued by governments, regardless of their political stands and ideologies. In 2015, a little more than half of EU countries had developed a lifelong learning strategy²⁵. All target countries of the study are considered to have one (AT, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FR, HU, LT, LU, PL, PT, SI, SK, UK)²⁶. Some implemented their strategies between 2012 and 2014 with a view to improving access, participation, flexibility and recognition (AT, CY, EE, HU, LU). Some Member States (FI, SE) consider that their entire educational system is already built and developed around the LLL concept and therefore do not plan to develop any explicit LLL strategy as such. But even when countries have one, local actors often say that it is more 'on paper' than in reality. Furthermore, in many countries the gap in accessing learning between average learners and disadvantaged adults has increased.

Hungary: At the end of 2014, the government adopted the "Strategic framework for the policy of lifelong learning for 2014-2020". Its strategy is primarily focused on the relevance of education and training provided to the labour market²⁷.

Austria: Austria introduced its comprehensive "LLL 2020" strategy in 2011²⁸, consisting of ten lines of action, each supported by strategic objectives, measures and benchmarks. In addition, within the framework of the comprehensive "LLL 2020" strategy, each public university must develop its own institutional LLL strategy. In February 2016, the Austrian National Council adopted the Federal Act on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF intends to make qualifications more comparable to other European ones. Moreover, it also aims to promote lifelong learning in all its forms; formal, non-formal and informal learning. It is expected that this will support the process of social inclusion through education and training of disadvantaged groups. Additionally, the objective of the education reform (launched in November 2015) is to provide resources to invest in education and training.

Portugal: In 2012 Portugal launched an Employment and Professional Qualification Strategy. This strategy is very much focused on education and training to increase employability. Due to the difficult economic situation, the Portuguese strategy "New opportunities Initiative for recognition and validation of learning" was not renewed

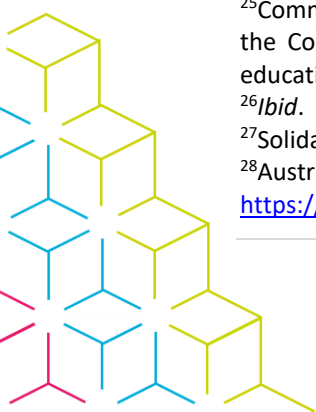
²⁵Commission staff working document, accompanying the Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), August 2015.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Solidar (2016), *Country studies 2016 – Building Learning societies*

²⁸Austrian LLL: 2020 Strategy,

https://www.bmb.gv.at/ministerium/vp/2011/lll-arbeitspapier_ebook_gross_20916.pdf?4dtiae



after 2010 despite its good results²⁹. However, lifelong learning was reinstated on Portugal's political agenda with four pages on the topic in the elected government's political programme (2015). The new Portuguese government has announced a series of measures to improve equity in education and fight school failure in 2015.

Slovakia: According to the ET Monitor 2016, the new government has embarked on ambitious reforms at all education levels and begun preparing a 10-year education strategy. It has also committed to engaging in wide consultations to support these processes. The government has recently decided to build a new LLL strategy³⁰ and consulted UNESCO's Institute of Lifelong Learning in early 2017. Planned reforms will focus on recognition, validation and accreditation of NFIL.

Sweden: The government considers that their entire educational system is already built and developed around the LLL concept and therefore do not plan to develop any explicit LLL strategy as such.

B. Cross-sectorial dialogue between education stakeholders, including policy-makers

a. Identifying the national stakeholders

The first step when considering the relevance of national LLL platforms is to identify the relevant stakeholders in Member States. Stakeholders are defined as a person or organisation that is affected or concerned by a policy.

Institutional actors

National, regional and local public authorities: governments are the main actors in implementing lifelong learning policies. Regional and local levels of governance are now systematically mentioned in the texts as the closest bodies to the reality of the field and thus the most efficient for tackling implementation challenges. Besides, decentralisation systems are so complex and different from one Member State to another that every level of governance should be taken into account according to the subsidiarity principle.

EU Institutions' representations and agencies: representations of the Commission and the Parliament in Member States contribute to the promotion and the legitimisation of European shifts in lifelong learning. More importantly, national Erasmus+ agencies are key actors since they are the main interlocutors of the public when it comes to implementing the EU funding programmes.

²⁹ UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre, *New opportunities, Portugal*, Programme Overview, http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/New%20Opportunities%20-%20Portugal.pdf

³⁰ UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (February 2017), *Lifelong learning at the heart of education reform in the Slovak Republic*, <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/lifelong-learning-heart-education-reform-slovak-republic>



Education and training providers

Formal education and training institutions such as primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and all other institutions that deliver recognised diplomas, such as some professional training centres. They put the European policies into action via their government's recommendations but also via their own projects and policies.

Non-formal and informal education and training providers that do not deliver recognised certificates but closely contribute to the implementation of European lifelong learning policies, especially since the institutions have placed a particular focus on learning outcomes and on the recognition of various forms of learning in the past years. These providers overlap very much with civil society groups and social partners.

Other stakeholders

Civil society organisations: as defined by the Commission, civil society embodies “the principal structures of society outside of government and public administration, including economic operators not generally considered to be “third sectors” or NGOs”³¹, meaning all the citizens gathered in the name of a certain vision of lifelong learning and, as education and training providers or learners, have the right to be informed about and associated with the implementation of European policies in their country.

Social partners: employers and workers as institutionalised interlocutors of public authorities in the definition of social dialogue by the International Labour Organisation (ILO): “all types of negotiations, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest in relation to economic and social policy”. The contribution of employers is particularly important in the framework of the EU2020 Strategy as employability is a crucial objective when it comes to education and training for the institutions; strengthening the link between education and training and work has thus become a European priority.

The private sector: following the same logic, cooperation with the business world should be reinforced in the field of education and training, so that the labour market needs and the learners' skills are better matched.

Researchers and academics: they are an essential element of the knowledge triangle mentioned in the legislative texts of the European Institutions. They provide the necessary expertise to policy-makers and to the broader public when it comes to designing, implementing and evaluating lifelong learning policies.

³¹European Commission (11 December 2002), *Communication Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission*, Brussels, COM(2002) 704 final 14



b. Benefits for the national consultation cultures

Some EU countries have adopted an LLL strategy, but it is still a “top-down” approach, education stakeholders, especially non-formal and informal ones have little say in national policies. What is at stake here is the level of development of “national consultation cultures”, that is to say the interactions between the state and the various stakeholders concerned by a given policy field. In EU Member States, consultation cultures are extremely diverse, especially when it comes to civil society influence. This is due to the fact that traditional trends in terms of representation of interests across Europe have been fostering social partnerships in very different ways for decades. Political theoreticians usually use three ideal types: statism, corporatism and pluralism.

Statism has been mainly conceptualised by Hobbes in its *Leviathan* as one of the founding theories of the social contract: all individuals make the choice to give up their freedom and create a coercive state that will defend the public good against egoistic and conflicting personal interests. Of course, this vision gets less relevance in a democracy where sovereignty is supposed to belong to the people. Yet it seems to prevail today for some authors in the case of France, Spain and Italy for instance, where lobbying seems to be still a pejorative word and civil society organisations’ legitimacy to intervene in policy-making does not go without saying.

Corporatism is the socio-political organisation of a society by major interest groups, known as corporate groups (as well as syndicates, or guilds) such as agricultural, business, ethnic, labour, military, patronage, or scientific affiliations, on the basis of their common interests³². Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries are usually classified in this category and its most symptomatic trend lies in tripartite negotiations between the state, employers’ associations and trade unions.

Pluralism, developed by the touchstone scholar Robert A. Dahl in “Who governs”, means that power is shared between different interest groups and this diversity is beneficial to society because sovereignty does not belong to a group of elites. Political, cultural, ethnic and religious groups freely compete to gain influence in the decision-making process and the state plays the role of arbitrator of interests, being clearly separated from society.

According to some EU trends, there is progress of the pluralist vision which is illustrated by the growing consultation cultures in EU countries. One of the benefits is for policy-makers to better recognise the added value of consulting a wider range of education stakeholders (of CSOs in particular). The second benefit is to foster ‘horizontal cooperation’. The ambition of the national lifelong learning platforms initiative is to foster stakeholders’ sense of belonging to a lifelong learning community, with fellow organisations that they may not have identified before. It comes down to empowering actors by making them aware of possible partners for projects or funding, allies for advocacy, etc. The first concern of stakeholders seems

³²Wiarda, Howard J (1996). *Corporatism and Comparative Politics: The Other Great Ism*. 0765633671: M.E. Sharpe. pp. 22–23. [ISBN 0765633671](https://doi.org/10.1080/07656336710000000000).



indeed to be exchanging practices and having the tools to benefit from EU grants for their future projects which is the prerequisite to work on EU policies. The platform is about increasing the level of trust from a trans-sectorial perspective, with a holistic and cooperative approach to lifelong learning.

c. Positioning of the new platform

Since the added value of national platforms is now defined, how could they be distinguished from existing initiatives to gather all actors from the education world? What is their positioning and complementarities towards other structures and projects? In this study, a platform is defined by LLLP as a “*structured and permanent non-governmental organisation representing civil society and organised as a network of member organisations*”. In all studied countries, there is no organisation that reflects the comprehensive definition of LLL as adopted by the EU institutions: “*Lifelong learning means all general education, vocational education and training, non-formal education and informal learning undertaken throughout life, resulting in an improvement in knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective, including the provision of counselling and guidance services*”³³.

At this point in time, there are few organisations that can be considered as lifelong learning platforms to a certain extent. In the Netherlands, there is a lifelong learning organisation called “Learning for life” but it only represents adult education in non-formal organisations. The most accomplished attempt of setting up national-level networks covering lifelong learning was the EU project called “LLL-HUB” (<http://www.lll-hub.eu/>). It was set up as a European Observatory for LLL and aimed to create national networks that could evolve into a platform. This project gathered 10 partners from 8 countries. The project results will feed into the analysis of the potential of setting up national LLL platforms in the third part of this study.

National Education Councils: some Member States have set up education councils with various educational stakeholders, like civil society organisations and social partners, to make them participate in the conception and implementation of policies. The councils are represented at the European level by EUNEC, the European Network of Education Councils. The national education councils and the national stakeholders’ forums share the ambition of disseminating, discussing and influencing the implementation of EU policies in education and training. This means that the lifelong learning platforms’ initiative is complementary to that of the councils, the difference lying in the perspective. The platforms would like to enhance a bottom-up approach with a real impulse from civil society. Some councils are initially civil society organisations that managed to become regular partners of public authorities and are a good source of inspiration for the platforms. But the councils are often appointed by the government, sometimes directly by the Head of State, as in France.

³³ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing “Erasmus for all”, the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, Brussels, COM (2011) 788/2. European Commission, “A memorandum on Lifelong Learning”, Commission Staff Working Paper, SEC (2000).



They are thus the voice of educational stakeholders, but they too often have their hands tied to central authorities, like in England where the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) was closed in 2012 as part of the wide education and training reform. The platforms are aimed at recreating leeway for education and training stakeholders and ensuring an independent space of expression for them.

Public authorities' initiatives (consultations and structured dialogue): The idea of the platform is at all levels similar to some governmental initiatives but LLLP would like to see this type of mechanism being bottom-up, that is to say, fuelled by civil society. Consultation cultures are incredibly varied depending on the Member States as academic research shows below and stakeholders cannot always count on the good will of public authorities. More than ad hoc projects launched by governments, these spaces for dialogue should be regular, sustainable and widely spread across Europe, regardless of the political setting.

Civil society lifelong learning organisations: the most optimistic scenario would see the transformation of existing associations promoting lifelong learning into coalitions or platforms to develop a sustainable form of cooperation between stakeholders, likewise LLLP at the European level. This ambition might complicate the readability of similar initiatives that have been launched across the EU, for instance the Hungarian Association for Lifelong Learning (SZETT) or the National Centre for Lifelong Learning in Sweden (ENCELL). These bodies do not always deal with policies and do not always represent civil society: they may be state initiatives or private research centres. Lastly, civil society organisations when there is a national association, often focus on a single educational sector, which shows the need for a trans-sectorial national stakeholders' platform with a long-term perspective.

Lifelong learning events: civil society organisations have already taken the initiative to launch lifelong learning or education and training days, weeks or festivals in different Member States. However, those experiences are most of the time sectorial (adult learner weeks are common) and do not encompass all aspects of education and training from a holistic perspective. They usually barely concern European policies, do not always aim at influencing the implementation process and are open to the public at large. The national platform's objective is to build a structured dialogue where the citizens' contributions are institutionalised through civil society organisations to have a better impact on decision-makers. More than a communication strategy or a vector of information, the platforms are designed to establish sustainable partnerships between stakeholders and decision-makers.

C. A multilevel framework (from grass-root levels to the European level)

a. To ensure better collaboration between different levels – local, national, regional and European

One other argument for setting up a national platform as an intermediary between the “bottom” (local, regional and national levels) and the “top” (European and



International levels). This is what we call “”. The role of an intermediary would be to enhance vertical cooperation by increasing the level of trust between decision-makers and stakeholders (for instance, citizens trust in institutions), civil society organisations, and education stakeholders at different levels; and to raise awareness among public authorities about their contribution to the policy design and implementation. There is limited knowledge about EU policies at local and national levels. It is a way to re-establish a climate of faith between decision-makers and other stakeholders. With a thematic coalition, structured network or in an association setting, becoming a credible partner of a public authority could be a successful outcome of the initiative. The level depends mostly on who has the education competence. For instance, in Belgium, the region has more competence in education and training policies. In the context of the study, it can be a relevant starting geographical starting point for engaging dialogue and cooperation. At EU level, one important function of regional or national lifelong learning platforms could be to help education stakeholders to advocate for and support the implementation of the European Semester recommendations. The coalition would advocate at national levels, gathering public support for Member States to take the European recommendations into consideration.

The grassroots level for this space of collaboration lies at the national, regional and local levels: coordination is the key word in achieving the above-mentioned goals. Gathering stakeholders and best practices needs structured means of communication, cooperation and consultation. The initiative of national lifelong learning platforms is the missing tool as a national prerequisite for a coordinated approach to the representation of civil society in education and begins with the mapping of the stakeholders that are affected by the policy in each Member State. The platforms could be designed as a solution to ease the dialogue between Member States so that they can improve their collaboration and then participate efficiently in the European decision-making process, in a decentralised perspective.

b. To compensate the lack of awareness and shared understanding of the lifelong learning concept

The national cross-sector cooperation enabling lifelong learning opportunities for citizens would be an opportunity to convey the European definition of lifelong learning to set a similar scene for the national debate in every Member State and ensure better implementation of EU strategies at the national level (e.g. European Semester). It can also be beneficial to provide information on lifelong learning opportunities for potential beneficiaries (citizens, learners, workers, young people, etc.)

c. To raise awareness of EU policy frameworks, programmes and funding

Raising awareness of EU policy frameworks, programmes and funding can reinforce active citizenship among the citizens and education stakeholders and encourage them to see more interest in contributing to policy-making. In that way it would contribute to bringing the EU closer to its citizens and foster the opportunities for



‘win-win benefits’. Civil society stakeholders can support Member States in identifying and planning the reforms that will improve their education systems.

National LLL platforms can also stimulate national campaigns, activities and research that feed into work carried out at the European level. At the end of the day, it would lead to improvements regarding the consistency of policies, development of indicators, lifelong guidance, European and national Qualification Frameworks, recognition of skills, competences and diplomas, and so on.

Part 2/Methodology of the study, results and limits

Respondents, process and objectives of the study

A. Target countries, participating organisations and respondents

The survey which feed into the updated version of this study was launched in Austria, Hungary, Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden by LLLP’s member organisations with the support of LLLP secretariat. 129 organisations responded. Not all questions were compulsory, therefore the number of respondents varies depending on the questions. Among the 129 respondents, organisations are primarily active in Slovakia (33 respondents), Portugal (31 respondents), Hungary (26 respondents), Austria (22 respondents) and Sweden (17 respondents).

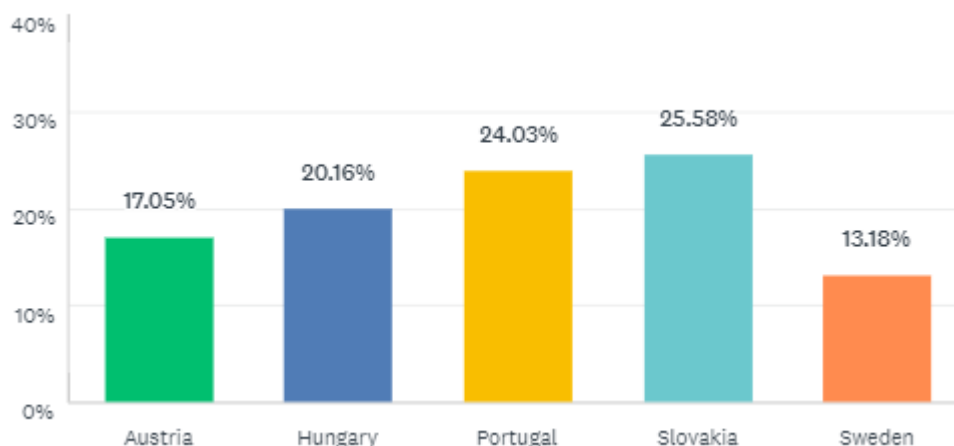


Figure 1: Country of activity (n=129)

Among the 129 respondents, the majority of organisations come from the formal education sector. Most respondent are active in higher education (40.3%) and primary and secondary school education (28.7%). One quarter of organisations are also involved in non-formal education and/or adult education. The other fields of activity covered are Vocational Education and Training (20.2%), youth (14%), and early childhood and care (7%). Those who answered “other” included respondents from sectors of volunteering, higher Vocational Education and Training, and folk high school, organisations which could maybe have fit into the suggested categories, but



some respondents seem to think differently about categories, possibly depending on the range of their (core) activities.

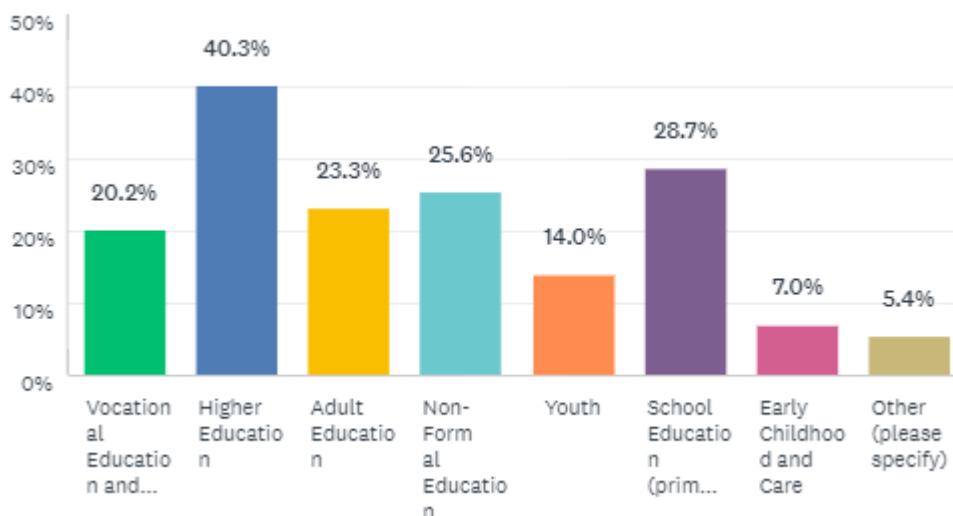


Figure 2: Main sector(s) of activity in education and training (Multiple choice; n=129).

Most respondents represent Non-Governmental Organisations (35%), followed by higher education institutions (30%), public schools (20%), private institutions (9%), public administrations (5%), and public-private entities (3%). Other types of organisations (5%) included: church school, folk high school teachers' organisation, local authority administration, non-profit organisation...

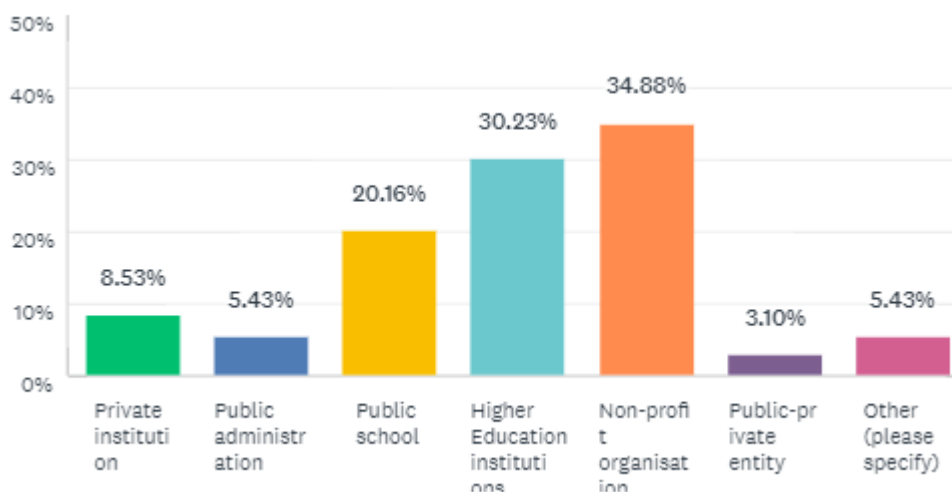
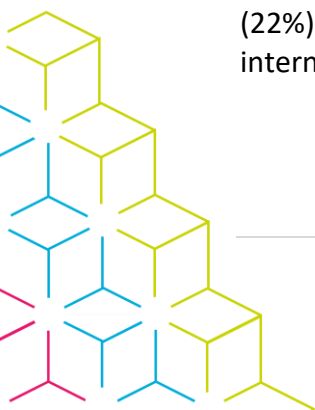


Figure 3: Type of organisation they represent (n=129).

A majority of respondents mainly operate at national level (56%), almost a third at local level (29%), a quarter at regional level and a minority operates also at EU level (22%). 14 organisations say they operate at an "other" level, notably the international level (10%).



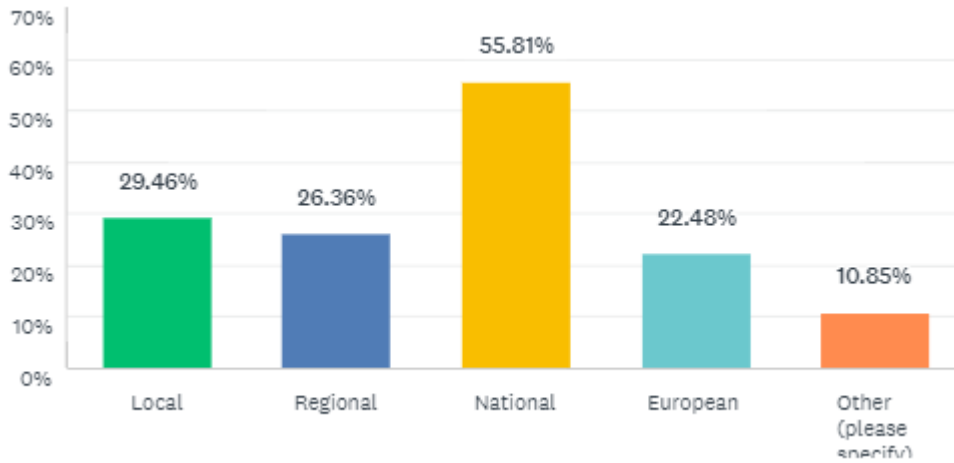


Figure 4: Level at which they operate (Multiple choice; n=129)

From an individual perspective, a majority of respondents declare themselves to have a background as teachers (51%), the others are experts (24%), educational institution leaders (20%), educators (11%), youth workers (10%) and social workers (4%). Among the 'other' professions represented are: researchers, managers, trainers, representatives, parents, students, trade union president, etc.

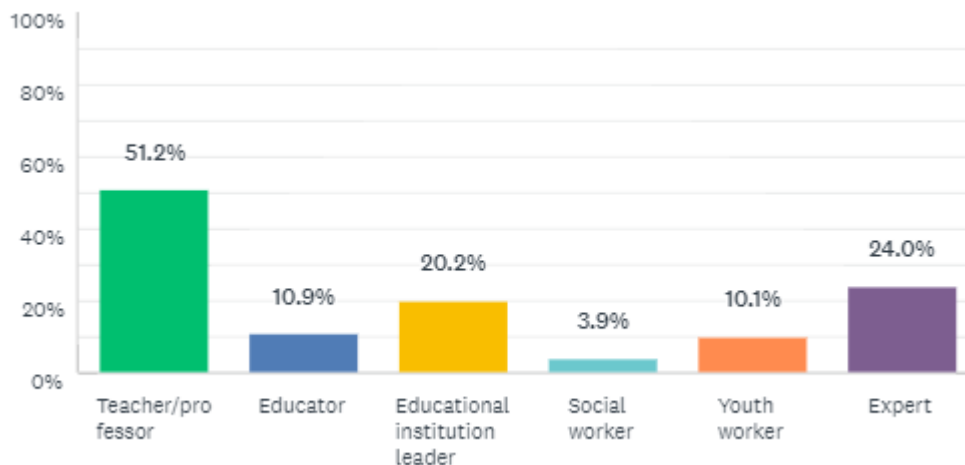


Figure 5: Professional background of respondents (n=129)

The position or function of the respondents is mainly "staff members" (43.4%), then director (23.3%), president (13.2%), elected representative (10.1%), secretary general (5.4%) and volunteer (4.7%).



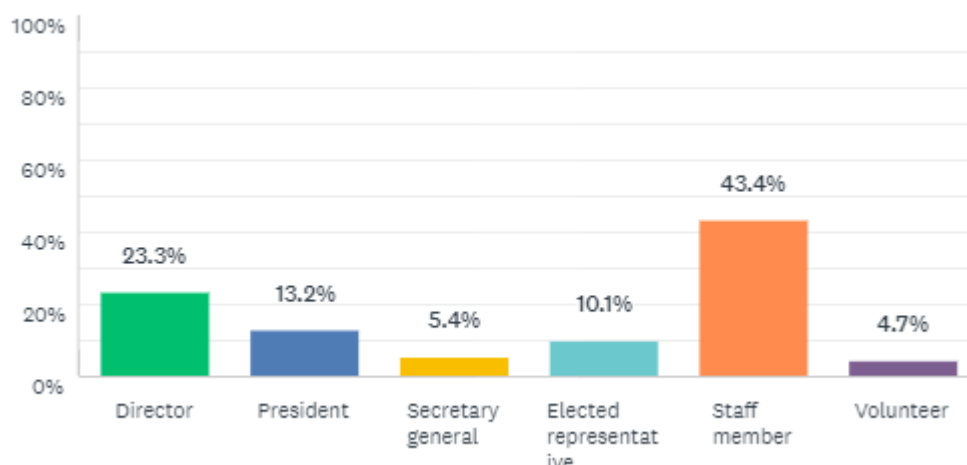


Figure 6: Position or function of the respondent (n=129)

B. Steps and methodology of the survey

For the quantitative collection of data, the needs analysis was carried out by a quantitative online survey to collect stakeholders' opinions on their conception of lifelong learning, their knowledge about EU and national policies and existing cooperation mechanisms, as well as their opinion on the needs, tasks and mission of a national lifelong learning platform.

As part of the second phase, LLLP conducted qualitative interviews. This part was carried out after the quantitative analysis and is based on its results. It also focused on the same five selected countries. LLLP selected two organisations from each of the five countries that are not representing the same education sectors (for instance, a VET centre and a university). Each organisation was asked five questions (*Annex 2*) on national strategies and concepts for lifelong learning, existing cross-sector and multilevel frameworks (i.e. related experiences) for cooperation and partnerships.

In parallel with the interviews and during the writing of the study report, some desk research was also undertaken in order to assess the state of play in each target country. This research mostly focused on the existence of national lifelong learning strategies and challenges in education.

C. Objectives

The present Feasibility study aims to collect the national stakeholders' perception on their national context and concept regarding lifelong learning and cross-sector cooperation, knowledge about EU policies, and opinions on national platforms. It will feed into the work of LLLP to bring the EU education and training agenda closer to the citizens by consulting national stakeholders on their context and needs. Facilitating the access to information, engagement in consultations processes and direct impact on national public policies, it aims to foster the development of lifelong

learning. The main objective of the feasibility study is to use its results to establish pilot project at regional or national level.

Survey results, their interpretation and limits

A. Survey and interview results

a. Understanding of the lifelong learning concept

The question regarding the understanding of the lifelong learning concept was framed in a way that respondents had to say how they perceived the opinion of the general public of the **concept of lifelong learning in their countries** (*'In your opinion, people generally link the concept of lifelong learning in your country to...'*). The limit of this question is the subjectivity of the perception of respondents who cannot be completely aware of what the rest of the country know. Nonetheless, the responses show that only **43% of all respondents** think the concept is understood by the population in their country as "any kind of learning taking place throughout life, be it formal, informal or non-formal". It can therefore be assumed that a majority have another definition than the EU institutions. Other respondents think people usually link the concept to one particular sector (VET, or non-formal education) or a certain age group of the population (adults).

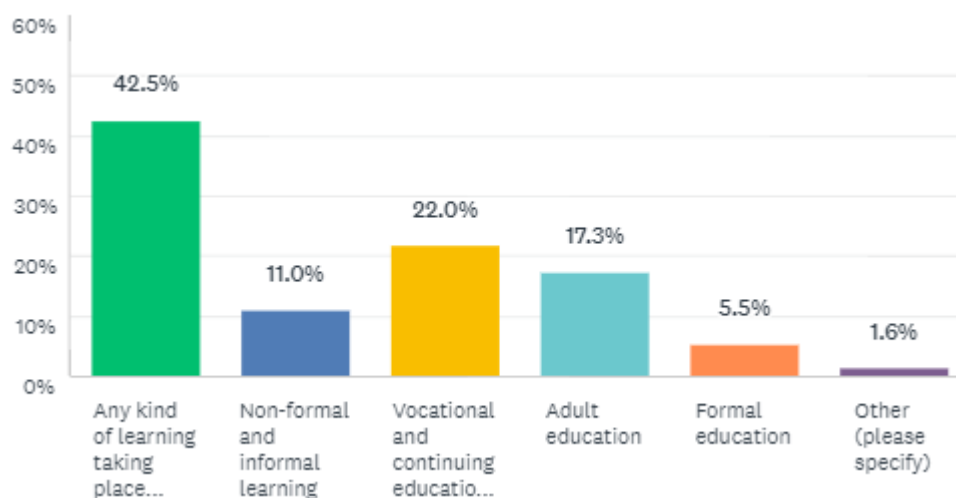


Figure 7: Definition of lifelong learning (n=127)

There are wide discrepancies in the understanding of the lifelong learning concept depending on the target country. The graphics below shows that it is in Sweden that the concept is understood in the most European way and yet, according to the interview, it is not yet the case for everyone. A respondent from the Swedish Students' Union wrote *'Often, the term is linked to the need to stay up to date with changes in the labour market. By this description, our organisation uses the term in a rather wide sense, where professional needs is only one out of many reasons to further one's education.'*

In Austria, the concept is essentially linked to adult education, whereas in the other countries, there is a majority of respondents perceiving that the concept by the population is not fully comprehensive as it is assimilated to adult education, vocational and continuing education or non-formal and informal learning. According to a respondent based in Hungary, *“Lifelong Learning is used in the sense of adult learning in formalised settings more or less exclusively in government communication. “For another respondent from the same country, the lifelong learning is defined at organisational and cultural level, which is “based on one of our 6 core values which says that “We are all teachers, we are all learners”. It indicates that in our work with our target group we do not only work on developing them, but we also learn from situations and based on that, we develop ourselves. Continuous professional and personal development is also engrained in our organisational culture much more than being a definition”.*

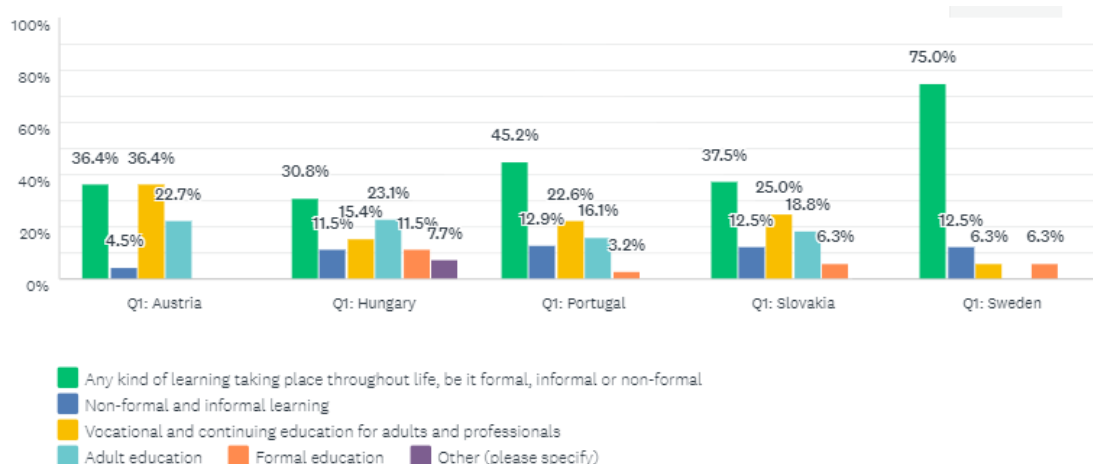


Figure 8: Definition of lifelong learning by country (n=127)

In Slovakia, there used to be a national definition for lifelong learning which was rather aligned with the one of the European Commission according to a respondent: *‘Lifelong learning are all activities realised during life course with the goal to get better knowledge, skills and develop abilities. As a basic principle of educational system of the Slovak Republic, it consists of a) school education and b) other education following the corresponding level of school education.’* In that definition, there is a clear focus on formal education.

b. Knowledge about EU and national policies in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is **not a government priority** according to 35.4% of the respondents (n= 127).



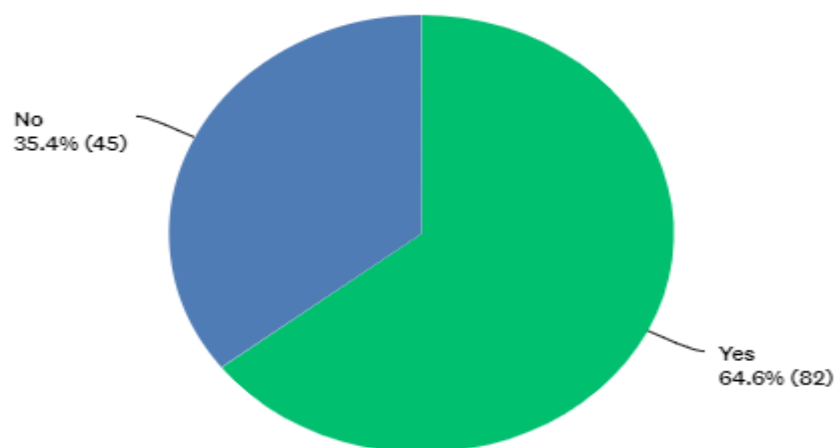


Figure 9: Is lifelong learning a priority for the national government? (n=127)

Austria and Sweden rate high in answering that lifelong learning is a priority in their country. In Hungary, one respondent says *“Unfortunately, if there is one, I am not aware of it. I think there might be one that is developed to meet expectations from the EU towards Hungary, but as I wrote above it is not widely communicated and used.”* Another respondent adds *“There is no lifelong learning strategy in Hungary, they created one in 2006, just before the current government came into office, but nobody uses it as a reference anymore.”* A majority of respondents from Slovakia consider that it is not a priority for their government. Yet, according to one respondent, there is a strategy: *‘It is applied by The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic which is the central body of the state administration of the Slovak Republic for elementary, secondary and higher education, educational facilities, lifelong learning, science and for the state's support for sports and youth.’* In fact, there used to be a strategy, but it was terminated in 2011 (*“Stratégia Celoživotného Vzdelávania”* 2011) and was not reinstated.

According to Helene Hellmark Knutsson, Minister of Higher Education and Research in Sweden who was quoted by a respondent during the interview, *“Lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important in the knowledge-intensive, complex and global world we live in. In order for Sweden to be a leading knowledge nation, we need higher education and high-quality research. Therefore, the government is investing in more training venues, special quality funds, increased labour market attachment and efforts to utilise the skills in the country.”*³⁴ However for one respondent from the Students’ Union, there is no *‘coherent strategy’*. And another Austrian respondent of the interviews working in a private school feels that the lifelong learning strategy in Austria is just about *‘political buzzwords as there seems to be no clear strategy’*. The respondent adds that the strategy is mainly labour-market driven and aims at giving additional qualifications to the individuals or helping them to access the labour market by providing training and guidance.

³⁴ Translated from Swedish to English, Extract of an article on Website of Swedish Government, *Lifelong learning should be strengthened*, 19 January 2016; <http://www.regeringen.se/debattartiklar/2016/01/livslanga-larandet-ska-starkas/>



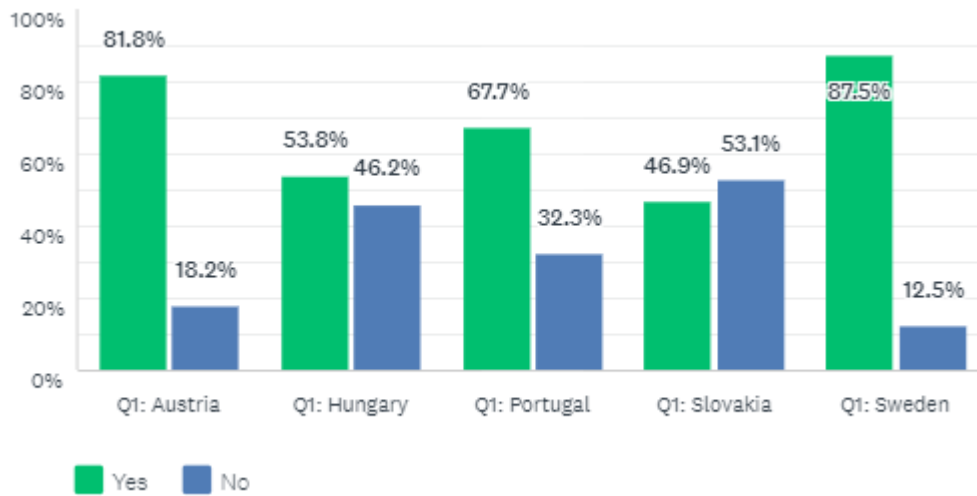


Figure 10: Is lifelong learning a priority for the national government? By country (n=127)

Organisations active in Austria, Portugal and Sweden are in majority aware of the existence of a lifelong learning strategy in their respective country. As for Hungary and Slovakia, results are more balanced which shows an unclear governmental communication strategy while the EC says there is a lifelong learning strategy in those countries. The balance of answers can also be explained by the discrepancy between having a strategy on paper and having it implemented.

Out of the 100 respondents to the next question, 20% say there is no national strategy on education and training in their country.

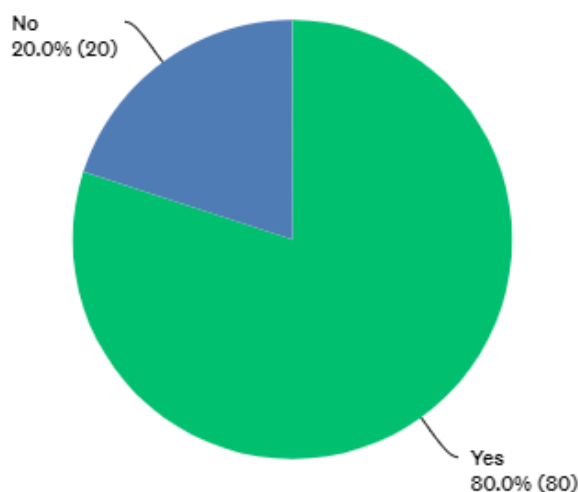


Figure 11: Do you have a national strategy on education and training in your country? (n=100)



The next question is an open one, leaving respondents to comment on the main topics of the governmental education strategies in their country. In Hungary, respondents say the government prioritises the development of VET, digital, reducing of early-leavers from school, higher education, social inclusion, public education, and teachers. In Austria, they answer: intercultural learning, social dimension, Neets (not in education, employment or training); older workers; digital and information and communication technologies (ICT), STEM, youth (participation, work, and policy), citizenship, migration, teachers training, and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Two respondents mention the national “LLL:2020” strategy. In Portugal, the respondents mention the following priorities: NEETs, soft skills, match between education and market needs, citizenship, meeting the EU2020 strategie(s) (Horizon2020, ET2020) like decreasing drop-out rates, training of unemployed and young people.

In Slovakia, among the topics are: dual education, competence-focused teaching and training. A more detailed response of one respondent list the targets of the former lifelong learning strategy (2007-2011): *“Creating a network of institutions authorized to recognize further education learning outcomes; creating a sustainable communication system between educational institutions and employers; enabling information exchange about knowledge and skills needed in the labour market; building a sustainable network of career guidance and counselling centres for adults to enable direct consultation with professionals; Creating a financial tool to support further education.”* In Sweden, the two main responses are: “education for future work”, “developing national education systems”.

Education stakeholders that responded to the survey do overall have better knowledge of the Erasmus programme. Two thirds consider themselves to be informed about EU policies and less than 4% consider themselves ‘not to be informed about it’. The most known EU policy is the EU2020 strategy (69% consider to be informed), and the Education and Training 2020 strategy (67% informed). The EU youth strategy is the one that is less known among the four suggestions in the survey question, but a majority knows about it (58%).



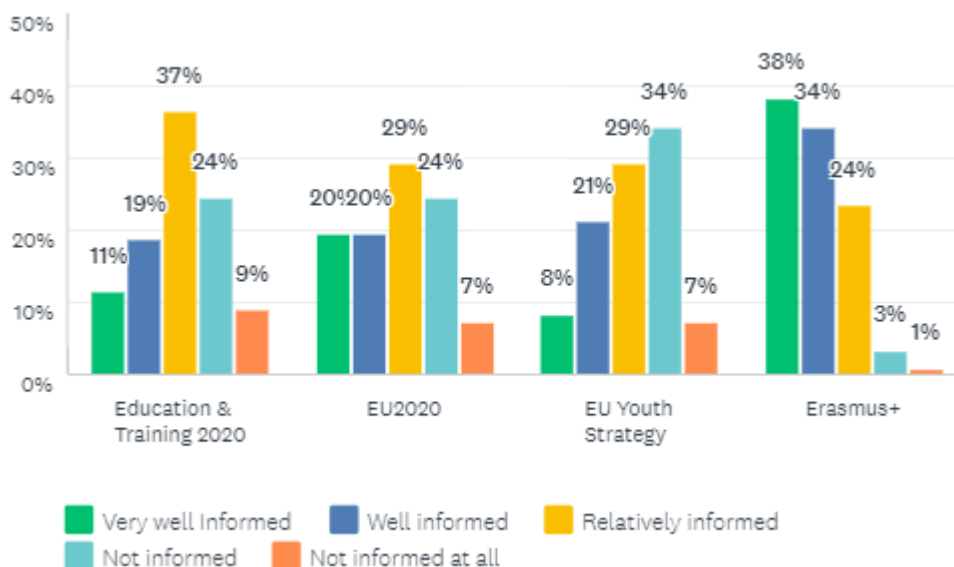


Figure 12: Knowledge about EU policies and programmes (n=123)

When it comes to EU frameworks and programmes, education stakeholders mostly get their information from EU institutions (50%), and equally from European organisations and Ministry of education (each 31%), other information channels are the national commissions on education (24%), Civil Society Organisations (26%), and other sources (20%). “Others” include newsletters, media, partners, universities, other ministries, national agencies and professional or personal networks.

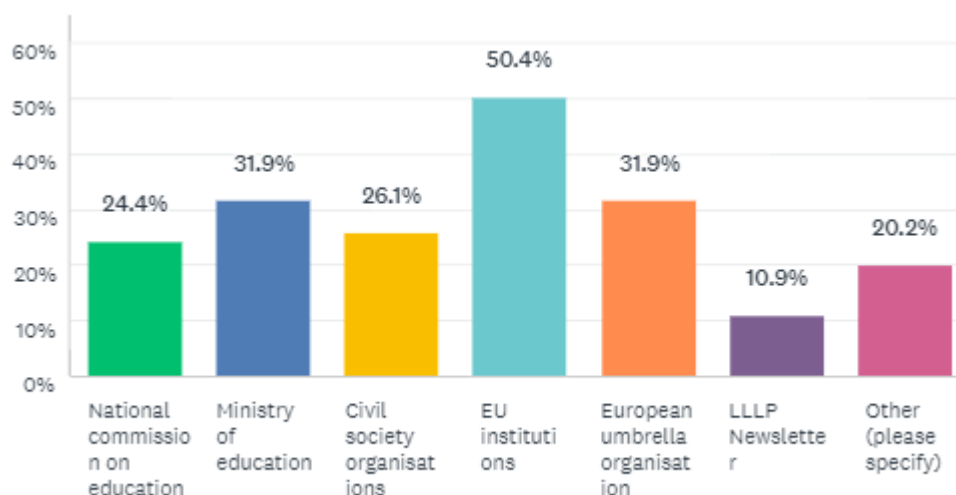
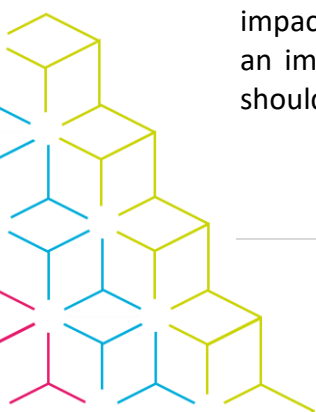


Figure 13: Sources for the information on EU policies (n=119)

Though most education stakeholders have little information about EU policies in the field of education and considering that 12% do not know whether they have an impact on their national context or not, a majority of respondents declare that it has an impact on their national level (53%), and a significant percentage responds “it should have one” (27%). Only a few responds that it does not have any impact (6%).



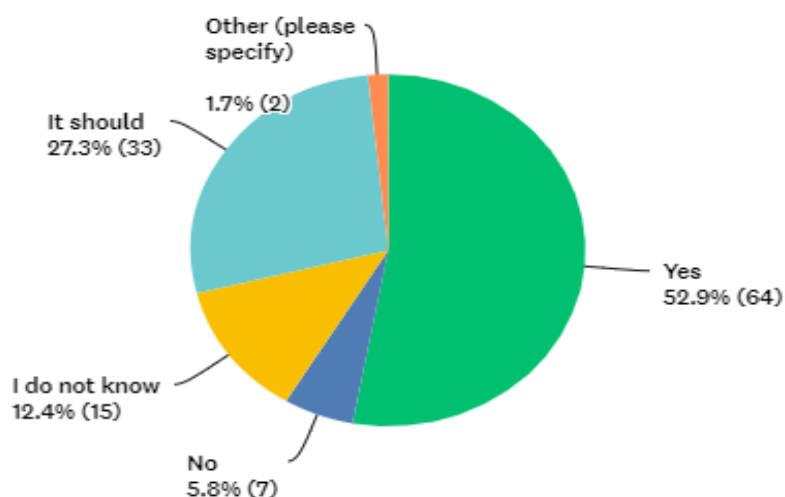


Figure 14: Do EU policies have an impact on national contexts? (n=121)

c. Cross-sector cooperation and partnerships

Among the organisations who responded to the question on the level of their cooperation with other organisations or institutions at national level, the cooperation is stronger with other educational institutions (high cooperation rate), and the lowest is with research institutes (an aggregated percentage of 48% have a low or very low cooperation rate).

What is interesting though, are the huge variation of cooperation between countries. Of course, results must be looked at with reservations, because the representation of educational stakeholders is limited and subjective. Austria and Portugal seem to be the most ‘cooperative’ countries for education stakeholders, while in Slovakia the cooperation culture is limited. According to a respondent from the Lisbon City Council (Portugal), there is a lot of cooperation in Portugal, ‘my organization has several responsibilities: exchange with different stakeholders, hosting international students within international programs like Erasmus Plus, we belong to several networks like XARXA F.P., EPALÉ, also we are members of Portuguese Consortium Erasmus Al Sud, that has a wide range of stakeholders, from universities to institutes or private organizations, we promote lifelong learning with a great range of free courses to citizens, along with the recognition of competences and combating early school leaving.’

Cooperation with educational institutions

	High cooperation rate	Low cooperation rate
Portugal	100%	0%
Austria	91%	9%
Hungary	80%	20%
Sweden	69%	31%
Slovakia	67%	33%

Portugal comes first with all respondents declaring to at least have a ‘relatively high’ cooperation rate with other educational institutions. Slovakia is where the rate cooperation is the lowest (67%). Weak results in Sweden are confirmed by the interviews: *‘There is no such cooperation that includes higher education along with other stakeholders. There is an organisation where all universities are represented (SUHF, The Association of Swedish Higher Education). They do occasionally organise conferences and other events where representatives from other levels of education participate. They also maintain [a] dialogue with organisers of vocational education. However, there is no structured cooperation between the higher education sector and the secondary education sector in general.’*

Cooperation with **civil society organisations**

	High cooperation rate	Low cooperation rate
Sweden	92%	8%
Hungary	75%	25%
Portugal	71%	29%
Austria	69%	31%
Slovakia	52%	48%

The cooperation rate with civil society organisations is the highest in Sweden (92%) and is the lowest in Slovakia with almost half of responding organisations saying they do not cooperate with Civil Society Organisations.

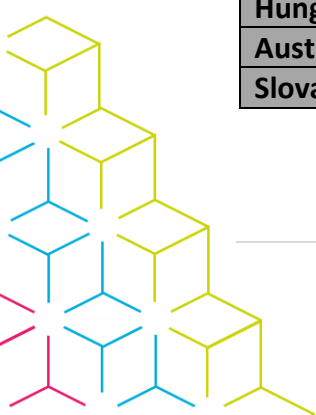
Cooperation with **public authorities**

	High cooperation rate	Low cooperation rate
Austria	81%	19%
Sweden	69%	31%
Hungary	63%	37%
Portugal	61%	39%
Slovakia	56%	44%

Cooperation with public authorities is the strongest in Austria (81%) and weakest in Slovakia (56%).

Cooperation with social partners

	High cooperation rate	Low cooperation rate
Portugal	93%	7%
Sweden	62%	38%
Hungary	63%	37%
Austria	52%	48%
Slovakia	41%	59%



Portuguese education stakeholders are the “champions” of cooperation with social partners (93%), while only 41% of education stakeholders in Slovakia maintain a high level of cooperation with social partners.

Cooperation with companies

	High cooperation rate	Low cooperation rate
Austria	81%	19%
Hungary	75%	25%
Portugal	61%	39%
Sweden	54%	46%
Slovakia	30%	70%

It is in Austria that education stakeholders cooperate most with companies (81%), and in Slovakia where they cooperate the least (30%).

Cooperation with research institutes

	High cooperation rate	Low cooperation rate
Portugal	75%	25%
Austria	67%	33%
Hungary	54%	46%
Sweden	38%	62%
Slovakia	22%	78%

While Portuguese education stakeholders have a major culture of cooperation with research institutes (75%), Slovakia achieves limited results for this type of cooperation (22%).

Answers to the following question “Does your organisation cooperate with organisations representing different sectors of education” show an impressively high rate for cooperation. It ranges from Hungary with lower rates (79.2%) to Portugal with a very high rate (96.4%). The high rates can be explained by the fact that responding organisations are already largely involved in transnational networks through which the survey was publicised. In the frame of the LLL:2020 Strategy in Austria, the Ministry set up working groups. One respondent from an adult education organisation gave some example of cross-sector cooperation in two working groups: ‘Community Education’ and ‘Validation of non-formal and informal learning’. They implement activities such as collecting data out of the empirical practice; analysing concrete work of the organisation according to ten goals of the strategy (LLL:2020); defining common quality standards and criteria; testing ways of implementation and evaluation. The respondent specified that these two working groups consist of members of all types of adult education and training, members of ministries and stakeholders from research and higher education.



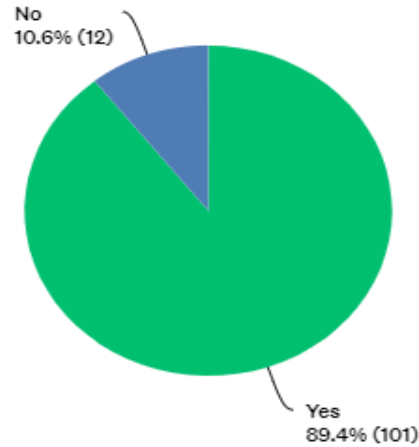


Figure 15: Cross-sector cooperation (n=113)

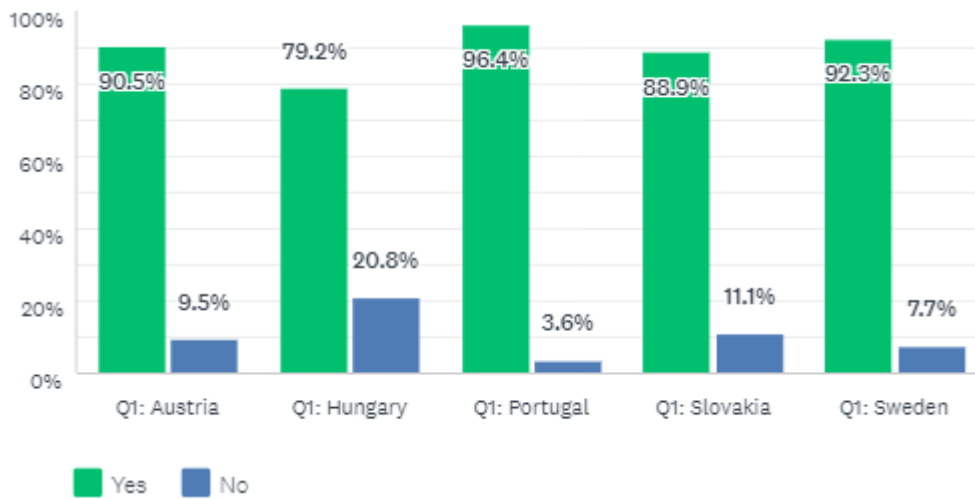


Figure 16: Cross-sector cooperation by country (n=113).

The majority of respondents cooperate with VET institutions, higher education institutions, adult education providers, school education and non-formal education providers. A minority cooperate with early childhood and care organisations (26%) and youth organisations (36%).



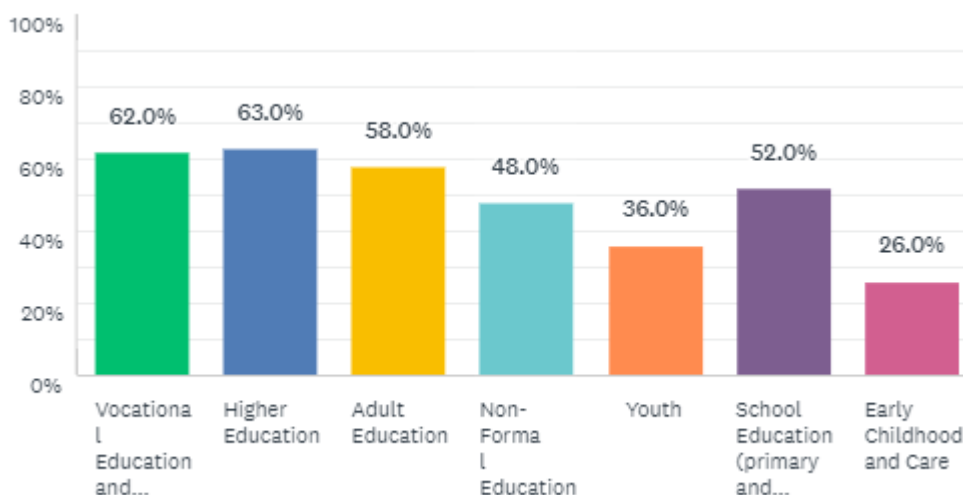


Figure 17: Type of organisations they cooperate with (n=100)

Respondents were then asked to give details about the topic they mostly cooperate on. Most mentioned topics are:

- **Training and learning:** E-learning, courses, staff and professional training (youth workers, companies, schools, leadership), open education, creating course material.
- **Work-based cooperation:** Traineeship, cooperation with companies, dual education³⁵.
- **Mobility:** Youth and adults exchanges.
- **Social activities:** Volunteering, sport, social inclusion.
- **Cultural activities:** Intercultural, language learning, active citizenship, migration.
- **Cooperation at EU and International level:** Projects, Erasmus+, European Qualification Framework, education, exchange of good practices, knowledge and experiences, networking activities.
- **Policy:** Representation, policy and legal framework design.
- **Research and innovation:** New learning methods and tools.
- Information Technology (IT) and digitalization.
- **Other topics:** Local development (rural development, local communities), assessment (skills, qualifications), children rights, and events (conferences, workshops, congress).

d. Cooperation with public authorities

Cooperation is stronger at local levels with public authorities, but the different levels of cooperation are very insignificant. “high cooperation” rates amount up to 61% for local levels, 60% for regional levels, and 58% for national levels. From that, we can say that the differences are not very significant. Though, they are progressively

³⁵ Dual education can be assimilated as studying and being apprenticeship, or trainee in a firm or organisation at the same time.



lower at the European level (50%). In Austria, according to one respondent, there is some cooperation between EU and local levels through the ‘Regional networks for adult education’. 4% of responding organisations “always” cooperate with public authorities on national policies in education, training, and youth. 72% cooperate “sometimes”, and 24% never cooperate.

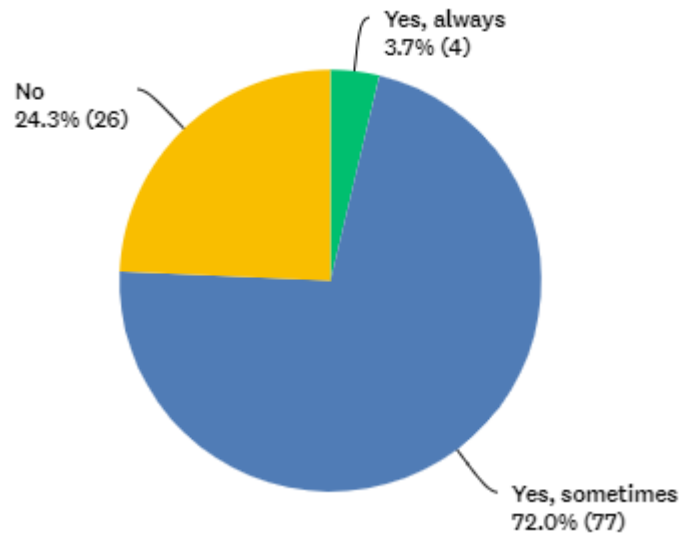


Figure 18: Public authorities’ consultation of education stakeholders about national policies in education, training and youth (n=107)

National consultation culture is stronger in Sweden (9% always and 72% sometimes) and Austria (9% always and 81% sometimes). It is much lower in Hungary (0% always and 50% sometimes). In Hungary, one respondent say during the qualitative interview that the general context is not favourable to civil society participation in public policies, “the current Hungarian government has made strong centralization efforts both in education and in the social services area. This trend has been coupled with annihilating the fora for stakeholder involvement in any form. In this hostile environment civic initiatives for sectoral or transversal cooperation remain weak and ad hoc.”



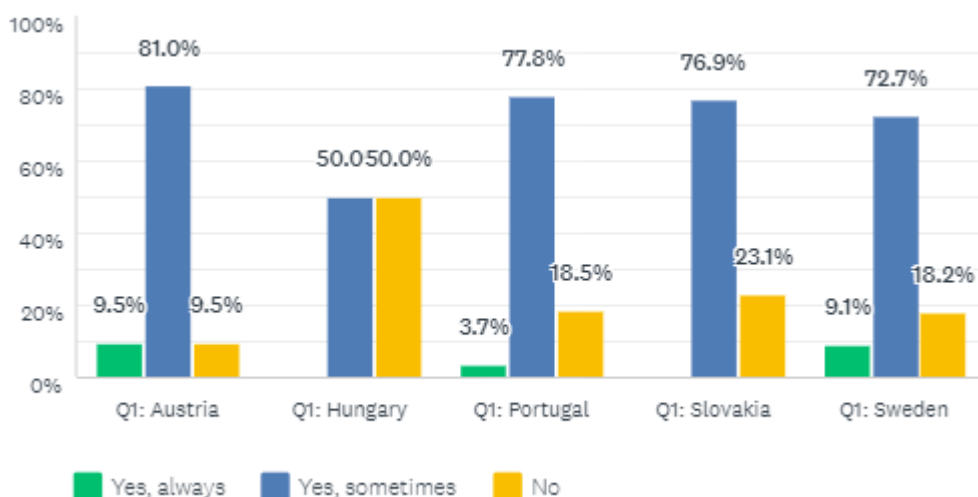


Figure 19: Public authorities' consultation of education stakeholders about national policies in education, training and youth by country (n=107)

Though these organisations are not always consulted by public authorities, a majority of them (52%) are currently involved in activities to influence the policy-making processes.

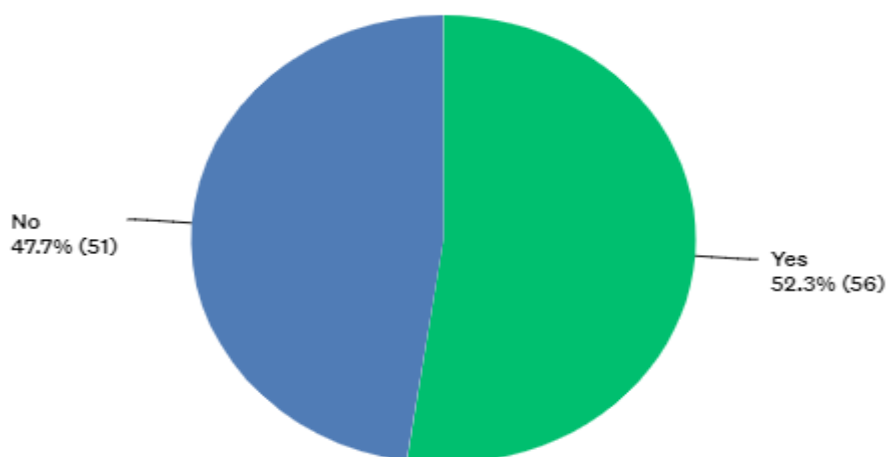


Figure 20: Involvement of responding organisations in policy-making (n=107)

Among those who are involved in policy-making, 72% cooperate on the policy-making process at the national level and 37.9% at the European level. *‘As there is probably neither [a] new strategy for lifelong learning, nor lots of interest by the government, it is difficult for me to talk about the activities [related to involvement in policy -making]. There are some discussions or debates, as well as projects in order to raise awareness about better employability in [the] labour market. However, [a] low number of participants is alarming, showing their poor advertising and lack of public interest.’* (Slovakia).

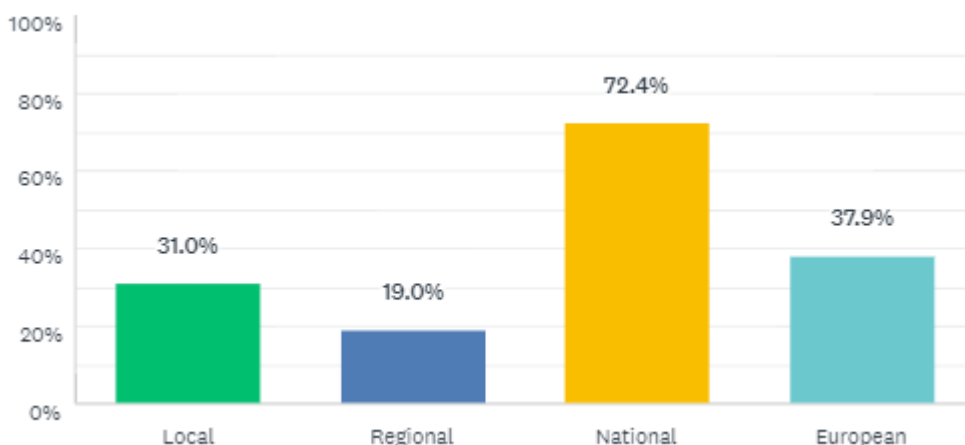


Figure 21: Level of cooperation with public authorities (n=58)

The dissatisfaction of organisations regarding their level of dialogue or cooperation with public authorities is important and marked with a third of them (35%) not being satisfied. None of the organisations is “totally satisfied” with its dialogue or cooperation between policy makers and CSOs in their country. 5% are “very satisfied” and 23% are “satisfied”. Overall, satisfaction is higher in Austria and Sweden. In Hungary, more than half of the organisations are not satisfied. In Slovakia, policy-makers are not very keen on discussing with youth organisations which led them to lose faith: *‘Education stakeholders from the current government are not willing to cooperate with almost any youth organisations. I think that if these groups [youth organisations] tried to reach stakeholders and nothing changed, they also lost their faith in doing the same thing without accomplishing anything.’*

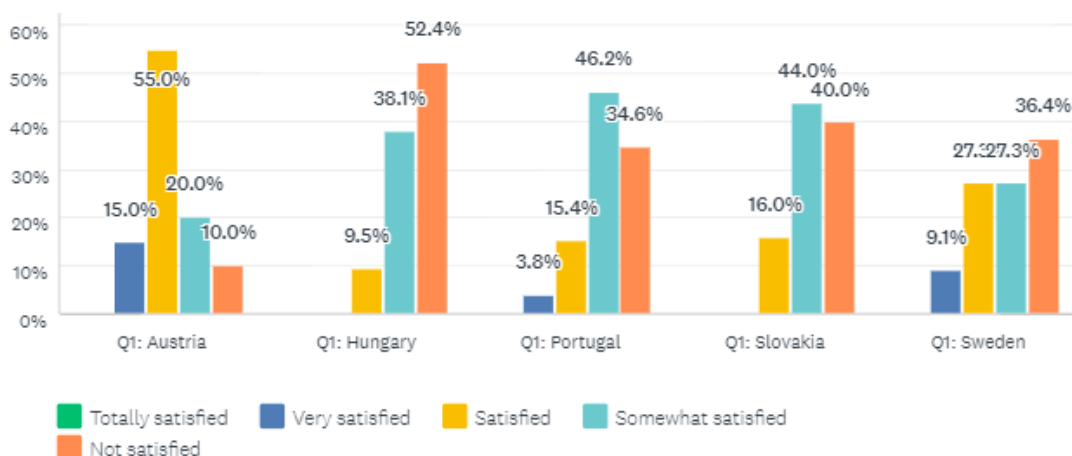


Figure 22: Level of satisfaction about cooperation or dialogue with public authorities (n=103)

Respondents were then asked in an open question to express what they think the main obstacles are to further cooperation between CSOs and public authorities. The most quoted were:

Lack of resources: human resources, relevant knowledge to contribute to national policies and time to lobby alongside their core daily work. Some CSOs do not have enough resources to be represented at the national level (Austria, Hungary, Portugal, and Sweden). The feeling of incompetence or lack of trained human resources for further dialogue or cooperation exists for CSOs, but sometimes this is also true for public administration in Slovakia and in Sweden (*“nobody is in charge of this dialogue”*).

Lack of interest or trust: respondents often quoted “selfishness” of public authorities that avoid consulting education stakeholders or certain categories of stakeholders (Slovakia, Hungary). The “top-down” approach and the lack of tradition in such cooperation are predominant in Hungary and Portugal. Sometimes, the given reason is a lack of trust coming from the authorities (Hungary, Portugal).

They focus on formal education, and higher education institutions in particular (Portugal). CSOs are lacking recognition of their “professionalism” from public authorities to be taken “seriously” in all 5 countries according to the respondents, and also some sectors of education feel neglected, like adult education (Austria).

The lack of understanding and communication is often resulting from different goals (Hungary, Portugal, Slovakia, and Sweden). In Portugal and Sweden, respondents said that public authorities are not aware of the difficulties CSOs are facing (*“of their special needs”*).

The public administrations bureaucracy is often quoted as a barrier in Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden. Even if there was a national platform on lifelong learning, it might not help CSOs to contribute to public policies, hence the lack of transparency and effectiveness of the National lifelong learning Institute in Slovakia that is mentioned by one of the respondents.

Some reasons are more directly political: One main argument is that politicians are too concerned with their short-term electoral and ideological interests (Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia). There are then two tendencies: on one hand, the political context is changing too rapidly (Portugal and Slovakia); on the other hand, politics resist change and do not engage in reforms, thus preferring to go on with “out-of-date methodologies” (Hungary). Some stakeholders feel like there is no significant policy in their sector (*“poor school laws”* in Slovakia).

e. Interest in participating in a lifelong learning platform

The survey asked the respondents if they know of any initiative similar to lifelong learning platforms activities. In Hungary,

“There are few efforts that grow out of demonstrations against government actions in the field of education. One of them is Halozat a Tanszabadsagert (Network for Freedom of Education), which is a totally privately initiated group/movement of individuals (mostly educators and civic organization



representatives). It is currently weightless, though there is an effort to restructure and revive it. Another one is Tanitanek “I would like to teach” movement. It was active about a year ago in networking, awareness raising and demonstrating, but faded away when focus should have shifted to forming plans. All the other existing groups or initiatives have lost any visibility and I think they probably do not have activities any more. Our organization is part of these networks and movements and we represented ourselves but have not been called to action for more than half a year now.”

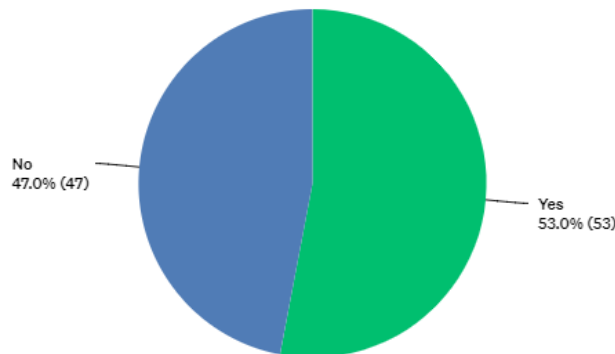


Figure 23: Participation in lifelong learning platforms (n=100)

The national context in some countries like Hungary is not fostering the participation of civil society organisations, and there is little representation of education stakeholders:

“Both have a narrow focus, they both are only about formal compulsory education (age 6-16(-18)). One is a government created body *KöznevelésiKerekasztal* (General Education Round Table) which has the teacher trade unions, the (also government created) teacher bar, some academics and a few had picked associations, none of them representative. In some cases where they didn’t like the representative organisations, they created one for themselves. It is a forum that is called together randomly when the government wants to show they have asked stakeholders. The other is like an amoeba, they use different names, sometimes they call themselves *I’d Like to Teach Movement*, sometimes *Civil Compulsory Education Forum*, sometimes other. They don’t have statutes or a formalised democratic structure. They advocate for a teacher-centred, but a little more modern formal compulsory education. Funnily enough they also tried to create their own ‘partners’ where they couldn’t find anybody who will join them without having any influence on what their representatives do, but they failed with creating their own parents or student organisation. They have just reached out to *ESZME* [parent association] and we’ll have a meeting with them to see if there is any way to cooperate. The main problem is that it is a non-existent organisation without democratic rules, so it very much depends on whose political benefit it is for at a certain point of time. Their main achievement was a number of demonstrations, but once they ran out of party money, they kind of float in thin air.”



In the following question, the respondents were asked whether they were interested in participating in national or regional lifelong learning platforms that would allow them to better express their views at EU, local and national levels. The participants are largely interested (60% “yes”, and 39% “maybe”), though the next questions show that their primary interest in such platforms is not to have a voice in policy-making but rather to have better opportunities for cooperation between education stakeholders. One Hungarian respondent said, “*Our organization would participate or contribute to this kind of work if we had meaningful structures for discourse, consultation and cooperation.*”

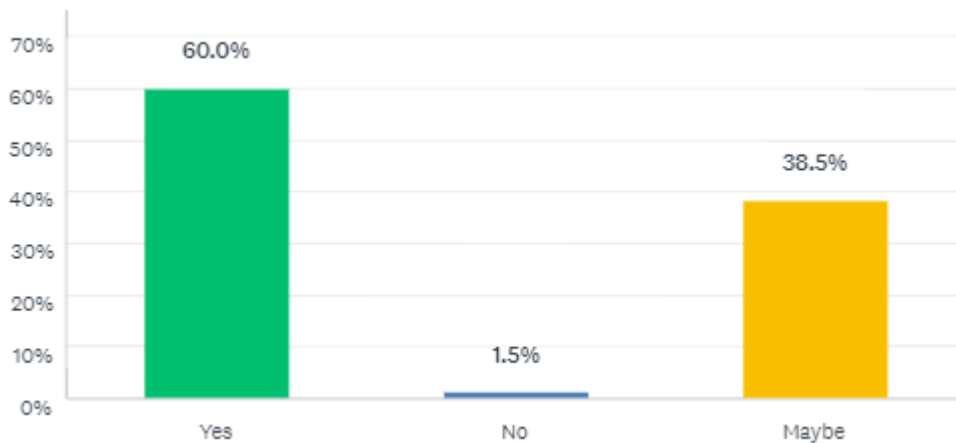


Figure 24: Would you be interested in participating in a lifelong learning platform? (n=65)

The 3 main reasons why they would like to participate in such platforms are:

1. To exchange best practices and share knowledge (55% strongly agree, 40% agree)
2. To meet new collaborators and expand potential partnerships (37% strongly agree, 53% agree)
3. To get information on funding (32% strongly agree, 49% agree)

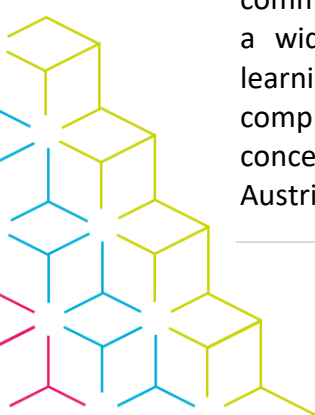


	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Meet new collaborators and expand potential partnerships	37.0% 37	53.0% 53	10.0% 10	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
Better understand EU/national/local policies and their impact on your sector of activity	28.0% 28	52.0% 52	20.0% 20	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
Contribute more to the definition and implementation of public policies in education and training	23.0% 23	47.0% 47	29.0% 29	1.0% 1	0.0% 0
Exchange best practices and share knowledge	55.0% 55	40.0% 40	5.0% 5	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
Disseminate information on your organisation's work and events	28.0% 28	55.0% 55	15.0% 15	2.0% 2	0.0% 0
Get information on funding opportunities	32.0% 32	49.0% 49	16.0% 16	3.0% 3	0.0% 0
More opportunities to work on education in a cross-sectorial way	33.0% 33	44.0% 44	19.0% 19	4.0% 4	0.0% 0

B. Interpretation of the results

The responses of the survey come from respondents and organisations with very different background, culture and professional functions. This helps to gather different perspectives and to obtain a broad view on stakeholders' perceptions about lifelong learning at national and regional level, for instance, coming either from formal or non-formal organisations. It is also interesting because it shows some common patterns within target countries and between them, and those patterns are in line with the findings of the desk research conducted while writing the study report. Countries where the national culture has been fostering the understanding and the practices of lifelong learning generally generate the best results in terms of cross-sector cooperation, partnerships and level of satisfaction in this regard.

Results show that there is a need to promote the lifelong learning concept and its meaning in all EU countries that are targeted by this study. This means communication actions to give visibility to the reality that is behind the concept, i.e. a wide scope of stakeholders. Information and communication about lifelong learning can consist of training, awareness raising campaigns, events and comprehensive policies. Then, there are discrepancies in the understanding of the concept depending on the country. In Sweden it is comprehensive overall, but in Austria it often relates to adult education. In Hungary, a significant share of the



population thinks lifelong learning stands for formal education only, and in Portugal and Slovakia, there is also an important margin for improvement.

The lack of shared meaning for lifelong learning can be a consequence of the absence of a comprehensive policy framework and strategy in education. In Hungary, a respondent claims *“I am not aware of a national definition for lifelong learning in Hungary. I think that we probably use EU definition(s) which is visible in government communications, requests for proposals, research. But it is not widely communicated in the general public or civil society.”* In all countries, there is a large share of respondents indicating that lifelong learning is not a priority for their government, while there is a national policy on education and training. When considering the finding that most respondents believe the ET2020’ and other EU institutions’ recommendations have an impact on the national context, there is reason to wonder whether the EU institutions actually advocate enough for Member States to adopt a national lifelong learning strategy.

There are many interpretations for these mixed results, considering that all five target countries are supposed to have a lifelong learning strategy according to the European Commission (2015):

- Respondents are unaware of such strategies or have limited about their national policies. This can result from a lack of communication from policy-makers and public institutions.
- Those who said that their country has a lifelong learning strategy might have a limited view on lifelong learning, thinking it is sector- or age-related.
- The government may have a so-called “lifelong learning strategy”, but it is not a holistic strategy covering formal, non-formal and informal education at all ages. Education reforms often target one particular sector, area, or challenge and that is in line with the specific recommendations of EU institutions, the Council in particular.
- They do not consider it a “government priority” in the field of education and training or compared to other policies of the ministries.
- Other reasons can be that they used to have a lifelong learning strategy, but they do not anymore, or they just adopted one but it is not yet very known by education stakeholders.

However, the survey results show the national level of development of those strategies and reflect the information that has been gathered during the desk research. More advanced countries in this regard are Sweden, and then Austria and Portugal; lagging behind are Hungary and Slovakia. Maybe it is worth to note here that they have joined the European Union at different time, Portugal (joined first (1985), then Sweden and Austria (1994), and Hungary and Slovakia (2003).

In Slovakia, the context is slightly different. The government decided to develop a new lifelong learning strategy in 2017 and started a consultation process with stakeholders. That explains why, back in 2015-16 when the survey was launched, organisations were not yet aware of these reforms. The consultation process that the government launched would perhaps increase the respondents’ perception of



being in cooperation and dialogue with public authorities if it was undertaken a few months or years later.

Where respondents give conflicting and contradictory answers, there are several possible explanations or hypothesis. More generally, it is mentioned that national policies are not clear, and all education stakeholders are not equally informed about them depending on the organisation or sector they belong to. Of course, perceptions of respondents can be very much influenced and biased by their own opinion on such policies. Maybe they lack information, or most probably, they do not feel represented or targeted by the national policies and therefore they would not consider that there is a policy in their field.

Regarding the results on respondent's knowledge of EU policies, they show that there is very heterogenic knowledge, with a third of respondents not feeling informed enough, another third feeling informed, and a minority being very informed. The only exception perhaps being Erasmus+ since overall, respondents are less aware of EU policies than EU funding. As the flagship programme of the European Union and main origin of funding for organisations in the education sector, Erasmus+ is the most known programme. The EU Youth strategy is the least known, with 41% answering that they are "not informed" or "not at all informed" about it. For the latter, the result can be explained by the fact that not all organisations work with the youth group, hence there is less of a chance that they hear about this strategy. Results, though, show that in general, local and national stakeholders are well aware of policies at all levels, but that there is big room for improvement.

The results confirm findings about the fact that for education stakeholders, the main benefits of the EU are funding rather than policy. The main reason is that education is a competence of Member States, and the EU institutions only provide EU guidance and benchmarks, that more generally, respective ministries and governments in education are aware of, but can decide to implement or not. On a separate note, results show that at least 27% of respondents think EU policies should have an impact on their national context. With such policy not being binding for Member States, it shows interest for more multilevel dialogue, cooperation and connection between the different levels.

It is not a surprise that there are disparities in the results regarding cross-sector cooperation depending on the country. Where the national culture is stronger, such as in Sweden or Austria, it is more developed. Also, in some countries, certain types of cooperation are more developed with specific institutions or organisations: with research institutes, education institutions and social partners in Portugal, with companies in Austria or with civil society organisations in Sweden. In all target countries, though, there is intense cooperation between education institutions (from 67% to 100% with a "high cooperation" rate).

The lack of dialogue and cooperation between education stakeholders and public authorities is an opportunity for establishing national lifelong learning platforms. Not all stakeholders that responded to the survey felt they had the same opportunities



to influence national policy-making. In Austria, where overall results were good for the participation of stakeholders in policy-making in the frame of the LLL:2020 Strategy, one respondent says that *'private primary and secondary educational organizations have very limited influence on the national level'*. The respondent says it is *'not easy to get appointments with the ministry of education.'* The existence of such platforms would help to ease the process of connecting education stakeholders to political actors. The cooperation exists at all subnational levels, though slightly less at EU level, but it is not systematic. When comparing results in terms of cooperation and consultation, the gap between answers can be explained by the fact that such cooperation is not always policy-related.

There is work to be done to raise awareness of public authorities about the benefits of consulting the beneficiaries in their policies. Education stakeholders are often not always equipped with resources that will allow them to reach their local, regional or national authorities. This is the very key role of a platform that can centralise the hopes and concerns of relevant stakeholders, by monitoring policies and informing their members on what is going on. When cooperation reaches the EU level, it is very likely to happen thanks to the European networks that these responding organisations belong to, or through EU-funded transnational projects. It is worth noting that responding organisations are very likely to already be linked to or informed by a European network, which means that results in local organisations or institutions not belonging to EU networks and not even being ware of their existence can show a different reality with organisations being less aware of EU policies and programmes.

Consultation cultures are very different from one EU country to another and civil society is not empowered in the same way across Europe; except in Member States where the 'pluralist' consultation culture as the result of a long and established tradition of civil dialogue is established, citizens' inputs are channelled via institutionalised consultative bodies or traditional social partners and lobbying is still seen as a rather new and illegitimate phenomenon. It results in countries where *"there is no coordination among education stakeholders, just some marginal groups – one pro-government forum organised by government, and one anti-government group - exist, but major stakeholder groups, especially parents and students are not part of either."* (Hungary, Interview)

The main finding of this study is the interest of respondents in participating in national lifelong learning platforms. The most significant answers being that respondents are "maybe" interested, the implication is that some awareness raising would need to be done in order to show the relevance of lifelong learning platforms and what benefits they could bring. The motivations are in alignment with what the stakeholders are used to cooperating on (exchange of good practices, meeting new collaborators, and getting information about funding), rather than what could maybe be new to them, namely, contributing to policy-making, for instance.

In any case, there seems to be some barriers for the participation of these organisations in public policies whether it is because of the feeling of not being able



to (because of a lack of resources, for instance) or not being entitled to (it is not their core job). Indeed, people would like to have a space to express their opinions, but that does not necessarily create commitment. Commitment is more than agreeing to objectives, it is about investing efforts in contributing. But, taking a look at the question on the motivations for participating in lifelong learning platforms, the opportunity to *“contribute more to the definition and implementation of public policies in education and training”* is the least stated reason among the 5 suggested, yet it is still significant that 70% of respondents “strongly agree or agree” that such a platform could help them to contribute to policy-making. In the end, only a change in cooperation culture and dialogue between education stakeholders and public authorities can foster the willingness of those organisations to discuss public policies in their countries.

C. Limits of the study

The survey representation of targeted stakeholders is limited and the answers often unjustified. However, the contributors to the study did their best to draw useful conclusions from the analysis of results. The study represents a unique input for the work of the Platform which is trying to promote at national level its holistic approach on the lifelong learning concept as defined earlier in this study. That said, several limits were identified:

- **The language barrier:** a few respondents say in comments that they do not understand English very well. This means that sometimes, they might not have understood the questions very well, and choose not to respond or to respond according to what they think they understand. One solution, though, time- and resource-consuming, would have been to translate the survey into each target country’s language.
- **The fact that all questions are not compulsory:** the number of respondents is partially decreasing as the survey progresses, and the number of answers is a lot below average when there is an open question for comments. This is reducing the representativeness of the results, thus potentially limiting the accuracy of the findings.
- **The respondents come from very diverse background and organisations:** This brings a lot of different perspectives depending on which sector they work in, or which type of learners they work with, but there are not enough answers in each category to be able to draw assertive conclusions and to be able to compare the answers depending on this variable. Therefore, answers can vary a lot depending on respondents belonging to a civil society organisation or an education institution in formal education.
- **Open questions can lead to “personal” or “organisational” biased answers:** (e.g. *“can you tell us more about the topics you work on through these partnerships”*). It is hard to know whether the respondents are responding on behalf of their organisation, or according to their personal opinion on the matter.



Overall, this survey aims at collecting perceptions of stakeholders rather than actual practices of cooperation and partnerships between education stakeholders, and between them and public authorities.

Comparison with 2012 study results

A. Limits of the comparison

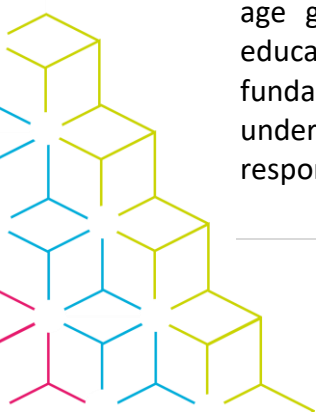
The reason for this study was to update the 2012 study and to a certain extent, compare the results and assess the evolution of lifelong learning national frameworks and their potential for development of platforms at national and regional level. The methodology used in both studies differs which is leading to some limitations regarding the comparative perspective. While the 2012 study aimed at reaching organisations based in all EU countries, the new one only targeted 5 countries. There are not enough answers for each country in the previous study to make it possible to compare any changes of lifelong learning contexts between 2012 and 2016 in the target countries. The 2012 study focused on national forums ‘to inform, discuss and implement the European strategies in education and training’, whereas this new study mostly had interest in the value of national platforms for the national level, that is to say with fewer focus in EU policies than the previous study. Questions or suggested answers are not always the same in both studies (number of choices, single or multiple answers, possibility to comment, wording), although sometimes very similar, it makes it harder to compare them if there is a slight change in the formulation of the question. Nevertheless, some comparisons are possible.

B. Comparison of results

a. Understanding of the lifelong learning concept

In the 2012 study, a large majority of respondents (more than 80%) seem to well understand the lifelong learning concept used by the EU institutions, because they choose the definition: *“any kind of learning taking place throughout life be it formal, non-formal or informal”*. What is interesting as well according to the 2012 study is that 40.3% chose more than one answer, meaning that they do not feel the aforementioned definition completely encompassed the lifelong learning concept and reality. This suggests that the understanding of what is lifelong learning is not yet shared by all education stakeholders.

These results differ a lot from the 2016 survey results, in which, a majority of respondents think the concept is understood in their country as related to a certain age group (adults), or a certain education sector (non-formal education, VET education). Based on this some of the conclusions of the two studies diverge fundamentally. The previous study authors consider that there is a common understanding of lifelong learning in the EU, whereas the updated study shows that respondents perceive that 43% of their country population really have a holistic



understanding of the concept (aligned with LLLP definition). Definition are different between countries and between respondents. Also, it has to be taken into consideration that when respondents are asked as part of the first study what they think the lifelong learning concept implies, in the second study, respondents are asked how people in their country understand it. It is therefore tricky to compare results here.

It is worth mentioning that in the 2012 study, respondents could add comments to “*why they think their organisation represents lifelong learning*”, which led to other shared definitions such as lifelong learning being a “state of mind” or a “perspective on life”. The question in the 2012 study “*do you describe your organisation as a lifelong learning one*” is not repeated in the 2016 survey.

b. Knowledge about European strategies and national education policies

Knowledge of EU policies

ET2020	Very well informed	Well informed (quite well)	Not really informed	Not informed at all
2012 (n=246)	2.4%	30.1%	40.2%	27.2%
2016 (n=123)	11.4%	18.7% ³⁶	36.6% ³⁷	24.4%
				8.9%

It is not surprising that knowledge about EU policies has increased over the year since the EU2020 strategy was launched in 2010, that is to say, only 2 years before the survey of the previous study. 4 years later, the differences in results are huge in the new survey with education stakeholders being a lot more informed about EU policies. Apart from the familiarity with policies that may develop over time and considering that EU institutions and networks are often the sources of information for respondents, the increase in knowledge can be explained by the fact that the EU, Member States or EU networks reached out to grass-root stakeholders during recent years. It took some time, but it results in respondents in 2016 being more informed than they were in 2012.

In the new study, however, a significant proportion of respondents remain as “not well informed” about ET2020 in their countries (34%). Even if this element has seen some improvement compared to the previous study, it has to be taken into account that the ET2020 strategy will be replaced by a new strategy in a few years which means that the information process will have to start almost from scratch again. The transition will be even more pronounced if the structure and content of the programme and frameworks are undergoing considerable change.

The related question “*where did you get information on the ET2020 framework?*”, present in both the first survey and the new one, shows high discrepancies in results. Whereas respondents to the 2012 study (n=128) put their own European network as

³⁶ « well informed »

³⁷ « relatively informed »



the primary provider of information on EU policies (68.8%³⁸), the responses in the 2016 survey (=119) consider EU institutions to be the primary provider. Again, the methodology of proposed answers makes it hard to draw some clear conclusions since the answers are not formulated in the same way, and in the 2012 study, there was a possibility to submit multiple answers.

Knowledge of national policies in education

In the 2012 study, a minority of stakeholders (43%) consider lifelong learning to be a priority in their countries. Results are significantly more positive in the new 2016 study with 65% of respondents saying that lifelong learning is a government priority. Even if we compare the results in Hungary, Slovakia, Sweden, Portugal and Austria from the previous study to the new study, in 2016 there are more respondents saying that there is a national lifelong learning strategy in their country. However, considering the limited number of answers in the previous study, it is not possible to assert that it can be explained by the fact that national governments have introduced a lifelong learning strategy, or communicated better on it since 2012. But this could mean, among other things, that the EU institutions have an impact on national policies.

In both studies, the reasons for the lack of dialogue and cooperation between education stakeholders and public authorities are the same, namely, the lack of awareness of the benefits of their contributions, the lack of consultation culture, and lack of interest. The 2012 study did not highlight different consultation cultures in the survey results, therefore, results do not reflect the different patterns that are identified in the new study.

c. Sectorial and trans-sectorial cooperation between stakeholders

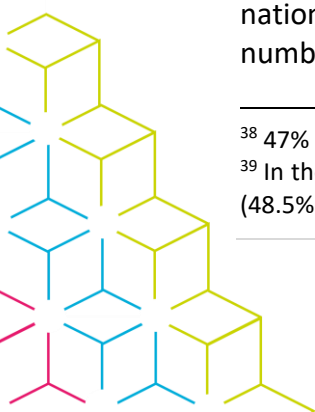
The question “do public authorities consult your organisation when it comes to national policies in education, training, and youth?” is equivalent in the 2012 and 2016 surveys. Results are converging.

Answer choices	2012 (n=206)	2016 (n=107)
Yes, always	5.8%	3.7%
Yes, sometimes	78.6% ³⁹	72%
No	18.9%	24.3%

Even though there is poor representation in the 2012 study regarding the five target countries of the 2016 survey, there is some evidence of common patterns regarding national consultation cultures that can to a certain extent confirm whether the number of public authorities’ consultations is higher in certain countries in

³⁸ 47% of them responded only EU networks as providers.

³⁹ In the 2012 study, there were 4 possible answers. For reasons of comparison, the answers “barely” (48.5%) and “often” (30.1%) were merged in this table.



comparison to other countries. It is also important to take into consideration that in both surveys stakeholders are very different when it comes to their type of organisation, and level where their activities take place (from local to national level), therefore, the results cannot tell with high certainty whether organisations are more consulted in one country or another. Yet on average, Sweden is the country that had the highest number of respondents saying “yes, always” in both studies. Austria, Slovakia and Portugal that have a majority of respondents responding “yes, sometimes” are close to the average of the EU countries’ answers in the 2012 study. Hungary comes last on average with half respondents answering “never” to this question in the 2016 survey.

Trade unions have traditionally been more consulted by public authorities, as their core business is to represent the public and private sector ‘professionals’, than civil society, which is a reason why non-formal and informal sectors are less consulted at national levels. They are often not considered to be “professional” enough or entities representing public interest, which is also reflected in the question of the 2016 survey: *“what are, according to you, the main obstacles to further cooperation in education and training between policy-makers and civil society in your country?”*. The qualitative interviews in the 2012 study specify that often, CSOs find it easier to make their voice heard if they dialogue with trade unions and employer organisations directly in order to indirectly reach policy-makers. They also specify that it depends on the issue.

It is also important to note that there might be growing trends showing that CSOs are more and more consulted in designing education policies (for instance regarding contents in formal education). A Portuguese respondent in the 2012 study also says that CSOs are increasingly involved in implementing wide national reforms influenced by European Strategies, such as the national qualification frameworks. However, results of the 2016 survey show that cooperation with public authorities is not so strong in Portugal. Regarding the EU programme that is increasingly decentralised, namely Erasmus+, the programme’s national agencies also engage in such collaboration with CSOs (e.g. national students associations).

Both studies show that sectorial and cross-sectorial cooperation is already well anchored in education stakeholders’ practices. “Yes” answers to the question vary from 70% (2012 study, n=201) to 89% (2016 survey, n=113). Both studies show that cooperation with educational institutions is the strongest, and that cooperation with research institutes is the weakest. The possibility for answering ‘CSO’ was given in the 2016 survey. Though the question was not structured the same way in both studies, it is possible to see a difference in results that can either be interpreted as differences in countries’ cooperation cultures or as an evolution of the level of cooperation. For instance, the 2012 study shows that 35% of organisations in the five target countries cooperate with companies, whereas in the 2016 survey, 60% of respondents say that their cooperation rate with companies is “relatively high”.

The 2012 study report declare that there is a growing trend to cooperate with different types of stakeholders (p.32) and this seems to be confirmed by the



difference in percentages (except for cooperation with public authorities and social partners in target countries – 2012 study), the 2016 survey results show stronger multi-stakeholder cooperation for all types of organisations or institutions⁴⁰.

	Cooperation with other stakeholders	
	2012 (EU n=177)	2016 ⁴¹ (5 countries n=113)
Educational institutions	92.1%	83%
CSO	N/A	70%
Public authorities	53.1%	65%
Social partners	37.3%	63%
Companies	34.5%	60%
Research institutes	32.2%	53%

There is little said in the 2012 study about the reasons why they cooperate, except that education stakeholders cooperate with social partners of the same sector; the public authorities for project and support purposes (rather than policy); with companies for funding or employment (VET); and with research institutes for research projects and mutual learning (in line with EU Strategy). In the new study, it is less clear whom they cooperate with and on what subject because the question is open to the cooperation with all stakeholders.

d. Interest in lifelong learning platforms

In both studies, respondents express their interest in joining lifelong learning platforms (or ‘forums’ as written in the previous study). In the 2012 study, it is a ‘yes/no’ question, and brings a result of 88.2% of respondents being in favour of joining lifelong learning Forums to “*better express their views on ET2020 and its implications at national level*” and an even higher number of them would be interested in joining lifelong learning platforms (95.1%). In the new study, 60% answered ‘yes’, 38% ‘maybe’, and only one respondent to the survey answers ‘no’ (2%) if it is meant for him to participate to a platform to better express its views on EU, national and regional level.

41.4% of respondents in the 2012 study are able to mention existing lifelong platforms in their countries but it is unclear which definition they refer to. Among them, we have selected the responses in the target countries of the new study, where unfortunately, the question was not repeated. In Portugal, one national lifelong learning platform that had been identified is the Learning Working group (LG@Pt) which is a network established in November 2010 bringing together public and private entities to stimulate the development of lifelong learning. Another

⁴⁰ Except for educational institutions but that can be explained by the fact that CSOs were added in the new study and could have been considered as educational actors in the 2012 study. 2012: 92.1% on average in the EU, 95% in target countries. 2016: 83% say they have a strong cooperation with these actors.

⁴¹ In 2016 survey respondents who answered “relatively high”, “high” or “very high” cooperation rate.



suggestion was the national agency for the management of the Lifelong Learning programme which was replaced by Erasmus+ national agency after 2014. In Hungary, the answer given is the Association of Higher Education Students' Associations (Felsőoktatási Diákszervezetek Egyesülete) and once again, the organisation does not really cover the lifelong learning reality. In Slovakia, the Association of Adult Education and in Sweden, several organisations are mentioned: National Council of Adult Education; the regional platforms for non-formal education; the National Centre for Lifelong Learning (Encell); and Sweden's United Student Union. The motivations for joining lifelong learning platforms are the same in the two studies. The 'exchange of best practices', the opportunity 'to meet new partners and collaborators' and the 'better understanding of policies constitute the main motivations.

Part 3/ Outlooks and recommendations

The setting up of lifelong learning platforms

This section is dedicated to the concrete setting up of permanent national lifelong learning platforms in EU Member States. Therefore, it will consider the following issues: the process of the creation and the different stages leading to it; the function or role of the platforms; the key conditions for their success; the challenges that may arise from its creation to its sustainability; and the organisational aspects.

A. Pre-stages for the setting up of a platform

a. Creating a space for cross-sector and multi-stakeholder dialogue at local, regional or national level

The setting up of the platform will take time. It is a long process of discussion between stakeholders which starts by creating a common space for cross-sector and multi-stakeholder dialogue in a local, regional or national context. Pre-stages formats allow education stakeholders to meet each other, experience peer learning activities together via the exchange of best practices and knowledge sharing. The forms of organisation that precede the establishment of a platform are wide and diverse. At the start, it can take the form of events with a cross-sectoral perspective to bring the stakeholders together during events or meetings. Events are an opportunity to learn from others' practices and to find new ways of collaborating together. The events could be thematic or of a more general nature, they can take the form of forums, capacity-building trainings, conferences, workshop, week or working groups. Launching "LLL forums" was the aim of the 2012 study. Apart from the EUCIS-LLL 2012 study, there have been a couple of other studies analysing the relevance of lifelong learning organisations (forums, institutes...).



The first one is a study also launched by EUCIS-LLL on setting up a “European Institute on Lifelong Learning (EILL)” (2010-2011)⁴². Its purpose would have been to contribute to the creation of the ‘knowledge society’ and support individual and collective emancipation and wellbeing through the development of lifelong learning. The study general objective was to investigate lifelong learning policies, strategies, systems and practices as well as potential for cooperation with existing lifelong learning organisations at local, regional, national, European and international level. In short, it was the ancestor of the LLL-HUB and had a more developed research part for the foreseen activities, and full European coverage.

Following punctual events, are established and structured networks that aim to connect people for personal and professional mutual benefits. This can lead to new business, cooperation and partnerships. A benefit of those networking events could be to increase trust between stakeholders and they could function as a facilitator for civil society consultation mechanism, thus being a unique contact for the representation of interests of all education stakeholders at national level for policy-makers. Like in the LLL-Hub.

The organised stakeholders could also not only coordinate the cooperation through projects and partnerships between education institutions in the formal sector, but with other sectors related to education, civil society organisations in particular, and stakeholders with whom they are less used to cooperate with: research institutes, companies, and employment agencies. Such collaboration is both one of the targets of EU policies and very often a target of national governments. Lifelong learning organisations in the broad sense could give visibility to more marginalised sectors in education (non-formal education sector).

Other possible organisations are thematic coalitions dealing with a specific issue or policy, for instance on guidance. One decade ago (2008), Cedefop, which is the European agency for promoting the development of vocational education and training (VET) in the European Union, published a study about “Establishing and developing national lifelong guidance policy forums”⁴³. It was seen as a manual for policy-makers and stakeholders and is focused on guidance and counselling. This manual is part of Cedefop’s contribution to supporting Member States in establishing and strengthening structures for more effective guidance on policy formulation and implementation. It is not only aimed at identifying outstanding initiatives and good practices, but also at giving insights into strategic choices and experimental approaches that Member States have taken in setting up their national guidance forums. Guidance in lifelong learning was one of the main topics discussed back at the time and led to the establishment of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network in 2007⁴⁴.

⁴²EUCIS-LLL (March 2011), *Feasibility Study on a European Institute on Lifelong Learning (EILL)*; Paper written by Antonio MOCCI, independent researcher, on behalf of EUCIS-LLL http://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EUCIS_Study_EILL.pdf

⁴³Cedefop(2008), *Establishing and developing national lifelong guidance policy forums*, Study <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5188>

⁴⁴Lifelong Guidance Policy Network website, <http://www.elgpn.eu/>



b. Starting from pre-existing initiatives to develop the ownership of the initiative

Field and desk research show there is yet no such thing as an equivalent to LLLP at national, regional or local level. Some countries have had LLL weeks, forums or festivals once or several times, but no permanent structures have been put in place. In Slovenia, there has been an LLL week organised every year by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education⁴⁵. There are National councils in France and other countries which facilitates dialogue⁴⁶, etc. but their function and their organisational aspects are very different to the ones presented in this study. In the United Kingdom, the Higher Education Academy launched a “Lifelong Learning Network” but it mainly focuses on vocational learning and higher education⁴⁷. There is also an organisation called ‘Leido Academy’ in the Netherlands which claims to be an ‘independent Dutch platform for organizations, networks, institutions, experts whose focus is on shaping ‘Lifelong Learning’⁴⁸. This organisation was partner in the LLL-Hub EU project.

a. Lessons from the LLL Hub project

The LLL Hub project has tested the feasibility of establishing a mix of a network and the organisations of several events. Co-funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme (former Erasmus+), the project ran from 2013 to 2016 and involved 10 partners from 8 European countries. It aimed at fostering a shared meaning of lifelong learning across Europe by encouraging cross-sectorial cooperation and dialogue at national level on the European agenda. LLLP coordinated the project together with CVO Antwerpen and was leading on the development of the methodology for the three project steps: the Labs, the Forums and the Agora. The project involved a wide range of experts from the 10 partner countries in Europe, including Turkey and has clearly demonstrated that collaboration on a regional and national level is of interest to the lifelong learning sector in the partner countries; it also showed the potential to influence policy at the European level through dedicated research and activities by experts at the national level. It was an opportunity for regional and national experts to exchange with their counterparts from other countries and to discuss joint conclusions to be put forward to policy-makers at European level. It has developed the “LLL-HUB methodology” which has been successfully tested offered an initial structure for collaboration which can be explored and used to plan and organise the launch of a pilot project for a national platform. Taking stock of existing initiatives such as the LLL-Hub should help lifelong learning platforms to position themselves in the national frameworks and give strong reasons for their creation. This will later

⁴⁵ Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) website, <https://www.acs.si/en>

⁴⁶ Eurydice website, Lifelong Learning strategy, France (last update in 2014) https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/France:Lifelong_Learning_Strategy

⁴⁷ Higher education Academy website, Lifelong Learning networks, <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/retention-and-success/widening-access-programmes-archive/lifelong>

⁴⁸ Leido Academy website <http://www.leidoacademy.nl/>



help avoiding criticism pointing at overlaps by making sure the new platform brings something very new and of added value to the education ecosystem.

B. Function of national platforms

Based on the assessment of the needs of respondents and contexts in selected countries of the study, it is possible to give an outlook on what could increase interest in a more permanent and formalised organisation and association between different levels. This being:

1. To exchange best practices and share knowledge;
2. Meet new collaborators and expand potential partnerships;
3. And better understand public policies at every level, and how they impact on their own sector of activities.

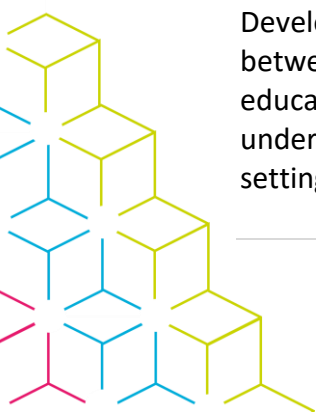
a. Transnational shared understanding, best practices and knowledge

As reflected by the results of the survey, the lack of shared understanding is a big stumbling block for ensuring effective dialogue and cooperation, in particular between CSOs and public authorities. By bringing together the very diverse stakeholders, the platform would pursue the goal of setting up a ‘community of understanding and values’ in the field of education. One of the main issues of the lifelong learning concept, is that its definition varies from countries, regions, organisations and subjectivity. Individuals in different countries and context relate it to “adult education” or “non-formal and informal education” whereas the European definition is lifelong learning covers education and training across all ages and in all areas of life, be it formal, non-formal or informal (European Commission). Lifelong learning does not only cover diverse sectors of education but encompasses also a broader perspective for education that is not exclusively linked to employment, but also to a the personal, social and cultural life of the citizens.

What the desk research and the results of the survey have shown is that national governments have not adopted this comprehensive view on education and, thus, often focus their policies on specific sectors. In Portugal and Hungary, there is a clear focus on education for the labour market. The National Lifelong Learning Agency in Slovakia only focuses on adult education. What is true for the target countries is also valid for most EU countries.

b. To contribute to the design and implementation of policies

The platform would facilitate better coordination of consultations, policy monitoring, and advocacy actions on public policies at EU, national and regional levels. Developing a shared meaning also helps to understand the bridging possibilities between various sectors, or how to make coherent policies. This is often neglected in education policies and that is why it is even more relevant to foster a common understanding of the concept across all education stakeholders. Thanks to the setting up of a platform, this comprehensive meaning could be discussed and co-



developed by cross-sector stakeholders in education, including policy-makers. The results of the study show that there is room for progress to achieve that. But many experiences have shown that adopting a comprehensive understanding of lifelong learning in alignment with LLLP's definition can be successful⁴⁹. The 'Impact of Lifelong Learning Strategies on Professional Higher Education' project (FLLLEX) was implemented from 2010 and 2012 and united higher education stakeholders in the EU to discuss the concept of lifelong learning. One of the main project outputs was the creation of a self-evaluation tool aiming at assessing the degree of lifelong learning implementation in one institution. Stakeholders realised they had the same understanding, however, when they were asked to map lifelong learning stakeholders, it turned out to be more difficult.

Having a comprehensive understanding and implementation of lifelong learning policies helps the recognition of the often-under-estimated importance of certain sectors of education and age groups. The platform, as a community of understanding, needs to reflect common views on education, but also reflect a diversity of views. That is why it is relevant to set up a lifelong learning platform in the regional or national context. If a pilot project for a national lifelong learning platform would come to life, it could benefit from existing initiatives such as the ones developed during the LLL-HUB and the web platform 'Discuss'⁵⁰, in the framework of another EU co-funded project aiming at giving a space for dialogue, cooperation and exchange between practitioners of lifelong learning, thus developing a 'community of practice on lifelong learning.'⁵¹

The function of a platform is to build and coordinate a joint position, represent an interest group to weigh heavier in the negotiations with policy-makers. That way, it gives a solution to the lack of resources of individual CSOs and education institutions for policy and advocacy activities. Having one organisation representing all sectors of education is more efficient in terms of financial resources, and better to develop 'holistic' rather than 'silo' policies. Furthermore, some policies make it necessary to build those bridges, for instance, the establishment of 'flexible pathways' between sectors of education or the assessment and the validation of skills and competences.

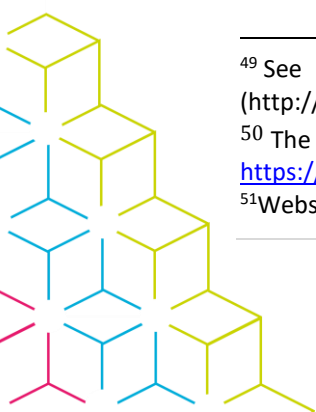
c. Intermediary between grass-root levels and the European level

In addition to the "horizontal cooperation" mentioned above is the "vertical collaboration" that mostly results from a bottom-up approach. The platform is a unique "one-stop-shop" interlocutor to connect local and national stakeholders to the European level. The relevance of an intermediary organisation is justified by the many benefits it would bring in structuring the dialogue between citizens and policy-makers.

⁴⁹ See pages 40, 42, 56-57 of the 2012 Feasibility Study and the website of the Flllex project (<http://www.flllex.eu/>).

⁵⁰ The Discuss Project was funded by the EU to build a community of practice on lifelong learning <https://www.discuss-community.eu/>

⁵¹ Website of the Discuss project, <https://www.discuss-community.eu/>; <http://www.discuss-project.eu>



For the European Union, benefits are both directed to provide data and information to EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of Europe, Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions) and to European networks (the Lifelong Learning Platform, its members, and other CSOs). Because EU policies are not binding, setting up lifelong learning platforms at national level could help to better disseminate and communicate EU policies and political recommendations at lower levels while better influencing the European level. In the education sector, EU actions are foremost known because they bring potential funding, but the outcomes of working groups and peer learning activities could as well be spread to the more local level and enhance the modernisation of education systems. The platform can be another useful contact for asking support on funding and projects. Such platforms, of course, would not replace existing structures but complement their work. They can guide organisations to find the relevant partners in a country, support in identifying potential fundraising or co-funding sources and provide support to small organisations in applying to projects.

The platform would communicate information on what the EU is offering, on the one hand, and on the other, collect information from grass-roots levels for the EU level (research, data, projects...). By raising awareness of how the EU is working at local levels, it would foster active citizenship, citizens being therefore more informed about their national challenges in terms of basic skills, qualifications, participation in lifelong learning, etc. Using the benchmark and the Education and Training monitor, they would be equipped and encouraged to use the data to reach out to policy-makers and to campaign for setting the political agenda.

The improvement of multilevel coordination is also about cost-effectiveness. For instance, it can help avoiding multiplying the allocation of funding for similar projects and help save some resources by sharing staff, activities and knowledge in a unique platform covering all lifelong learning dimensions. As civil society organisations, permanent national platforms offer a steady contact for education stakeholders and engage in long-term relationships that are not dependent on political ideologies, nor affected by political changes (and elections in particular).

For the Member States and public authorities in charge of education policies, the platform would help them to create more synergies and complementarity with other policies and programmes in the areas of employment, social affairs, research and innovation. The platform would collect information and knowledge from their members and share very valuable information to be used in policy-making. They would start the work of setting up consultations and help to bridge stakeholders with policy makers in civil dialogue formats. Multi-stakeholder cooperation has been proven to increase innovation. This idea has been translated into the quadruple helix and “open innovation 2.0” concept of the European Commission⁵². A national platform for lifelong learning following this example and seeking to enhance the

⁵² European Commission, Digital Single Market, <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/open-innovation-20>



equal representation of the “knowledge triangle” (education, research, innovation) could contribute to modernising education systems and accelerating innovations.

For citizens, platforms would provide a wide overview of education in their country, information about the different paths, frameworks and reference studies. This would bring the EU to the citizens and give them more opportunities to meet with education stakeholders and express their view as beneficiaries of the providers of education and training.

C. Key success factors and challenges for the establishment of national lifelong learning platforms

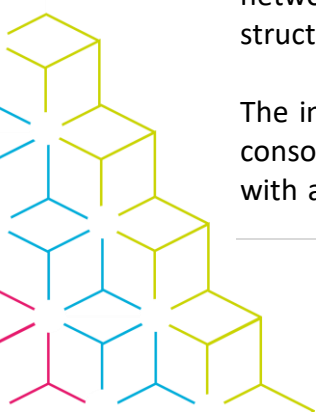
The setting up of lifelong learning platforms is raising several challenges that this section is aiming at bringing solutions to by listing some “success factors” for avoiding a failure in the implementation phase. There have been many steps that were identified with the help of the outcomes of the LLL-HUB project and its methodology. Most of the key success factors presented below have been drawn from the conclusions of the project.

a. Before setting up national platforms

The issue of leadership and governance: identifying the right contact persons in each Member State that could start the initiative is a tricky step. The mapping of LLLP members’ members, as well as relevant organisations or structures on the national level is essential. The category “educational stakeholders” involves all those concerned by the policy. Learners also have to be included. The interference with existing structures, councils and initiatives could result in political obstacles. Stakeholders that have high legitimacy in their country should be identified, as well as those who have a strong power of mobilisation and willingness to collaborate. LLLP members’ members could help a lot with the process and members would put forward relevant key contacts in their countries whom LLLP could meet and negotiate with. The 2012 study showed that relying on existing networks is the best way to launch such an initiative because they already know potential partners and would easily mobilise stakeholders. That is why, from the beginning, it is key to develop shared ownership of local, regional and national stakeholders of the platform and of the understanding of the lifelong learning concept. In some EU member states there might be little interest in EU issues or the lack of support and interest of setting up a platform might seem discouraging. There is also a strong need to avoid making EU cooperation in education and training seem patronising.

Administrative issues: Before setting up a platform, for a long time, the cluster and network will remain informal. Different countries have different governance structures.

The initiative could be launched in one or a limited number of pilot countries by a consortium based on a plan for joint work and activities that needs to be discussed with a few and then suggested to a wider group, using the experience gained from



the LLL-HUB project and the methodology used (LLL-LABS, LLL-FORUMS, LLL-AGORA). National key contacts have to be identified, they must share the same vision, be committed and interested enough to take the lead in setting up a national platform and willing to invest time and efforts in making it a sustainable initiative.

b. Ownership

It is important that national stakeholders develop ownership of the concept to ensure the legitimacy of the initiative. Setting up such a platform is a process that will take time before gaining mutual trust. The pilot project must include a wide diversity of stakeholders. Even if stakeholders must develop an overall common understanding, it should not prevent all diverse opinions to be expressed, hence enhancing constructive and fruitful dialogue and debates. Also, the platform should include learners' voices as main beneficiaries of education and training policies. The process of setting up such a platform should therefore involve all stakeholders of grass-root levels, not to be seen as imposed through a top-down approach. The platform could include representatives from each educational sector (primary and secondary level, higher education, adult education, VET, non-formal education, training businesses, human resources...) appointed by the organisation representing the branch⁵³.

c. Ensuring the sustainability

An option could be to advocate for an appropriate European call for proposals under Erasmus+ or similar programmes to support the activities of the national platforms with prior parallel fundraising efforts to ensure co-funding. The platforms should adopt a clear target to ensure members are committed to reach a specific policy impact (campaigning mode). It can be a response to a particular EU initiative (such as Paris declaration) or as a follow up of main policy priorities already highlighted in the LLL-HUB comparative report. The Platform would work on the regional or national level depending on where the education competence lies and its structure could then be formalised later, which was the case with LLLP.

For various reasons, the LLL-HUB project showed that partners face challenges in sustaining the work of a network for its transformation into a more formalised and permanent structure; these reasons can be related to the core organisational mission and activities of the partners, organisational capacity issues, lack of decision-making power or financial issues among others. To ensure the sustainability of a platform, some organisational aspects must be considered. On one hand, such platforms should comply with national legislation and cultures, on the other they should not replicate what has been done before and take inspirations from best practices in the EU.



It is a very time-consuming commitment and a lot of work to build a platform from scratch. Another potential issue might be limited commitment to the initiative or a lack of continuous investment of time and effort. Furthermore, shared ownership and cooperation mechanisms might be conflicting with leadership as well as lack of clarity regarding sharing responsibilities. Ideally, the involvement of all stakeholders would be an asset for sustainability but having a group of key stakeholders driving its activities and influencing policy would be a good start. It is possible that the initiative being new, and not yet institutionalised, just a few stakeholders will take part in it at the beginning. But there could be a “snowball effects” as soon as they understand and gain interest in it. If some organisations see other members participating in the platform, they would want to participate as well, not to be left behind the benefits of such participation, in policy-making in particular.

Recommendations in EU and national contexts

At national level:

- The platform initiative should be launched in one or a limited number of pilot countries by a consortium of strong civil society organisations supported by LLLP. To begin with, pilot projects can take the form of ‘forums’.
- The consortiums shall act as key pivots in the selected country and do a great deal of research work on LLL national policies (legal documents and implementation), mapping of stakeholders and mobilisation of additional financial and human resources.
- The audience of the platforms should initially be composed of civil society organisations from as many educational sectors as possible and they should be able to commit further to the setup of the national platforms.
- The platform should take regional contrasts into account in its analysis of the implementation of LLL policies. Regional platforms may be considered when education is a regional competence.
- LLLP and national stakeholders’ expertise and culture should be put on an equal footing to develop a real ownership of the stakeholders involved in the creation and management of the platform.
- The organisation of LLL Forums can be the start of the creation of more permanent platforms given that there is some commitment and willingness to pursue the initiative in a more sustainable way.

At European level:

- European policy initiatives should encourage and support cross-sectoral cooperation and dialogue at national level e.g. Structured dialogue in Youth (Erasmus+), European Semester national consultations etc.
- European programmes and funding schemes should support transnational cooperation, peer learning activities and exchange of good practices between countries to build on existing examples of cross sectoral cooperation and help them develop national stakeholders’ forums.



- Efforts to raise awareness about EU lifelong learning policies and initiatives at national level are needed. The EU should improve its communication and make better use of civil society organisations at EU level and their transnational networks.
- An appropriate European call for proposals should be opened to launch a national platform with prior fundraising efforts to ensure co-funding.
- The European Semester process has highlighted the need for cross-sectorial cooperation in education and training in its recommendations while running the national consultations. These practices could be used to further strengthen and make such national gathering and dialogue among stakeholders more systematic.

Conclusions

The Lifelong Learning paradigm in the European Union seems to have lost some importance when the programme Erasmus+ replaced the former programme that covered all sectors of education under the title ‘Lifelong Learning’. The previous programme was easier for communicating on Lifelong Learning and led to many studies and research on the topic in the years 2000. After 2013, there was less interest from research institutes and institutions in the progress made for the development of LLL in the EU as a whole, and each country was looked at separately. Even if the replacement of the previous programme harmed its potential for spreading the LLL definition, for its recognition and a comprehensive integration in both EU policies and national policies in education and training, many Member States are still launching new lifelong learning strategies. It is the case in EU countries (Slovakia, Austria, etc.) but even outside EU borders. The Turkish Ministry for instance launched a similar initiative called the “Lifelong learning strategy” (2014-2018).

It shows that the EU can have impact on national policies even by not having binding power in that regard. However, the idea of setting up lifelong learning platforms is not meant to create an organisation for implementing EU policies from a top-down approach only. Such platforms are very useful, as network nodes between local stakeholders representing the citizens from all sectors covering formal, non-formal and informal education, and the upper level, the national policy-makers and public authorities who decide on the public policies in education, and European stakeholders, who try to foster policy convergence and strategic guidance for the improvement and modernisation of EU education systems. This idea of national LLL platforms is very much to improve the conditions of a bottom-up approach to building EU and national policies.

Platforms are therefore a key instrument to contribute to democracy, active citizenship, legitimacy of institutions, and dialogue with civil society. Civil society representations are often the organisations that best understand the needs and issues of ‘those who are affected by the policies’ in the field of education, which is a sector that is largely managed by public actors and funding. They can be good



partners for the traditional representatives of professionals, the Trade Unions and other social partners and contribute largely to a balanced and healthy representation of interest in cooperation and dialogue with public authorities. They can bring very valuable and innovative good practices and knowledge that have been highlighted in thousands of EU and local projects.

The writing of the feasibility study is a very valuable experience for LLLP and brings very interesting perspectives for policy developments at national level. The Lifelong Learning Platform will keep on promoting the idea of setting up national platforms in the coming years and will consider the possibility of conducting an update of the study in the future. LLLP will monitor the outcomes, welcome feedback and build on it in order to improve the of data collection on that issue. LLLP is also intending to carry out complementary tasks such as to develop an LLL Glossary. The purpose being also to spread the shared meaning of the Lifelong Learning concept. LLLP will continue to advocate for the punctual organisation of LLL Forums as it strongly believes in the relevance and benefits of setting up national lifelong learning platforms. LLLP will now focus on the practical aspects of the establishment of pilot projects with all interested stakeholders.



Table of figures

Figure 1: Country of activity (n=129)	25
Figure 2: Main sector(s) of activity in education and training (Multiple choices; n=129).....	26
Figure 3: Type of organisation they represent (n=129).....	26
Figure 4: Level at which they operate (Multiple choices; n=129)	27
Figure 5: Professional background of respondents (n=129).....	27
Figure 6: Position or function of the respondent (n=129)	28
Figure 7: Definition of lifelong learning (n=127)	29
Figure 8: Definition of lifelong learning by countries (n=127)	30
Figure 9: Is lifelong learning a priority for the national government? (n=127)...	31
Figure 10: Is lifelong learning a priority for the national government? By countries (n=127).....	32
Figure 11: Do you have a national strategy on education and training in your country? (n=100)	32
Figure 12: Knowledge about EU policies and programmes (n=123)	34
Figure 13: Sources for the information on EU policies (n=119)	34
Figure 14: Does EU policies have an impact on national contexts? (n=121).....	35
Figure 15: Cross-sector cooperation (n=113)	38
Figure 16: Cross-sector cooperation by country (n=113).....	38
Figure 17: Type of organisations they cooperate with (n=100)	39
Figure 18: Public authorities' consultation of education stakeholders about national policies in education, training and youth (n=107).....	40
Figure 19: Public authorities' consultation of education stakeholders about national policies in education, training and youth by countries (n=107)	41
Figure 20: Involvement of responding organisations in policy-making (n=107)	41
Figure 21: Level of cooperation with public authorities (n=58)	42
Figure 22: Level of satisfaction about cooperation or dialogue with public authorities (n=103).....	42
Figure 23: Participation in lifelong learning platforms (n=100).....	44
Figure 24: Would you be interested in participating in a lifelong learning platform? (n=65).....	45



Bibliography

Research and online resources

CEDEFOP (2008), *Establishing and developing national lifelong guidance policy forums*, Study <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/5188>

EUCIS-LLL (February 2011), *Austerity measures, lifelong learning and social cohesion*, Position paper.

EUCIS-LLL (March 2011), *Feasibility Study on a European Institute on Lifelong Learning (EILL)*; Paper written by Antonio MOCCI, independent researcher, on behalf of EUCIS-LLL http://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/EUCIS_Study_EILL.pdf

EUCIS-LLL (May 2012), *Feasibility study on National Stakeholders' Forum*; <http://lllplatform.eu/lll/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Survey-and-Feasibility-Study-on-National-Stakeholders-Forums.pdf>

EURACTIV website (September 2017), *Europe's investment in education keeps dropping*, article by Paola Tamma <http://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/europes-investment-in-education-keeps-dropping/>

EURYDICE (2015), *Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning opportunities*.

LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM (31st August 2017) *Worrying trends in financing education in Europe: down by 11% since 2009!*, Press Release, <http://lllplatform.eu/news/much-european-countries-spend-education-lets-compare-data-throughout-years/>

SOLIDAR (2016), *Country studies 2016 – Building Learning societies*

WIARDA, Howard J (1996). *Corporatism and Comparative Politics: The Other Great Ism*. 0765633671: M.E. Sharpe. pp. 22–23. [ISBN 0765633671](https://doi.org/10.1080/0765633671.1996.10555555).

EU policies

COUNCIL Conclusions (March 2011) on *The role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy*, (2011/C70/01)

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (11 December 2002), *Communication Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission*, Brussels, COM(2002) 704 final

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (3 March 2010), *Communication on Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, COM(2010) 2020 final

EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2015) Staff working document, accompanying the Draft Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020), August 2015.

JOINT REPORT (8 March 2012) of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), 2012/C 70/05



REGULATION (2011) of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing “Erasmus for all”, the Union Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, Brussels, COM (2011) 788/2

National policies

Austria

AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT, *Strategie zum lebensbegleitenden Lernen: LLL:2020 Strategy*, https://www.bmb.gv.at/ministerium/vp/2011/lll-arbeitspapier_ebook_gross_20916.pdf?4dtiae

EPALE, <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/de/resource-centre/content/lll2020-strategie-zum-lebensbegleitenden-lernen-osterreich>

ERWACHSENEN BILDUNG website, *Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria* https://erwachsenenbildung.at/themen/lebenslanges_lernen/oesterreichische_strategie/aktuell.php

EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Austria <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2819%29>

LASSNIGG Lorenz "Lifelong Learning" (October 2000): *Österreich im Kontext internationaler Strategien und Forschungen*, Sociological Series, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna. <http://www.equi.at/pdf/rs45.pdf>

Hungary

EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Hungary <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2816%29>

Portugal

EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Portugal <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2821%29>

UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre, *New opportunities, Portugal*, Programme Overview, http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/New%20Opportunities%20-%20Portugal.pdf

Slovakia

EUR-Lex, 2017 Council Recommendations, Slovakia, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0809%2824%29>

HUŽOVIČOVÁ Mária (2014), *The Lifelong Learning in the Field of Employment Policy in Slovakia*, Dubnica Institute of Technology, Acta Technologica Dubnicae, volume 4, issue 2. <https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/atd.2014.4.issue-2/atd-2015-0003/atd-2015-0003.pdf>

UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (February 2017), *Lifelong learning at the heart of education reform in the Slovak Republic*, <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/lifelong-learning-heart-education-reform-slovak-republic>

Sweden

EUR-Lex, 2016 Council Recommendations, Sweden http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3AOJ.C_.2016.299.01.0053.01.ENG

SWEDISH GOVERNMENT (19 January 2016), *Lifelong learning should be strengthened*; <http://www.regeringen.se/debattartiklar/2016/01/livslanqa-larandet-ska-starkas/>



SWEDISH GOVERNMENT, Memorandum (2014), *A National Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning*, <http://www.regeringen.se/49b725/contentassets/c3f69b21f6e548f9903440c279d88221/en-nationell-referensram-for-kvalifikationer-for-livslangt-larande-u20144373gv>



Annexes

Table of Annexes

Annex 1 - Survey questions.....	73
Annex 2 - Qualitative interviews for the feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms	83



Annex 1 - Survey questions



Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies

1. Introduction

The Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies will also look into existing related initiatives and structures at the national level, cross-sectorial work already being done, and examine current needs and expectations. The results of the online survey will be exploited and put together into a final report. To answer our survey will take only few minutes of your time.

The survey will be open until the 28th of February 2017.

Your feedback is important!



Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies

2. General questions: profile of respondent



* 1. In which country is your organisation primarily active?

- Austria
- Hungary
- Portugal
- Slovakia
- Sweden

Other (please specify)

* 2. What is/are your main sector(s) of activity in the field of education and training?

- Vocational Education and Training
- Higher Education
- Adult Education
- Non-Formal Education
- Youth
- School Education (primary and secondary)
- Early Childhood and Care
- Other (please specify)

* 3. What type of organisation are you representing?

- Private institution
- Public administration
- Public school
- Higher Education institutions
- Non-profit organisation
- Public-private entity
- Other (please specify)

* 4. What is the name of your network/organisation/institution?



* 5. On which level do you operate?

- Local
- Regional
- National
- European
- Other (please specify)

* 6. What is your background?

- Teacher/professor
- Educator
- Educational institution leader
- Social worker
- Youth worker
- Expert

Other (please specify)

* 7. What is your position/function?

- Director
- President
- Secretary general
- Elected representative
- Staff member
- Volunteer

Other (please specify)



Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies

3. Understanding about LLL

* 8. In your opinion, people generally link the concept of lifelong learning in your country to:

- Any kind of learning taking place throughout life, be it formal, informal or non-formal
- Non-formal and informal learning
- Vocational and continuing education for adults and professionals
- Adult education
- Formal education
- Other (please specify)

* 9. Do you consider lifelong learning to be a priority for the national government?

- Yes
- No



Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies

4. Knowledge about EU policies



* 10. How acquainted are you with EU frameworks and programmes in the field of education and training or any other initiative? (Scale your answers from the list of initiatives)

	Very well Informed	Well informed	Relatively informed	Not informed	Not informed at all
Education & Training 2020	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EU2020	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EU Youth Strategy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Erasmus+	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

11. If you are aware of those initiatives, where did you get the information from?

- National commission on education
- Ministry of education
- Civil society organisations
- EU institutions
- European umbrella organisation
- LLLP Newsletter
- Other (please specify)

12. In your opinion, does the EU Member States cooperation in the field of education and training affect your national context?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- It should
- Other (please specify)





Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies

5. Cooperation activities (cross education sector & other relevant stakeholders)

* 13. Have you cooperated with other organisations/ institutions at national level? (Scale from very High level of cooperation to very low level of cooperation)

	Very high	High	Relatively high	Low	Very low
Educational institutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public authorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social partners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Companies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research institutes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Civil society organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Can you tell us more about the topics you work on through these partnerships?

15. What are, according to you, the main obstacles to further cooperation in education and training between policy-makers and civil society in your country?

* 16. Does your organisation cooperate with organisations representing different sectors of education?

- Yes
- No



17. If yes, which ones:

- Vocational Education and Training
- Higher Education
- Adult Education
- Non-Formal Education
- Youth
- School Education (primary and secondary)
- Early Childhood and Care

Other (please specify)



Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies

6. Relations with public bodies

* 18. To what extent do you consider yourself a partner of:

	Very high	High	Relatively high	Low	Very low
Local public authorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regional public authorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
National public authorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
European institutions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



* 19. Do public authorities consult your organisation when it comes to national policies in education, training and youth?

- Yes, always
- Yes, sometimes
- No

* 20. Are you currently involved in any activities to influence the policy-making processes?

- Yes
- No

21. If yes, at which level?

- Local
- Regional
- National
- European

22. Are you satisfied with the level of dialogue/cooperation between public authorities and civil society in your country?

- Totally satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not satisfied



Feasibility Study on National Lifelong Learning Strategies

7. Relevance of a LLL Strategy at national level in your country



* 23. Does a national strategy(s) on education and training exist in your country?

- Yes
- No

24. What are the main priorities, topics of these strategies?

* 25. Do you participate in lifelong learning platform(s)?

- Yes
- No

26. If not, would you be interested in participating in national/regional lifelong learning platforms that would allow you to better express your views on EU/local/national level?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



* 27. Why would these platforms be useful?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Meet new collaborators and expand potential partnerships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better understand EU/national/local policies and their impact on your sector of activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contribute more to the definition and implementation of public policies in education and training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exchange best practices and share knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disseminate information on your organisation's work and events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get information on funding opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
More opportunities to work on education in a cross-sectorial way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. Any further remarks?

29. If you are interested to receive the results of the survey please write down your email address:

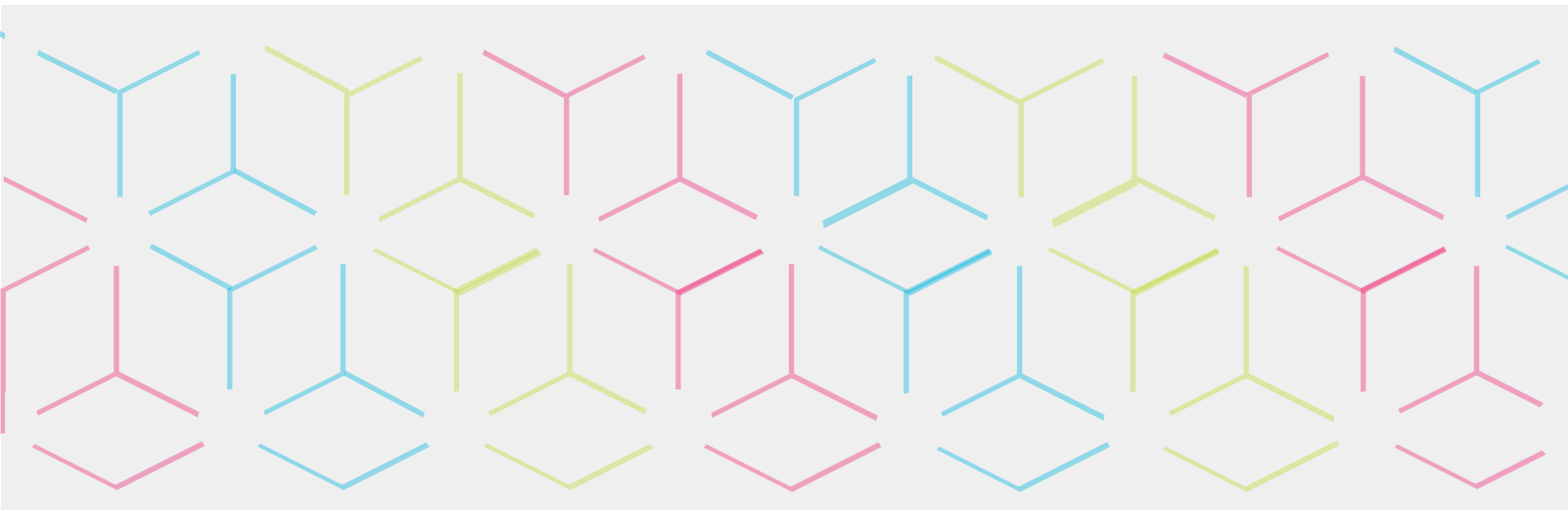
Thank you for participating in our survey!



Annex 2 - Qualitative interviews for the feasibility study on national lifelong learning platforms

- 1. Is there a national definition for lifelong learning in your country?** If yes, can you please specify it? Is this definition used by your organisation or do you have a different definition?
- 2. Is there a national strategy for lifelong learning in your country?** Please specify which one and to whom it applies.
- 3. Do any cross-sectoral and transversal cooperation between education stakeholders at national level exist in your country?** (Forum, event, council, organisation...) **If not, which civil society organisation(s) or entity could be considered as the most representative(s) for diverse education sectors?** Please give one or a few examples of organisations. Is your organisation part of any of these?
- 4. Could you tell us a little bit more about its/their statute(s) and the types of its/their activities?** (e.g. networking, awareness raising, projects, exchange of good practices, dialogue with political representatives, etc). Does your organisation participates or contributes to the work of this/these national stakeholders?
- 5. Does such organisation(s) also cover multi-level dialogue, cooperation and/or partnerships between the EU, regional and local levels?** Please specify.





LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION

10 Rue de l'Industrie
1000 Brussels - Belgium
info@llplatform.eu
www.llplatform.eu



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union