**European Civil Society Platform
on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL)**

Survey and Feasibility Study
on National Stakeholders' Forums

May 2012

Research - Lifelong Learning

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) brings together 25 European networks working in education and training. Together, they cover all sectors of education and training including networks for higher education, vocational education and training, adult education and popular education; networks for students, school heads, parents, HRD professionals, teachers and trainers.

EUCIS-LLL was created with the purpose of involving the different actors as much as possible in the dynamics of discussing and implementing the policies and actions of the European Union. It acts as a resource centre and a space for knowledge exchange, facilitating cooperation between institutions and civil society organisations. It wishes to offer the possibility for the European citizen's voice to be heard on educational issues and, drawing on the expertise of the networks that make up the platform, to bring concrete solutions for potential ways in which the decisions made by the European Institutions can be implemented. It is in a unique position to support European networks in education and training to work collectively at all levels and to contribute to a structured policy dialogue within the open method of coordination in education and training (Education and Training 2020). Such dialogue is essential for the future development of a European Union that is closer to its citizens.

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In September 2011 the Fourth Stakeholders' Forum on EU cooperation in Education and Training was organised in Brussels by the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) and the Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC). This annual event highlights a vivid civil dialogue between stakeholders and the DG EAC and is soon to become the place to discuss the modernisation of our education & training systems in line with the European Semester cycle. EUCIS-LLL is therefore a privileged partner of the European institutions when it comes to making the voice of citizens heard in the decision process, as acknowledged by the European Commission in 2009. The platform aims at tightening the links between Europeans and policy-makers so that the grassroots level has its say, and that is how the initiative of National Stakeholders' Forums was born during the 2011 European Forum. As the participants underlined the lack of stakeholders' involvement at the local, regional and national levels, they recommended setting up national forums of consultation on European strategies and policies following the example of the Brussels event.

This feasibility study is therefore the concrete expression of EUCIS-LLL's wish to make progress towards quality cooperation between all stakeholders and to involve the grassroots level in a genuine structured dialogue with the European institutions. The research has led to interesting findings: we now have at our disposal a database with thousands of national organisations affiliated with our European networks that can provide many wonderful opportunities to launch cooperations at the national levels. We also did a survey among 300 of these stakeholders that gave surprising results. As for the interviews with a dozen participants in order to get inspiration from their own innovative projects, these exchanges were already important moments of cooperation and peer learning and I thank them all very much for the time and help they offered to the EUCIS-LLL Secretariat.

Now what comes next? The idea, as presented in the following report, is to build small consortiums of civil society organisations in some EU member states to coordinate the first steps of the National Forums and see how successful the initiative is. We are already making some moves in that direction at the moment. This networking effort should also pave the way for a project that EUCIS-LLL is very much intent on doing: a Lifelong Learning Hub that would contribute to creating knowledge societies, by developing a unique online portal and gathering a community of actors to investigate and share lifelong learning policies, systems, research and practices. I hope you will enjoy the reading and share our enthusiasm for the initiative and its further developments.

Gina Ebner, President of EUCIS-LLL

1// Setting the scene: a partnership approach for civil society

A. A POLICY DIALOGUE WITH EUROPEAN STAKEHOLDERS FOR SUCCESSFUL POLICY-MAKING

"*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.*"[1]

For the first time in the history of European education and training policies, this field of action is enhanced by the EU's Growth Strategy as an essential element of success for the next decade. 9% of the financial framework 2007-2013 has been allocated to competitiveness for growth and employment, including education and training. Building knowledge societies has become the solution to overcoming the economic crisis with skilled individuals matching the labour market needs, but also in highlighting social inclusion and personal development by promoting a lifelong vision of learning[2] through learning outcomes – or, as the Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET2020") puts it, "*creating a climate conducive to creativity and better reconciling professional and social needs, as well as individual well-being*"[3].

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 providing a framework for cooperation between the Member states, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives*"[4]. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union indeed states that "*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.*"[5]

This soft law has proved to be far too weak over the last decade to ensure an efficient implementation of EU policies in the field of education and training ("ET2010"). The Joint Report of the Council and the Commission at the beginning of 2010 regretted that "*the majority of the benchmarks set for 2010 [would] not be reached in time*"[6]. The EU strenghtened the OMC in the framework of the Education and Training work programme for the period 2010-2020. However results over the first cycle (2009-2011) confirm that progress is still not there. One element is of course the level of investment that is made in our education and training systems. As the 2012 Joint Progress Report shows "*Cuts in education budgets risk to undermine the economy's growth potential and competitiveness. In the 2012 AGS, the Commission confirmed its conviction that, when consolidating their public finance, Member States should prioritise expenditure on growth-enhancing policies, such as education and training*."[7] EUCIS-LLL already warned against these trends[8].

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1 Council Conclusions on the role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy, 4 March 2011 (2011/C70/01)

2 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: "*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 counseling and guidance services*"

3 Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET2020"), 28 May 2009 (2009/C119/02)

4 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

5 Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal of the EU, no.C83 (30 March 2010)

6 Joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of ET2010 work programme, Brussels, 18 January 2010, COM(2009) 640 final

7 2012 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), 8 March 2012, 2012/C 70/05

8 EUCIS-LLL position paper "Austerity measures, lifelong learning and social cohesion", February 2011

Another element to understand this lack of results in the governance of the whole system. 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 into action European policies: "*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*"[7].

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 carved in the stone of the Treaty of Lisbon (see below), the European consultation culture towards "*those affected by the policy*"[8] has evolved over the past years to make them the essential links in the chain of implementation. In the new EU funding programme for education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020, "Erasmus for all", the action "Support for policy reform" is 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*"[9].

B. Contextualising the National Stakeholders' Forums: a legal framework

1/ Ensuring the participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the decision-making process

For more than a decade, the European Institutions have been taking steps towards a more open, transparent and participative policy-making process in order to evolve toward a more democratic European Union. This is the case of the European Commission which, entitled with the right of initiative, has become the main interlocutor for the wider public. Public consultation is, to the Commission, "*those processes through which the Commission wishes to trigger input from outside interested parties for the shaping of policy prior to a decision by the Commission*"[10]. Consultation has become an essential instrument in legitimating European decision-making, especially in a field of welfare competencies such as education and training.

After the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) that fully recognises education as a European field of action, the Treaty of Amsterdam is the first to mention public consultation: "*Without prejudice to its right of initiative, the Commission should, except in cases of particular urgency or confidentiality, consult widely before proposing legislation and, wherever appropriate, publish consultation documents*". This means mostly sending papers and communications to national parliaments on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, coupled with varying methods of public consultation from the different DGs of the Commission (mainly online public consultations and recourse to expert groups)[11].

In 2001, the White Paper entitled "European Governance" enhances participation in decision-making as one of the leading principles of good governance; the paper underlines the need for "*stronger interaction with regional and local governments and civil society*"[12]. Civil society organisations[13] have naturally become the flagships of democratic steps towards better governance: "*Civil society increasingly sees Europe as offering a good platform to change policy orientations and society. This offers real potential in broadening the debate on Europe's role. It is a chance to get*

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7 Communication from the Commission "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" Brussels, 3 March 2010, COM(2010) 2020 final
8 Communication "Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission", Brussels, 11 December 2002, COM(2002) 704 final
9 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
10 Communication "Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue – General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission", Brussels, 11 December 2002, COM(2002) 704 final
11 See the webpage of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, "Consultations"
12 "European governance: a white paper", Brussels, 25 July 2001, COM (2001) 428 final
13 Communication, Ibid.: "*the principal structures of society outside of government and public administration, including economic operators not generally considered to be "third sectors" or NGOs*"

citizens more actively involved in achieving the Union's objectives and to offer them a structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest."[14]

The following communications of the Commission in 2002, "European governance: better law-making" and "General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission", reaffirmed the need for "*a coherent approach to representation of civil society organisations at a European level*"[15], the role of which is "*closely linked to the fundamental right of citizens to form associations in order to pursue a common purpose, as highlighted in Article 12 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights*".[16] One of the minimum standards for consultation lies in the identification of clear targets, namely "*those affected by the policy*"[17].

Ten years later, here is how consultation has been formalised in the Treaty of Lisbon (2010): "*the Institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.*"[18] The treaty also recalls the importance of the Economic and Social Committee (that has institutionalised the role of civil society) and dedicates Title XII to education, vocational training, youth and sport. The emphasis there is mainly put on promoting cooperation between educational and training establishments and developing exchanges of information and experience[19].

The grassroots for this space of collaboration lie at the national, regional and local levels: coordination is the key word in achieving those goals. Gathering stakeholders and best practices needs structured means of communication, cooperation and consultation. EUCIS-LLL is the kind of structured channel mentioned by the 2001 White Paper. The initiative of National Stakeholders' Forums, as we will see below, is the missing tool as a national prerequisite for a coordinated approach to the representation of civil society, and began with the mapping of those affected by the policy in each Member State. The forums have been designed as a solution to ease the dialogue between them so that they can improve their collaboration and then participate efficiently in the European decision-making process.

2/ Applying the principles of a coherent consultation culture to lifelong

The last decade has also been crucial for lifelong learning. Influenced by the intergovernmental initiatives of Bologna and Copenhagen, in line with the Lisbon Strategy, the first common political framework "Education and Training 2010" was implemented at the beginning of the millennium to finally create a European space of lifelong learning by convergence of the national systems. The Open Method of Coordination aims at helping the Member States to develop their own policies by defining common European objectives and benchmarks as well as tools (exchange of best practices, peer learning, pilot projects). Following the European governance reform, the Commission's "Memorandum on Lifelong Learning" (2001) initiated a very large consultation in Brussels involving civil society[20] and resulted in the Communication "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" which underlines the need for cooperation and coordination in the field of lifelong learning at European level: "*The continuum of lifelong and life wide learning also means that the different levels and sectors of education and training systems, including non-formal domains, must work in close concertation with each other*".[21]

When the time came to evaluate the implementation of the ET2010 work programme, the institutions regretted that "*the majority of the benchmarks set for 2010 [would] not be reached in time*"[22], as insufficient progress is showed in

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14 "European governance: a white paper", Ibid.
15 Communication, Ibid
16 Communication, Ibid
17 Ibid.
18 Treaty of Lisbon, Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, Article 11, Official Journal of the EU, no. C83 (30 March 2010)
19 Ibid.
20 See the results of the consortium set up in the framework of the consultation "Accent sur l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie"
21 Communication from the Commission "Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality", Brussels, 21 November 2001, COM(2001) 678 final
22 Joint progress report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of ET2010 work programme, Brussels, 18 January 2010, COM(2009) 640 final

this diagram for four of them[23]:

Figure Int.2.1: Progress towards meeting the five benchmarks for 2010 (2000-2009)
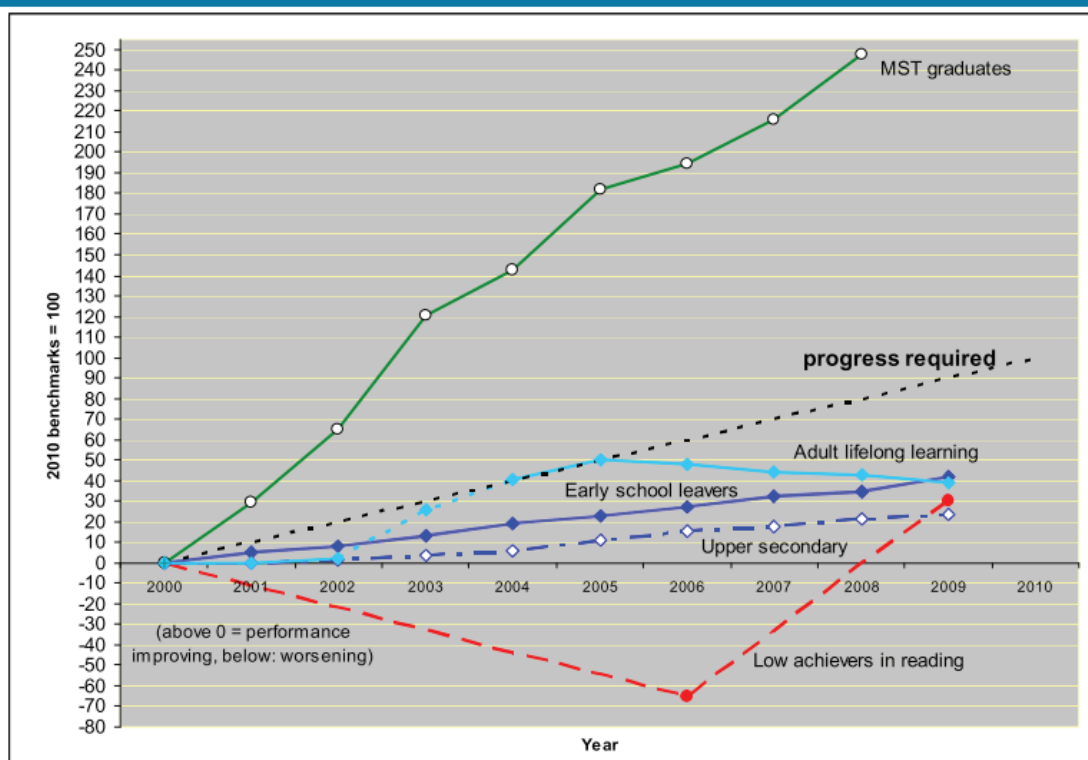
Source: European Commission DG EAC

In this figure the starting point (in 2000) is set at zero and the 2010 benchmark at 100. The results achieved each year are measured against the 2010 benchmark (= 100). The diagonal line shows the progress required, i.e. an additional 1/10 (10%) of progress towards the benchmark has to be achieved each year to reach the benchmark. If a line stays below this diagonal line, progress is not sufficient; if it is above the diagonal line progress is stronger than what is needed to achieve the benchmark. If the line declines, the problem is getting worse.
In the case of lifelong learning, it should be kept in mind that there have been many breaks in the time series, which tend to overstate the progress made, especially in 2003. Therefore the 2002-2003 line on adult lifelong learning participation is dotted. For low achievers in reading (data from the PISA survey) there are comparable results for 18 EU countries for only three data points, 2000, 2006 and 2009.

The Peer Learning Seminar that followed, decided upon by the Commission to identify wrong steps, reaffirmed a strong will to empower stakeholders: "*In the area of lifelong learning, partnership is needed because lifelong learning is a shared responsibility and no actor can achieve a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning policy alone.*" The participants evoked the difficulty of collecting the opinion of stakeholders "*on the ground*", the obstacle of "*highly decentralised implementation structures*" and the need to "*identify complementarity to reduce duplication and fragmentation*".[24] In essence, the implementation of ET2010 partially failed because coordination between stakeholders was not structured enough to encourage coherent peer learning between the Member States.

The EU's growth strategy EU2020 reaffirms in its introduction that a "*partnership approach should extend to 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*"[25]. The flagship initiative "New Skills for New Jobs" especially calls for a "*strategic framework for cooperation in education and training involving all stakeholders*" at the EU level and "*promote and monitor the effective implementation of social dialogue outcomes*" at a national level[26], while the Fourth Guideline of EU2020 recommends "*the development of infrastructures and networks that enable knowledge diffusion (…)*[27]".

23 Progress towards the common European objectives in education and training, indicators and benchmarks 2010/2011 (DG EAC, 2011)
24 Peer learning seminar: critical factors for the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies (19-21 May 2010, Vienna, Austria)
25 Communication from the Commission "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" Brussels, 3 March 2010, COM(2010) 2020 final
26 Ibid.
27 Communication, Ibid.

The fourth strategic objective of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training ("ET2020"[28]) follows the same line: "*Broader learning in communities, involving representatives of civil society and other stakeholders, should be promoted with a view to creating a climate conducive to creativity and better reconciling professional and social needs, as well as individual well-being*" [29]. The Open Method of Coordination shall be used to achieve these goals.

The National Stakeholders' Forums are one of the learning communities that think "broader" and aim at bringing together the stakeholders of the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation) among which civil society organisations and policy-makers to promote EUCIS-LLL's holistic vision of lifelong learning in each Member State. Their goal is to identify complementarity between relevant actors and enhance this feeling of shared responsibility, so that key messages and efficient practices can emerge to improve the implementation of lifelong learning policies. The forums are the vectors of active citizenship and the tools at the national level for an Open Method of Coordination based on peer learning and periodic monitoring.

C. Changing consultation cultures in Member States: new approaches to consultation for lifelong learning[30]

1/ Trends for the representation of interests: the EU landscape

Within the European Union, national consultation cultures – that is to say interactions between the state and the various stakeholders concerned by a given policy field – are extremely diverse, especially when it comes to civil society influence. It 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. Three ideal types are usually used by political theoreticians: statism, corporatism and pluralism.

Statism has been mainly conceptualised by Hobbes in its Leviathan as one of the funding 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 relevant 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[31] 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. Arnaud Tiercelin ("La Ligue de l'Enseignement") describes that kind of situation in France, since the French Revolution that suppressed all intermediary bodies between the people and the State:

> "*The Minister does not care that much about the Higher Council for Education because it is a consultative body, this is not codecision. So he de-legitimates his own official consultative organs. Those institutional spaces are basically where you test a power struggle, not spaces where you can co-elaborate things. (…) The French public function is essentially a defender of the general interest, so it does not need to ask people's opinion; this is sometimes the curious thing about France.*" (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

Corporatism is defined by Schmitter as "*a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports*"[32].

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28 To learn more about on-going reforms and policy developments in Member States, see Eurypedia: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Ongoing_Reforms_and_Policy_Developments
29 Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET2020")
30 See synthetic table of EU consultation cultures in annex
31 *EU Member States' consultation with Civil Society on European policy matters*, directed by Didier Chabanet and Alexander H. Trechsel (European Union Democracy Observatory for the European Economic and Social Committee, European University Institute of Florence, October 2011), p.111
32 *Still the century of corporatism?* P.C. Schmitter (Reviews of Politics 35,1, 1974)

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, a traditional form of social dialogue known as the "Poldermodel" in the Netherlands for instance[33]. Social partners are part of civil society but the latter encompasses a much broader community of stakeholders and a strong social dialogue does not mean that civil dialogue is developed. While civil society consultation seems relatively well organised and recognised in Sweden or Austria, this is a rather recent phenomenon in the Netherlands or Germany where public authorities tend to regard civil society as a source of expertise via increasing ad hoc consultations.

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. The central question remains how power is distributed and balanced between those conflicting influences in a polyarchic situation. The classical type is the British one, a neoliberal model where lobbies are seen as partners and counterweights of the state and such institutionalised vectors of consultation such as an Economic and Social Committee never existed[34]. This is of course the most favourable context for civil society organisations to flourish.

However, one has to be reminded that those are only ideal types and the study field on the representation of interests is highly controversial. The British model has also been described as statist for instance[35], while the case of France is keenly fought as being pluralist or neo-corporatist[36]. Arnaud Tiercelin, who has been working in civil society for years[37], explains how civil society had to organise itself to weigh on the policy-making process since consultation mechanisms are strictly framed and informal lobbying is not seen as natural:

> *"The issue of representativeness and legitimacy of consultative bodies appointed by the government is a problem. Faced with those bodies, civil society got auto-organised to empower a collective voice because it does not want to be instrumentalised by the Ministry, without having a legal status. This is a logic of power struggle in the street, of media visibility, of capacity to structure the networks of actors that count. It is a lobbying strategy, not like the long, structured dialogue in Germany. But there is a difference with classical lobbying cultures: in France, there is a spontaneous mistrust in instituted frameworks. There is always a bit of anti-state culture in the French civil society."* (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

Besides, this typology is in perpetual mutation with the enlargement of the European Union. The national contributors to the European Union Democracy Observatory's study often refer to a **"southern" model** as for Greece, Cyprus and even Poland, the culture of which would be a mix between statism and this southern model[38]. Alexander H. Trechsel, co-director of the study, suggests that it might not be a substantive analytical category but rather some characteristics that would be sometimes associated with southern countries. It seems to refer to weak and unorganised civil society organisations that are though fairly politicised and close to power, participating in opaque decision-making spheres. This lack of grassroots legitimacy, added to clientelism and sometimes corruption, leads to general mistrust from the public. In Poland, the author wonders why this phenomenon is still visible twenty years after the fall of communism. The Soviet era had often an important influence on the consultation culture of young **EU Member States with a recent democratic transition. Those could form a fifth category** of representation of interest systems. The general trend is a proliferation of civil society organisations after the transition, like in Hungary where the contributor talks about a "*foundation fever*"[39], but a lack of membership due to a persistent common belief that citizens cannot influence decision-making.

33 *EU Member States' consultation with Civil Society on European policy matters*, Ibid. p145
34 Ibid, p. 205
35 *National Patterns of Governance under Siege: the impact of European Integration* in *The transformation of Governance in the EU*, Vivien A. Schmidt (Routledge, 1999)
36 *French interest group politics: pluralist or neocorporatist?* Franck L. Wilson (The American Political Science Review, 1983)
37 See details and contacts in annex for testimonies.
38 *EU Member States' consultation with Civil Society on European policy matters*, Ibid. p 31, 83, 159
39 Ibid, p.85

The EU accession generally gave a second impulse to this development of civil society, (Czech Republic)[40] especially with more funding for organisations (Bulgaria)[41]. Often, public authorities quickly provide a participation "toolkit" for civil society organisations with a legal framework and several consultation mechanisms (Latvia[42]) but decision-makers are not always willing to start enriching the public debate with civil society input (Hungary)[43]. Besides, civil society is very young except when it played a huge role in the democratic transition like in Czech Republic or Slovakia: organisations are weak, not well coordinated or implanted on the territory, their finances are not sustainable and thus their influence on decision-making is even more limited.

2/ Reflecting on a successful implementation of LLL strategies: an evolution towards pluralism?

Common trends are very hard to identify across the EU when it comes to consultation cultures since traditions of representation of interests are deeply anchored, with blurry distinctions and they are constantly shifting toward new ideal types while the EU is enlarging. It seems, however, that **the EU Member States are converging towards an increasing consultation culture with the influence of the EU pluralist vision that advocates a stronger social partnership**. Internet consultations are more and more frequent in all types of countries such as Portugal, Latvia or Malta[44], based on the principle of citizens' direct participation in decision-making. **This kind of participative democracy has been advocated by the European Commission in 2010 to ease the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies**.[45] As mentioned before, the Commission thinks that the commitment of stakeholders is crucial for the success of strategies like ET2020 and pleads for "*new approaches to consultation (…) to be developed in addition to the use of more "traditional" channels (e.g. based on social-partners' dialogue) which have their strengths but also limits as the field of lifelong learning is usually characterised by complex and highly decentralised implementation structures involving a broad array of stakeholders*"[46]. In the field of lifelong learning, corporatism thus seems to be archaic, even though the Commission is aware that more pluralism means also "*empowering certain stakeholders and excluding others*"[47], as Arnaud Tiercelin pictures it in France:

> "*Often, emerging associative movements in the field of education, especially movements for education to sustainable development, contested the fact that historical movements took up too much space in consultations. One can demand to be represented in consultative bodies, as new important actors but they are of course a lot smaller and younger, and sometimes they have the feeling that they have trouble making themselves heard compared to big, historical, institutionalised movements.*" (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

The picture is also changing in times of economic crisis. The legitimacy of governments' actions such as austerity measures has been questioned within every Member State and has awakened citizens' awareness of what should be needed to build a sustainable social model for Europe. In Iceland, a candidate Member State that the crisis hit deeply, consultation mechanisms were privileged by the government as tools for reflecting upon future moves, especially in the education field:

> "*The consultation culture in Iceland is something that we have resorted to after the bank system collapsed. The government conducted national meetings and seminars for the public to discuss what happened before, during and after the crash: is this something that we want, that we can accept? Or should we strive for a different kind of society? We also had a committee appointed by the Parliament which went into developments prior to the banking crash, including moral questions. They handed out a nine-volume report. So yes, the consultation culture is partly something that we have developed in the last few years but I think that what is also significant for education in Iceland is the kind of cooperation that we can have between social partners. Civil society is not that developed*

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40 Ibid, p.35
41 Ibid, p.24
42 Ibid, p.113
43 Ibid, p.92
44 Ibid, p.166, 116, 138
45 Peer learning seminar: critical factors for the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies (19-21 May 2010, Vienna, Austria)
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid

and social partners really hold educational institutions together. Even though they have huge fights when they negotiate wage contracts, everyone agrees on the fact that education is important. This is something that maybe other countries can be interested in." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland).

A shared vision thus needs to be developed in cooperation with all stakeholders for an efficient implementation of ET2020 objectives. The National Stakeholders' Forums have been designed to achieve this shared vision so that every stakeholder, beginning with civil society organisations, can have a global picture of ET2020 and the tools to discuss and participate in its implementation. The main challenge here is to set up such forums, and then perhaps some platforms on lifelong learning in countries instilled with such different consultation cultures. In a context where pluralism and open competition between civil society organisations and other stakeholders seem to prevail more and more, the solution may be – as we will see in the feasibility study – not to build a hundredth platform that would have to gain legitimacy for years with stakeholders and public authorities. The idea would rather be to start with an informative forum on ET2020 for civil society organisations and then other stakeholders; and at a second stage, open the debate, convey political messages and enter the power struggle inherent in our changing consultation cultures.

2// Introducing the National Stakeholders' Forums

A. IDENTIFYING NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD OF LIFELONG LEARNING

The most important question that comes to one's mind is then: who are *"those affected by the policy?"* Who exactly are links in the chain of the European policy agenda in lifelong learning? **A stakeholder is blurrily defined as "a person with an interest or concern in something"**[48]. Here follows a non-exhaustive attempt to list every actor possibly concerned by European lifelong learning policies in the Member States:

- Institutional actors:

    o **National, regional and local public authorities**: governments are the main actors in implementing lifelong learning policies but 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, especially since central governments did not succeed in achieving the benchmark targets of 2010. 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.

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

- Education and training providers:

    o **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 in action the European policies via their government's recommendations but also via their own projects/policies.

    o **Non-formal and informal education and training providers** that do not deliver recognised certificates but closely follow the implementation of European lifelong learning policies, especially since a particular focus on learning outcomes and on the recognition of various forms of learning has been made in the past years by the institutions. Those providers overlap very much with civil society groups and social partners.

- 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"*[49],** 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.

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48 Oxford dictionaries

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

- The private sector: in the same logic, cooperation with the business world should be reinforced in the field of education and training, so that the labour market's 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.

B. Added value: trans-sectorial and multi-stakeholders' lifelong learning forums

The next step to take then is to think about how to ensure that those actors regularly gather within the Member States to reflect upon European policies that affect them all. **How can we deepen national consultation mechanisms to create a concrete participation culture for a broad societal support in implementation?** The European Stakeholders' Forum organised by DG EAC and EUCIS-LLL in September 2011 gave rise to the idea of National Stakeholders' Forums to improve the participation of stakeholders in the implementation of the Education and Training 2020 strategic work programme (ET2020) and its four objectives:

- 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.

Particular attention could be paid to the five benchmarks that have been set up to monitor the progress made towards those objectives:

- at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education;

- the share of 15-years olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%;

- the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%;

- the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%;

- an average of at least 15 % of adults (age group 25-64) should participate in lifelong learning.

The most optimistic scenario of the initiative would transform this forum into a thematic coalition or even a sustainable and inclusive **Stakeholders' Platform** to establish permanent communication between them. Now if **a forum is "*a meeting or medium where ideas and views on a particular issue can be exchanged*"[50]**, what would be the usefulness of one more national meeting on education and training? What is the added value of a National Stakeholders' Forum?

- To define a common terminology of lifelong learning: during the peer learning seminar organised by the Commission in 2010 on critical factors for the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies, participants expressed the feeling that a common understanding of the concept was missing, while it was essential in order to "*raise awareness and communicate on lifelong learning with stakeholders and the civil society at EU and national level*".[51] The National Stakeholders' Forums would be an opportunity to convey the European definition of lifelong learning to set the same scene in every Member State for a national debate. Besides, the forums would offer the opportunity for all actors to sit around the table once a year and bring their vision of lifelong learning. Knowing what lies behind the concept for the stakeholders would already be a giant step in identifying similar or different representations according to education and training sectors or stakeholder types. Communication and reflection on the European lifelong learning policy agenda cannot be achieved without a shared understanding of the notion, verily common values.

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50 Oxford dictionaries
51 Peer learning seminar: critical factors for the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies (19-21 May 2010, Vienna, Austria)

- To structure a dialogue dedicated to the European policy agenda: the National Stakeholders' Forums would be the first space of dialogue entirely dedicated to the implementation of European strategies, presently the ET2020 that educational actors barely know, as shown below by the survey. One of the ambitions is to inform stakeholders about EU policies in the field of lifelong learning since communication is the first step for a fruitful debate on what will be the tendencies in education and training for the next ten years. The forum would be an opportunity to identify what has been done and what challenges should be tackled according to the different stakeholders, create a consensus and convey, in an optimistic scenario, key messages to be sent out to public authorities to make recommendations on a more efficient implementation.

- To improve confidence between stakeholders in horizontal cooperation and vertical consultation processes:

  o **Horizontal cooperation:** the ambition here is to make the stakeholders perceive a lifelong learning community that they belong to, 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 indeed to be exchanging practices, and giving them the tools to benefit from EU grants for their future projects which is the prerequisite to a pedagogical work on what EU policies are. The forum is about increasing the level of trust on a trans-sectorial perspective, in a holistic and cooperative approach to lifelong learning.

  o **Vertical consultation:** the forum's aim is also to increase the level of trust between decision-makers and the stakeholders, especially civil society organisations, to raise awareness among public authorities that their contribution to EU policy implementation would be relevant and legitimate. On the other hand, it comes down to re-establishing a climate of faith in decision-makers, so that the other stakeholders see them as open-minded and ready to welcome new participation mechanisms. Making a thematic coalition or a platform emerge from the forums as a credible partner of public authorities could be a successful outcome of the initiative; but this option can only be conceived after having tested the forums' popularity.

- To put civil society at the heart of the consultation culture:

  o The forum would be the first meeting of all national stakeholders of lifelong learning policies supported by civil society organisations. National EUCIS-LLL civil society members would gather within each Member State and be the flagship organisations of the forum by launching the initiative. A strong civil society capable of mobilising resources and activating a space of dialogue would convey the message that civil society organisations are reliable partners in the implementation process.

C. Positioning: a bottom-up approach with a holistic vision of lifelong learning

If the added value of National Stakeholders' Forums is now defined, how could they be distinguished from existing initiatives to gather all actors from the education world? What is their position and complementarity towards the following structures and projects?

- **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. Those 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. The forums' initiative is then complementary to the councils' but the difference lies in the perspective. The forums 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 forums, like the Estonian Education Forum presented below. But the councils are often appointed by the government, sometimes directly by the Head of State as in France. 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) is about to close (2012) as part of the wide education and training reform. The forums are aimed at recreating leeway for education and training stakeholders

and ensuring an independent space of expression for them.

- **Public authorities' initiatives:** interviews for this research have also targeted good practices from some governments that initiated broad consultation processes like in Iceland or Slovakia. The idea of the forums is at all levels similar to those initiatives but once again, EUCIS-LLL would like to see this type of mechanism coming from the bottom, that is to say from civil society. Consultation cultures are incredibly varied according to 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, those spaces of dialogue should be regular, sustainable and widely spread across Europe, regardless of the political vicissitudes.

- **Civil society lifelong learning organisations:** the most optimistic scenario would see the transformation of forums into coalitions or platforms to develop a sustainable form of cooperation between stakeholders, based on the model of EUCIS-LLL 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 or the National Centre for Lifelong Learning in Sweden. As for ad hoc events, those bodies do not always deal only with European policies – even if they use the same terminology, which is good for clarifying concepts and identifying common interests. Nor do they always represent civil society: they may be state initiatives or private research centres. Lastly, civil society organisations 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. This study gathers some of those good practices. However those experiences are most of the time sectorial (adult learner weeks are common) and do not encompass all aspects of education and training in 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 Forum'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 forums are designed to establish sustainable partnerships between stakeholders and decision-makers.

D. A SCIENTIFIC PROCESS

This report was drafted from November 2011 to February 2012. As we saw above, the first challenge to solve when it comes to launching this kind of ambitious initiative was to identify the target stakeholders. Mapping all the relevant actors concerned by EU lifelong learning policies would be a lifetime task and EUCIS-LLL does not have the time and resources of the Cedefop, for instance, to launch that kind of research. What has been done though is **a mapping of every national organisation belonging to EUCIS-LLL European networks by country, to identify all the flagship civil society organisations in each Member State that could gather together and lend impetus to the initiative**. The final product is a very precious file to EUCIS-LLL in establishing concrete partnerships across the EU between stakeholders that already share our lifelong learning values. This mapping is one of the elements that constitute the strong added-value of the initiative.

Given that the idea is highly innovative and that national initiatives launched before have rarely shown similar approaches, **academic research** turned out to be very limited - except for consultation cultures within EU Member States that have been the subject of several research papers (see bibliography). The document *EU Member States' Consultation with Civil Society on European Policy Matters*, directed by Didier Chabanet and Alexander H. Trechsel (European Union Democracy Observatory) for the European Economic and Social Committee in 2011 has been very helpful. As for the Forums' organisation in itself, a precious resource was found: the Cedefop brochure '*Establishing and developing national lifelong guidance policy forums'* (2008). It was designed as a manual for policy-makers and stakeholders and has been very inspiring to set up our own feasibility study since the consultation process was very much like our forums. As for the rest, the best material was to be found in the stakeholders' experiences themselves and we led **a sociological investigation to gather quantitative and qualitative data.**

The idea was first to launch **a survey aimed at all member organisations of EUCIS-LLL**[52] to ask them about lifelong learning, European and national education policies and consultation cultures, the idea of national forums, etc. The aim was to obtain an objective vision of civil society on those themes to feed this study with quantitative research material on the feasibility on national forums and platforms. When we closed the survey, 293 stakeholders had participated through 22 European networks. More information on the process, the feedback and the results is to be found in the following section.

The second part of the study provides content about the organisational aspect of the forums and **more qualitative feedback (interviews)** was needed to give substance and credibility to the initiative. The main difficulty was in selecting good practices with similar aspects to our idea inasmuch as it is a very innovative initiative and existing structures of consultation differ greatly from our forums. Yet what appeared in the first place to be a methodological weakness turned out to be beneficial for the report: the voices of many different kinds of stakeholders can be heard in this research, from public authorities to civil society organisations, from EU project coordinators to event organisers, etc. All bring new advice to the feasibility study on different topics (funding, organisation, content…). We focused on practices that:

- share the European definition of lifelong learning
- involve many kinds of stakeholders
- have been designed in a spirit of cooperation or participation
- have organised at least one event related to lifelong learning (seminars, conferences, consultations, festivals…)

Thirteen stakeholders from different EU countries and even one candidate Member State (Iceland) have been interviewed by phone or sometimes face-to-face and talked with enthusiasm about their experience, their organisation, the project they have run and the people they cooperated with. Their valuable testimonies have been recorded and transcribed on paper as raw material to illustrate this report.

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52 See Survey in annex

3// The stakeholders speak: their word on the National Stakeholders' Forum

A. Methodology and limits

As seen below, the survey[53] has been designed to obtain quantitative feedback on the feasibility of a Forum on ET2020 and lifelong learning strategies in general. It was initially aimed at the EU27 national organisations belonging to EUCIS-LLL's European networks, which had been previously mapped to identify potential flagship organisations to launch the initiative in each country. The member organisations of EUCIS-LLL as well as the EUCIS-LLL secretariat promoted the survey via emails and members' websites. Whilst promoting the survey, the EUCIS-LLL team was solicited by other stakeholders that were not part of its networks but were willing to answer the survey. We finally decided not to limit the participation to EUCIS-LLL member networks since the forums will be aimed at the highest number of education and training actors. Anyway, the national organisations linked to EUCIS-LLL are mostly from organised civil society but a lot of EUCIS-LLL networks now encompass a much broader range of stakeholders. This is good because the survey collects the point of view of many other actors than just civil society but it has hedged some questions, for instance those related to sectorial and trans-sectorial cooperation. The survey lacks a question on the responding type of organisation because we assumed that all of them would be from civil society.

Basic questions were asked first to identify their network, their country of origin and their sector of activity. The survey could be thus used as a very interesting tool to filter answers per country for instance and compare their opinion, say on consultation culture, to academic data. The couple of hundred sets of feedback on the study are not representative enough to draw conclusions according to countries or sectors but the idea of cross references should be kept in mind for further investigation on the forums. Perhaps there would have been more feedback if EUCIS-LLL had had the resources to translate the questionnaire and the analysis into several languages and mobilise more mechanisms for broadcasting it.

Overall, thirty questions have been asked, sometimes with multiple choices and possible comments, on several issues, the relevance of which is further explained below:

- Their concepts of lifelong learning
- Their knowledge about European and national education and training policies
- Their feeling about the European and national consultation cultures
- Their perception of existing consultation and cooperation mechanisms in their country
- Their willingness to be involved in national forums and platforms

Questions on the forums and platforms come last because the researcher estimated that several key elements should be highlighted first, coming upstream of the initiative. In that logic, the questions were ranked in a hierarchy within the following categories:

- About you (name of organisation, European network, sector, country…)
- About lifelong learning (perception in general, vision of one's own organisation)
- Launching National Stakeholders' Forum (knowledge of ET2020, EU citizenship and representation, enthusiasm about a forum)
- Launching permanent national platforms of cooperation (national lifelong learning policies and consultation culture, level of cooperation between stakeholders, enthusiasm about a platform)

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53 See survey in annex

B. Survey results

1/ Identifying the participating organisations

Over the whole network of EUCIS-LLL, **293 stakeholders answered our call** and expressed interest in structured cooperation at the national level in the field of lifelong learning. The national members of 22 European networks from EUCIS-LLL out of 24 participated in the survey. 26 answers came from external organisations (often from candidate members of EUCIS-LLL) and gave rise to hope that the initiative, if advertised outside EUCIS-LLL, could be welcomed by a much broader range of educational actors. We gathered feedback from all the EU countries but also an unexpected range of other countries, which at some point in the future, might be part of the EU (such as Croatia or Turkey) or influenced by EU policies by exchange of good practices with their neighbours (Norway, Switzerland). Country data is useful for identifying some Member States where the stakeholders would be reactive enough to launch the first pilots of forums and platforms, like in the Netherlands where DUCIS-LLL[54] has already been promoted (7.2% of respondents).

What is your country of origin ?
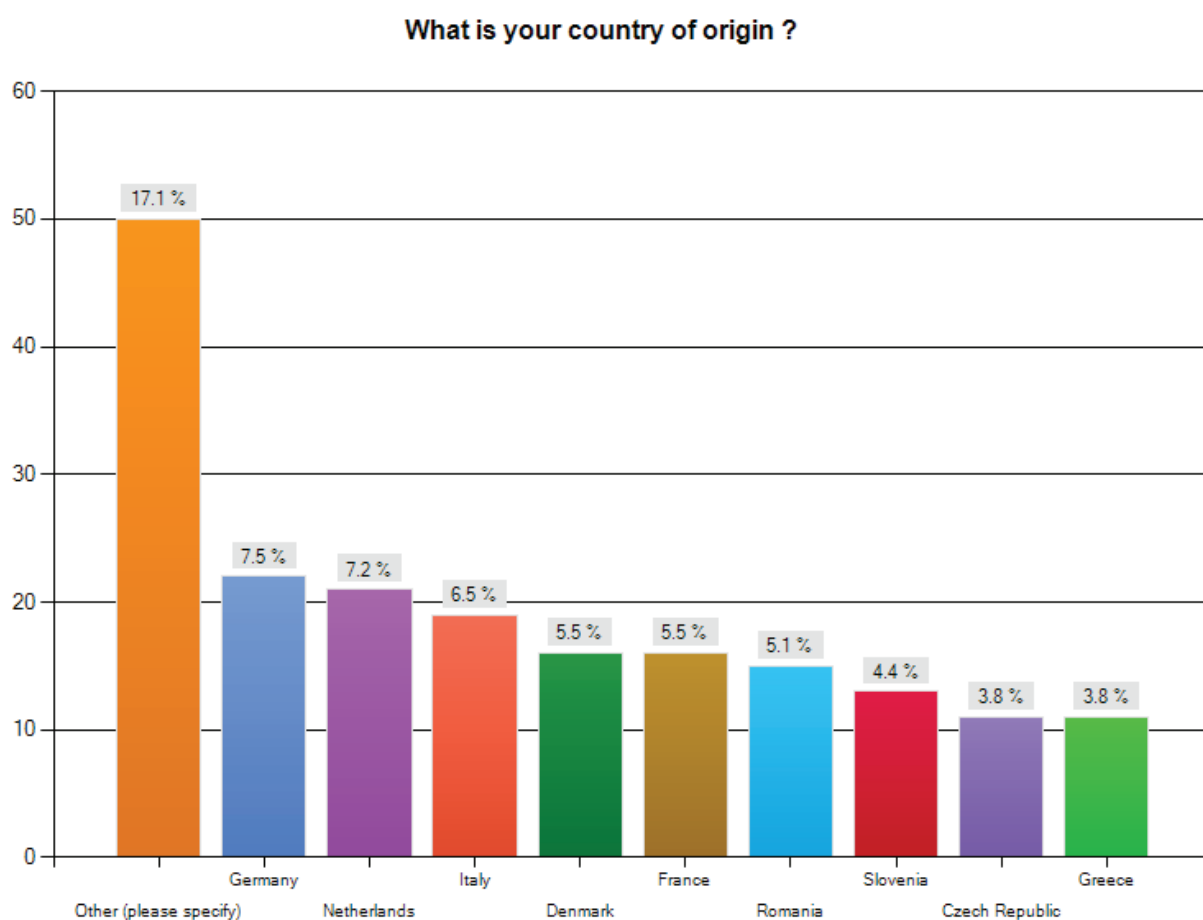
Figure 1: Country of origin (n=293)

Together, the participating organisations represent a various range of education and training stakeholders that provide exhaustive feedback for the study, even though as expected the biggest networks answered the most, such as the European Student Network (ESN) that represents a third of the results (27.6%).

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54 DUCIS-LLL, the Dutch Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning, is an initiative recently launched in the Netherlands as a national version of EUCIS-LLL.

What is the name of your European network ?
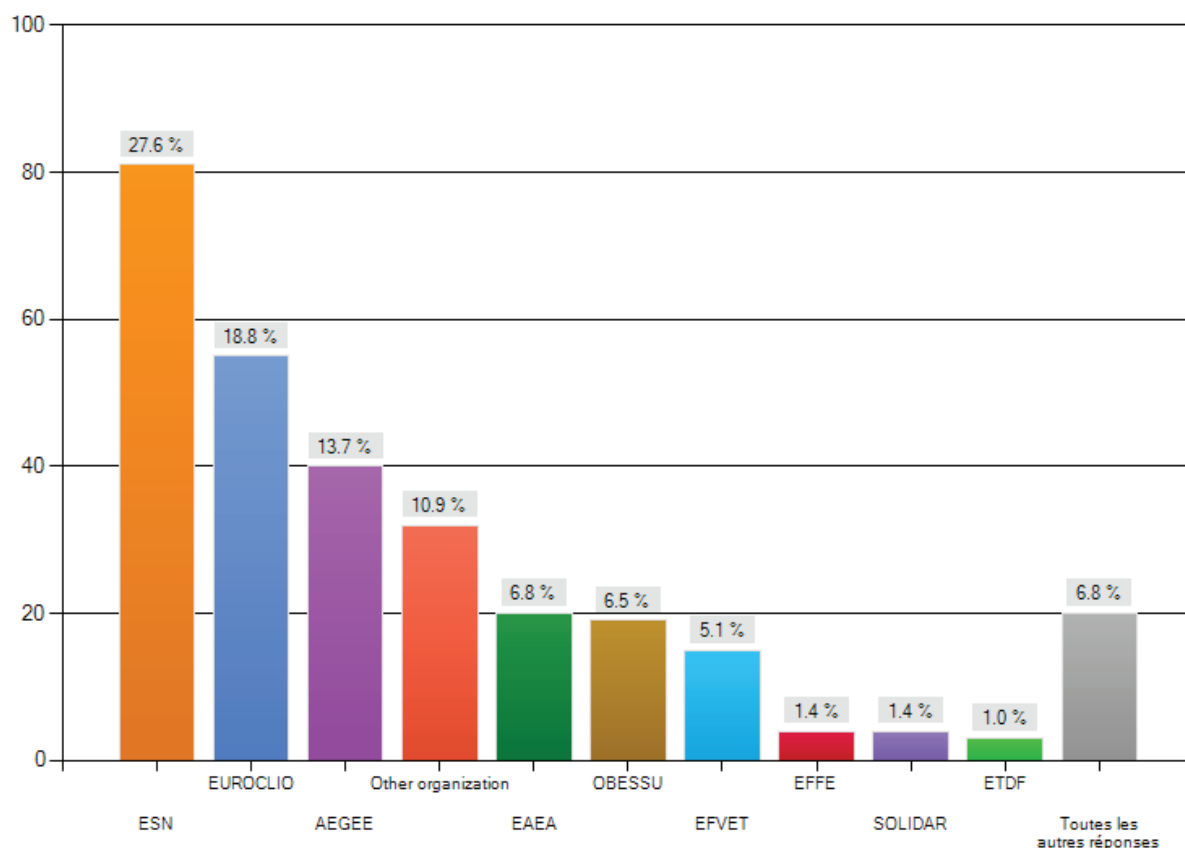
Figure 2: European network membership (only the most ten reactive) (n=293)

2/ Understanding of lifelong learning

Higher education, through ESN and other networks, is obviously the most represented sector through the survey since 49.8% of the organisations mentioned it as their sector or one of their sectors of activities. Yet the **non-formal education sector** combined with other non-formal types of education like youth and leisure time activities and adult education represent **74% of respondents**, as a reminder of the essential role that non-formal education plays today. What is interesting to note is that **only half of the respondents consider they are only dealing with one sector of education (51.9%)** while 39.2% consider that they belong to two or three different areas. For instance, 65.8% of the people saying they work in higher education said they were also working in one or two other fields. Also, 11.6% of the respondents do not recognise themselves in the categories we mentioned and felt the need to add other disciplines in the free comments of the question, like "intercultural learning" or "learning mobility".

What is your sector of activity ?
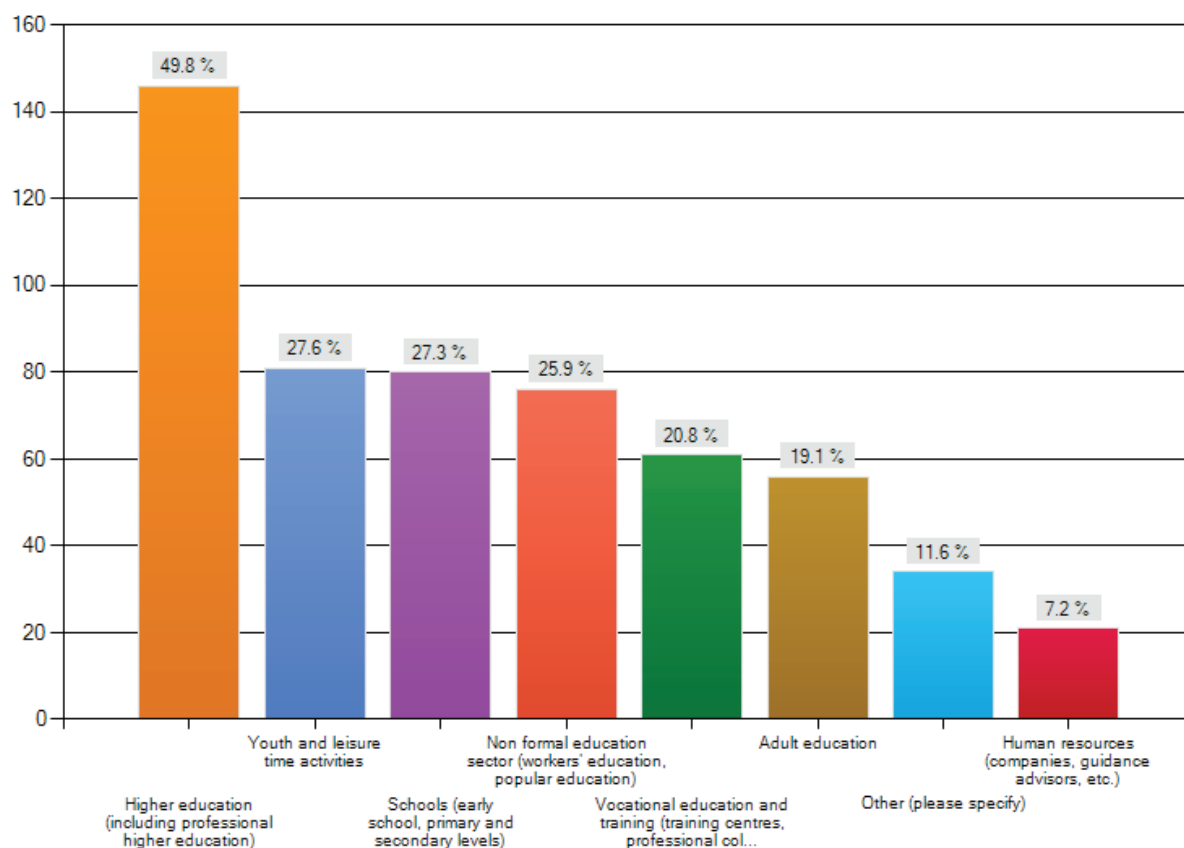
Figure 3: sector of activity (multiple choices) (n=293)

Those multiple choices have a lot to do with their concepts about lifelong learning. It is essential for the initiative, as explained above, that stakeholders share the same ideas about lifelong learning if the plan is to set up discussion forums on EU lifelong learning policies and their national implementation. One of the main sources of added value of the forums is to build a community around a shared understanding of lifelong learning. No debate can be led, no policy monitoring can be carried out and no political message can be conveyed if the concept is not clear. The fact that the participating organisations do not identify themselves with a single sector is already positive. Besides, **82.8% of respondents describe their organisation as a lifelong learning one and 87.6% think that lifelong learning is "any kind of learning taking place throughout life be it formal, non-formal or informal"**. It is very interesting to see that 40.3% of them chose more than this answer: it means that they do not feel that lifelong learning encompasses all the possible other answers and there is still some work to be done to ensure that everyone integrates the fact that lifelong learning includes all kinds of learning, even informal learning for instance. Anyway, lifelong learning is for the majority a never-ending process that does not know any age or type of education. More than a concept they work with, they see it as a state of mind, a perspective on life that needs to be promoted and defended. Here are some examples of why the stakeholders regard their organisation as a lifelong learning one:

> *"Because it constantly allows the members and target groups to develop themselves as individuals and learn throughout the planned projects and activities." (ESN Timisoara, Romania)*

> *"Because we are aware of the impact education has on your whole life and for society and we are trying to promote this understanding." (AKS Aktion kritischer Schüler-innen, OBESSU, Austria)*

> *"Because even if my organisation is aimed at a specific age range, it gives you a lifelong learning state of mind." (AEGEE Italy)*

How do you understand lifelong learning ?
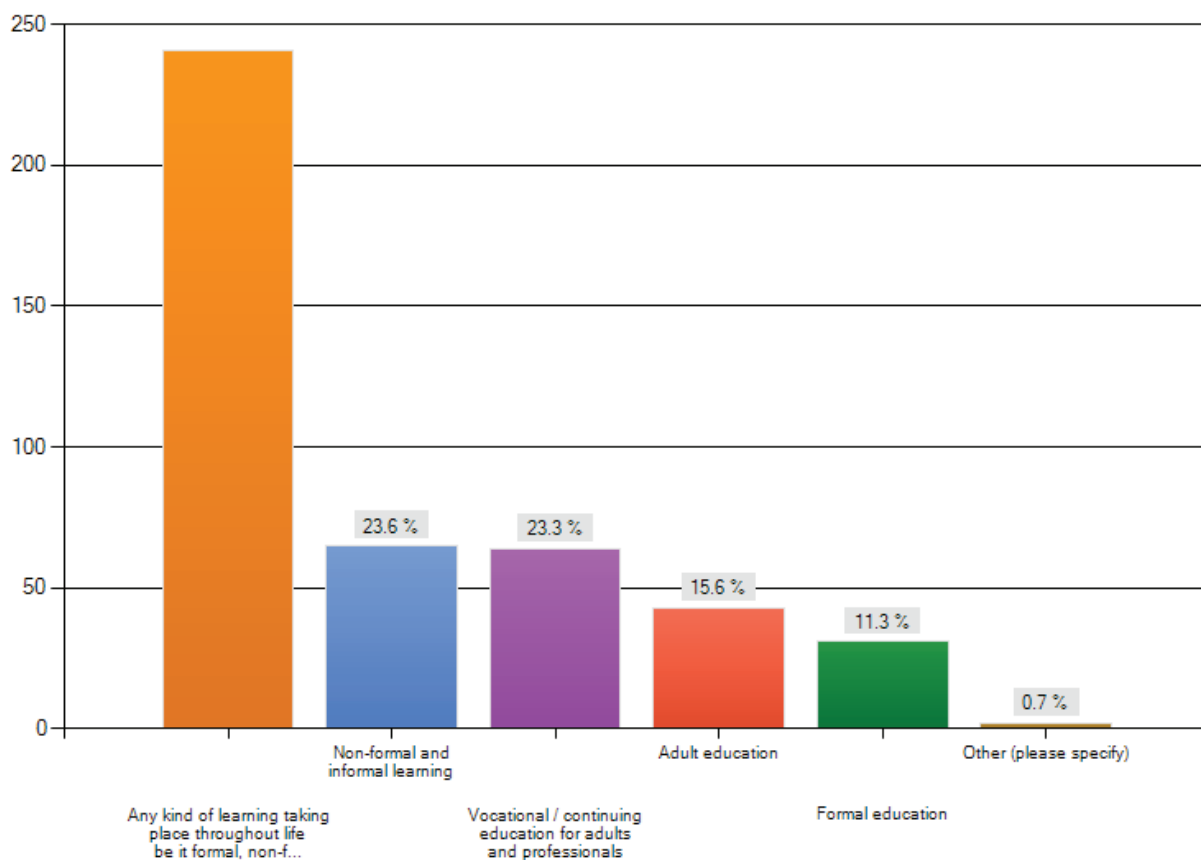
Figure 4: understanding of lifelong learning (multiple choices) (n=275)

Thus the majority of stakeholders share the same vision of lifelong learning as a holistic concept from cradle to grave, as EUCIS-LLL defines it. Those results legitimate the role of EUCIS-LLL in spurring on the forum initiative and show that there is a prerequisite of a common understanding.

3/ Knowledge about European strategies and national education policies

Gathering education and training actors around a common definition of lifelong learning is an important step. The next one lies in the evaluation of their ability to discuss EU strategies and monitor their implementation at a national level to give their feedback. One alarming result, later confirmed by the interviews, was the fact that 27.2% of the respondents did not know the ET2020 strategic framework at all and 40.2% did "not really" know about it; meaning a total of 67.4% of respondents with not much knowledge about ET2020. While all the European texts call for more cooperation with relevant stakeholders, and especially the Commission's peer learning seminar on critical factors for the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies[55], a third of those affected by the decisions are not even aware of the EU strategy that will prevail until 2020 (and we will see later on that when they are, it is thanks to their European network). Broader participation in decision-making is not even imaginable if those already involved do not decipher European texts. While there is a crucial need to give them the keys to understand European priorities and participate in their implementation, the first function of the forums will therefore be pedagogical.

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55 Peer learning seminar: critical factors for the implementation of lifelong learning strategies and policies (19-21 May 2010, Vienna, Austria)

Would you consider yourself as well informed about the "Education and Training work programme 2020" ("ET2020") ? (This is the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("open method of coordination") at the European level until 2020).
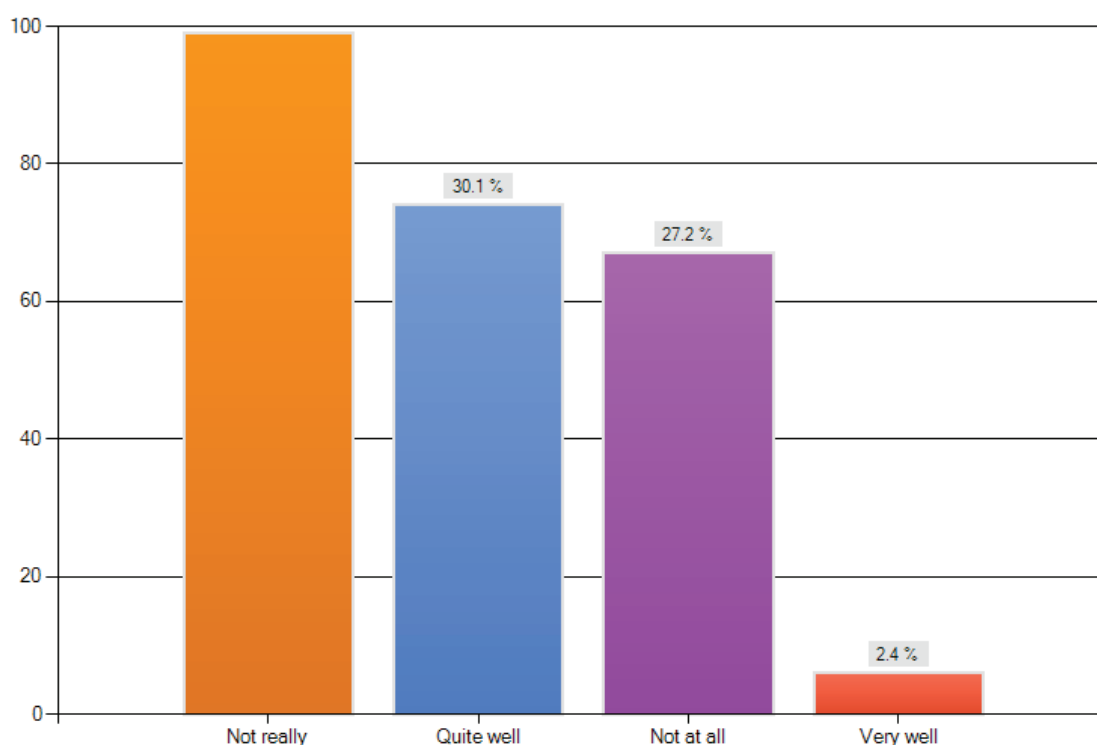
Figure 5: knowledge about ET2020 (n=246)

On the other hand, stakeholders seem to be highly aware of what happens in their own country. **69.4% of them follow national debates in the field of lifelong learning/education and training**. This result shows that most of them are truly interested in the future of education and exercise an informal monitoring on the decisions of public authorities. More than that, they are the actors on the ground, able to make an objective judgement on the national situation in education and training and give a considered opinion on what direction it should take.

97% of respondents think that lifelong learning should be a priority in their country, but 57.1% estimate that this is not the case. This slight majority gives hope for the consideration that Member States have for lifelong learning, but the qualitative feedback on this question show worrying trends for the future. Many participants feel that "*we are in a financial crisis period and the first sectors suffering are education and social welfare systems*" ("Citizens in Action", UNIQUE, Greece). There are several mentions of budget cuts (France, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark) and when lifelong learning is actually a priority, the stakeholders warn about its narrow focus on employability: *"It is important for people to be quite flexible in the labour market"* (Estonian History and Civics Teachers Association, EUROCLIO, Estonia). In the same line, higher education is privileged and other fields of education feel truly neglected: *"My country is still dealing with reforms to establish a more effective higher institution system so I don't see any other priority right now"* (ESN Czech Republic). More generally, sectors outside formal education are left behind and no attention is paid to their societal benefits: "*Unfortunately, the education policy is moving in the completely wrong direction in my country (Sweden). More and more emphasis is put on formal education and important individual decisions have to be taken earlier and earlier, which means that the road to learning more at a later stage of life gets closed for many individuals at a very young age."* (ESN Sweden) Those opinions confirm the recent concerns of EUCIS-LLL regarding

the new Commission's "Erasmus for all" funding programme (2014-2020) and legitimate its claim to keep a lifelong learning approach to actual challenges. EUCIS-LLL's position paper on "*Austerity measures, Lifelong Learning and Social Cohesion*" has indeed stated that "*in a smart, sustainable and inclusive society, the right to education should be extended to lifelong learning. The equitable and lifelong access to knowledge is seen as the prerequisite for learning societies. This means providing everyone with the means to learn in all contexts.*"[56]

Should lifelong learning be a priority in your country?
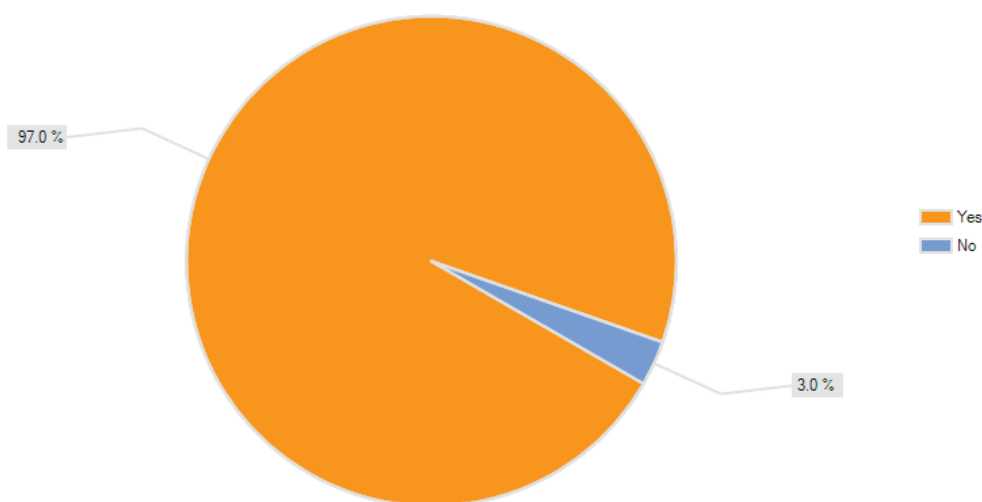
Figure 6: should lifelong learning be a priority in your country? (n=202)

These results obviously show that stakeholders not only have the same understanding of lifelong learning, but also have some common values. EUCIS-LLL and the respondents share the idea that in times of crisis, lifelong learning should be the priority. National forums would give a voice to those that promote a holistic vision of lifelong learning and help them participating in decision-making to foster an inclusive approach to education and training.

4/ Active citizenship and representation of interests at EU and national levels

A community of values - sometimes of interests - has been identified as being well informed about the decision-making process (at least at national level) and able to bring valuable input from civil society and other stakeholders. How prepared are they to make their voice heard in their own country and at European level? The survey shows that **88.8% of them would like to get more involved in the definition of public policies while 86.6% would like to participate more in EU debates on lifelong learning.**

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56 http://www.eucis-lll.eu/pages/index.php/positions/access-to-lll

Would your organization wish to get more involved in the definition of public policies?
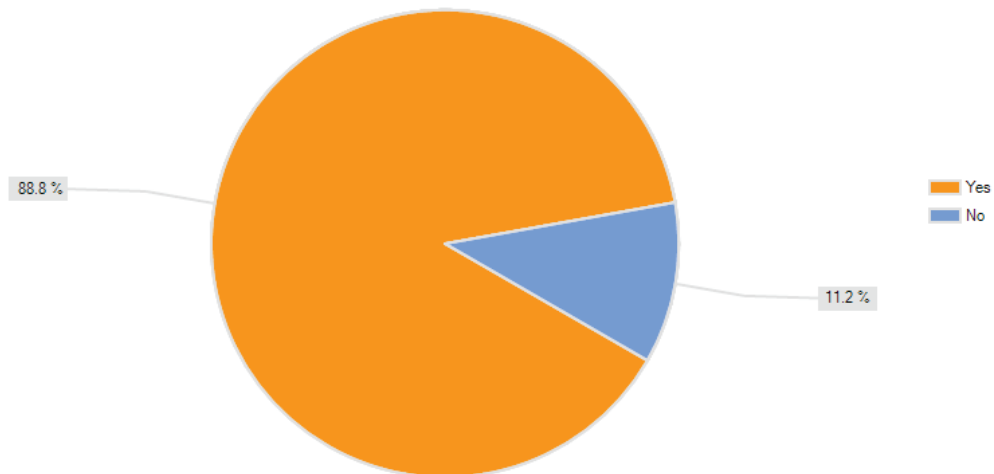
Figure 7: active citizenship at the national level (n=206)

Would you like to get more involved in EU debates?
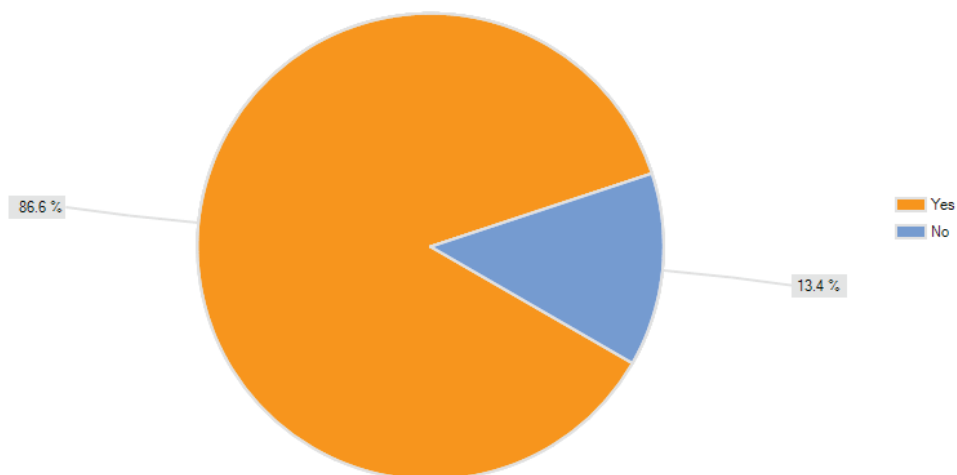
Figure 8: active citizenship at the EU level (n=246)

Those results show that most of them are active citizens, ready to get fully committed to defending their values and interests in the design and implementation of lifelong learning policies. This is a very positive trend for the design of forums and platforms. As the Commission said, "*consultations and forums give people space to express their opinions but do not necessarily create commitment. Commitment is more than agreeing to objectives, it is about investing efforts in contributing*"[57]. EUCIS-LLL's role is to enable this concrete participation by creating spaces for dialogue and the drafting of political messages.

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57 Ibid.

As for the European level, a broad consensus is observed as expected concerning the consultation culture. **To the question, "Do you feel EU Institutions take your interests into account?", 59.3% of respondents answered, "Yes, sometimes".** Given that the consultation culture is well developed and pluralism has been an *acquis* for more than a decade in the European decision-making process, Brussels could be easily used as an example to develop lifelong learning networks like EUCIS-LLL at the national level. But when the stakeholders were asked if their interests were represented at the EU level by an organisation or a network, and while they had to give the name of that network at the beginning of the survey, only half of them (53.3%) answered yes. Besides, **only half of them had heard of EUCIS-LLL (48.1%), mainly through their European network.** Thus they do not think automatically of their European network as a defender of their interests, even though a majority think that it is the best source of information on EU matters. Indeed, **when they are aware of ET2020, 68.8% say it is thanks to their European network,** far beyond other sources like EU events or projects:

If you are aware of ET2020, where did you get information ?
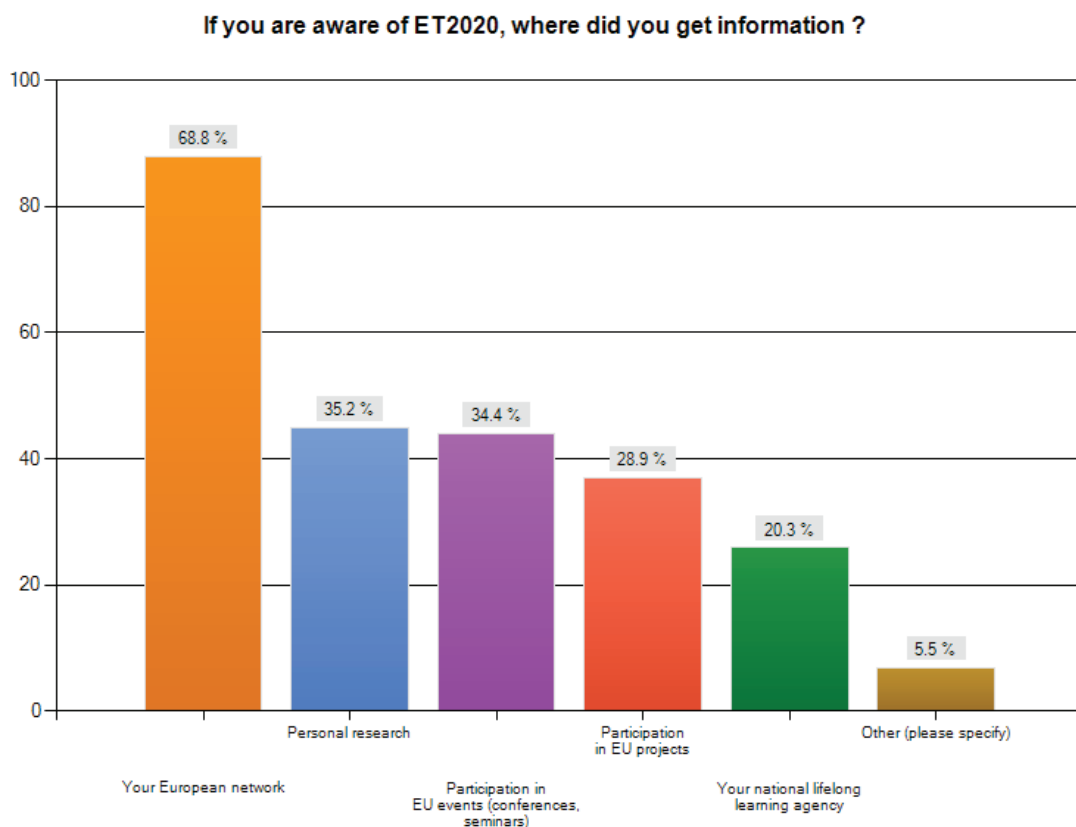
Figure 9: main sources of information on ET2020 (multiple choices) (n=128)

This result is very important for EUCIS-LLL since it means that its members are almost the only sources of information for national stakeholders when it comes to European strategies (**47% of those who responded "my European network" did not choose any other proposal).** This legitimates the fact that EUCIS-LLL European networks have some real added value for their members, and that their pedagogical role towards them is even more important than the representation of their interests in Brussels. That is why EUCIS-LLL advocates sustainable support of civil society organisations within the Commission's new "Erasmus for all" programme and wants to go further in defending their interests by implementing a structured dialogue on the model of the youth sector.

It is essential for national stakeholders that not only do they feel that their interests are properly heard at EU level, but also that the European Union is for them a window of opportunity to take part in the national decision-making game. Therefore European networks are in the best place to support the creation of forums at a national level on EU topics and ET2020 implementation in particular, because only they will give civil society the tools to understand EU strategies and influence the related national policies. They have specific added value as bridges between the EU and the grassroots level.

Room for manoeuvre has to be found in the EU but also in national decision-making processes, as "*commitment and ownership are also dependent on the extent to which the stakeholders are empowered and enabled to develop specific actions as compared to simply implementing decisions made elsewhere*"[58]*.* As seen before, 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 pluralist Member States where a long tradition of civil dialogue is established, citizens' inputs are channelled via institutionalised consultative bodies and lobbying is still seen as a rather new and illegitimate phenomenon. The huge contrasts according to countries appear when it comes to asking the stakeholders if **public participation and consultation matter for their country's public authorities: a third (30.1%) thinks they regard it as "normal" and a third (28.6%) as "non-relevant".** It is even more interesting to compare the data according to academic research: 88.5% of respondents from an extended definition of Scandinavian EU countries including Sweden, Denmark and Finland - reputed for their corporatist tradition and more eager to enlarge social dialogue to civil society organisations - answered that participation and consultation from public authorities were "normal", "necessary" or "important" in their own country. On the other hand, the study of a group of "statist" countries including France, Spain and Italy showed that 30.1% of their inhabitants chose one of those three answers to qualify their national consultation culture.

Added to deeply-anchored consultation cultures, decentralisation processes but also political vicissitudes have to be considered and the sustainability of civil society organisations' *acquis* is not guaranteed over the years: "*More than on decisional levels, it sometimes depends on the governments' attitudes. Changes in government can bring change in the philosophy of participation. Organisations working in LLL should be strong enough to at least maintain the advances given during previous governments*" (TKNIKA, Institute of Innovation for VET and LLL, EFVET, Basque Country). As a result, **almost half of respondents (48.5%) think that their organisation is barely consulted by public authorities when it comes to national policies in education and training.**
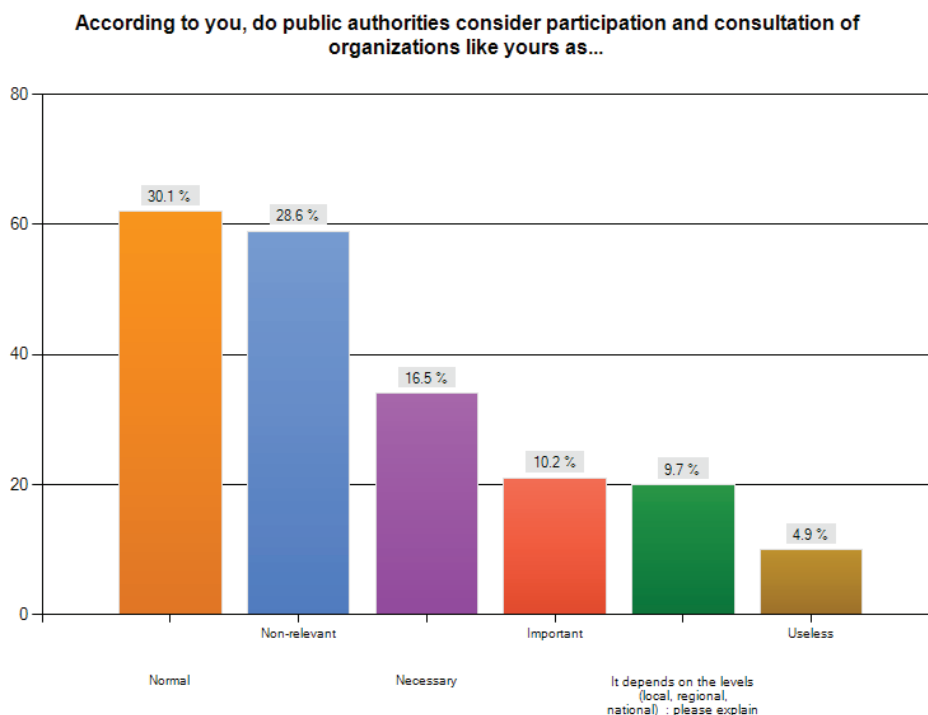
Figure 10: relevance of participation and consultation for national authorities (n=206)

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58 Ibid.

Is your organization consulted by public authorities when it comes to national policies in education and training?
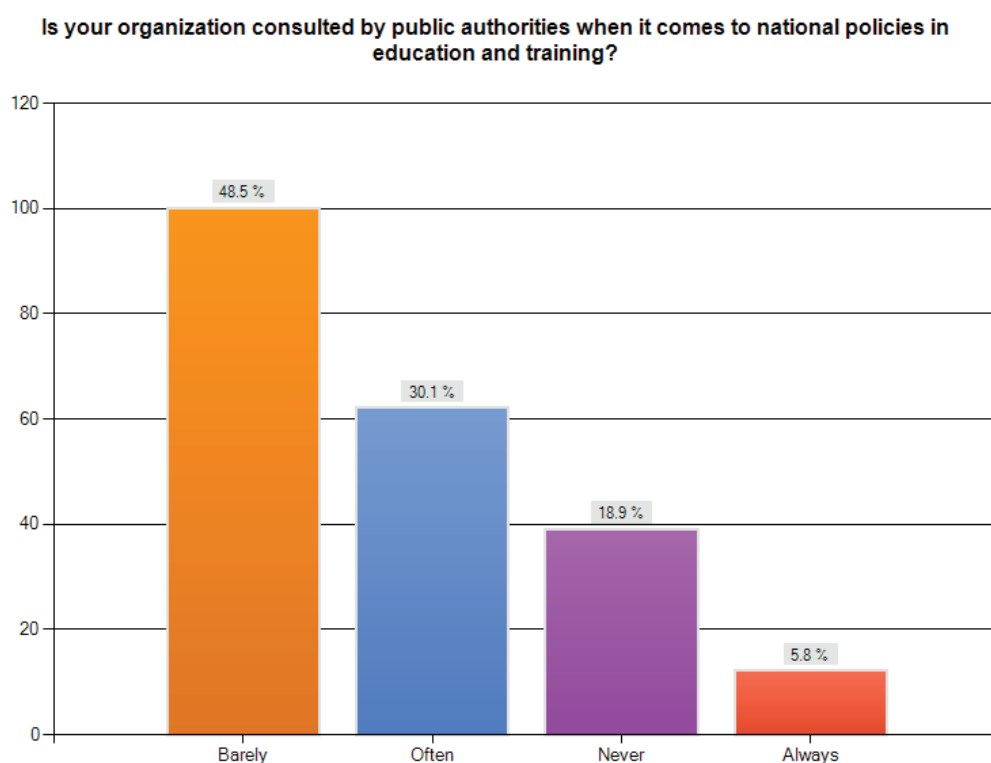
Figure 11: consultation frequency of public authorities of civil society organisations (n=206)

Most of the qualitative feedback for this answer shows that social partners are still the most listened to at a national level, as ODVB (ESHA, Belgium) observes: *"We are invited about twice a year to the cabinet of the education ministry, but when the time comes for decision-making, they listen to the trade unions."* Not surprisingly, OBESSU's student unions feel that they are fully integrated in the decision-making process. The survey shows also that **72.7% of OBESSU respondents say they collaborate with public authorities, against 53.1% for overall respondents**.

> *"Whenever the topic concerns vocational education and training, the public authorities on national level ask for SAKKI's opinion or consultation - for example when discussing and deciding on student grants or study programmes."* (SAKKI, OBESSU, Finland)

> *"We are part of the School Council of the State, and the government is obliged to consult this platform before passing any kind of educational policies. Moreover, we sometimes have specific meetings with the Ministry of Education to give them our standpoints on education."* (CANAE, Confederación Estatal de Asociaciones de Estudiantes, OBESSU, Spain)

Yet social partners and civil society organisations should not be seen as rivals in the power struggle for influence. OBESSU defines itself with both characteristics and members from such European networks are potentially being precious for legitimating the forums' initiative at a national level since they are already part of the social dialogue with public authorities, which is after all an element of a broader civil dialogue.

> *"Our organisation has close relations with both trade unions and employers' organisations and sometimes it is necessary to go that way to be heard. Sometimes there is a direct connection to the public authorities. It depends on the issue."* (FIC, SOLIDAR, Denmark)

Besides, interactions between public authorities and civil society organisations are more and more common, for instance for the design of contents in formal education: *"New curriculum in history is always discussed with the Danish History Association but of course this does not mean that they always follow our advice"* (Danish History Teachers Association, EUROCLIO). Civil society input is also increasingly taken into account when implementing wide national reforms influenced by European strategies, such as the National Qualification Frameworks. AFTEBI (Associação para a

Formação Tecnológica e Profissional da Beira Interior, EFVET, Portugal) mentions a "*participation in the identification and definition of training offers for a publication in the National Catalogue of Qualifications within Level 5: Professional Qualification*". National Lifelong Learning Programme agencies seem also to mobilise civil society quite a lot, especially for ESN that represents Erasmus students: "*on the national level, many ESN countries cooperate with their national agencies for Erasmus*" (ESN Sweden). We can conclude that even if the positive feedback shows that civil dialogue is increasingly common, neither public authorities nor European agencies or representatives should be neglected in the creation of forums since the outcomes will be aimed at the decision they take or the policies they implement. Even in Member States where civil society consultation is not the norm, traditional vectors of dialogue have to be exploited to convey the messages of potential forums.

If historical reasons and political conjunctures (like the economic crisis or elections) can hinder civil society dialogue, other obstacles were identified by the survey. **The main barrier to improving dialogue according to stakeholders is that public authorities are not aware of the benefits of their participation (55.7%).** The "lack of consultation culture in my country" (36.5%) comes second and belongs to structural motives; whilst "no real will for your participation" (29.2%) and "lack of trust" (17.7%) come next.
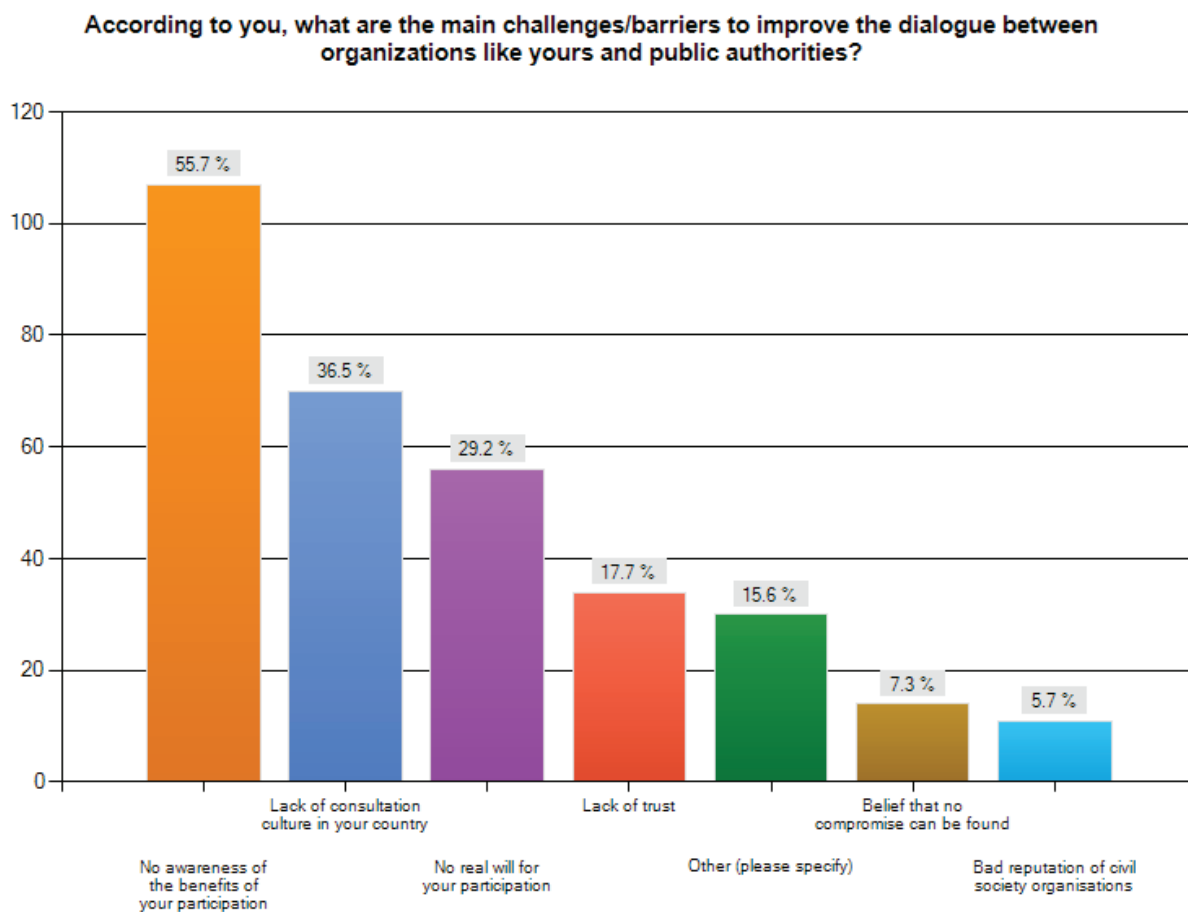
Figure 12: main barriers to improve dialogue between CSOs and public authorities (multiple choices) (n=192)

Structural reasons aside, it is surprising to see that the main challenges for better dialogue seem to lie in the lack of communication and cooperation mechanisms before the lack of trust. Qualitative feedback goes in the same direction for that question: "*too few financial resources*"; "*bureaucratic structures*"; "*time and money and awareness of how to interact the best*"; "*lack of communication channels*"; "*not enough clarity*"; "*short time to respond to consultations*"… These results are essential inasmuch as they show that what dialogue mechanisms need to be effective is simply coordination. Even though trust issues vary greatly according to the political context and both parties rarely share the same point of view, organisational difficulties are much easier to overcome than a lack of understanding and trust between civil society and public authorities.

Thus, critical factors for more successful dialogue between Member States and stakeholders do not come mainly from ideal types of consultation cultures or mutual animosity, but rather from a lack of coordination. This is the opportunity for EUCIS-LLL to introduce the forums' initiative as a facilitator for easing civil society's input in the decision-making.

5/ Sectorial and trans-sectorial cooperation between stakeholders

EUCIS-LLL is not starting from scratch while trying to coordinate national stakeholders in the field of education and training. If the European added value of the forums is completely new, **half of participating organisations already cooperate "quite a lot" (50.7% of respondents) within their own field or on a trans-sectorial basis.**
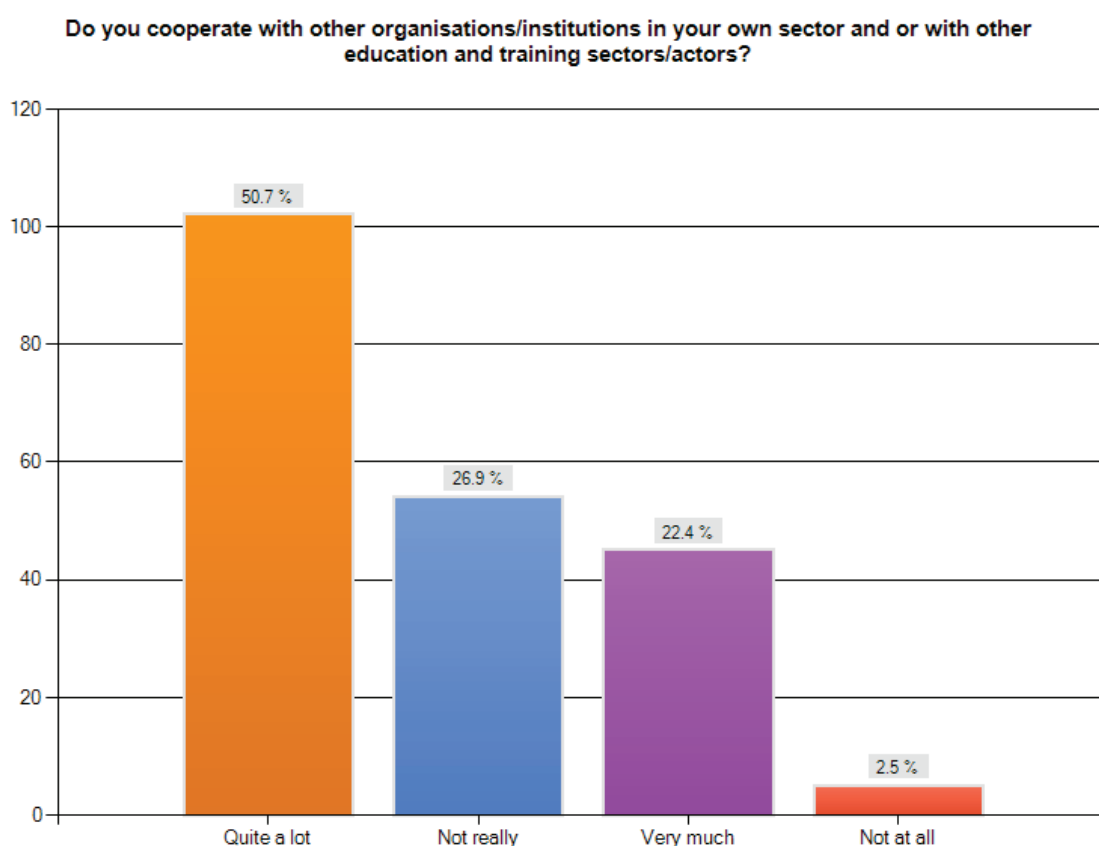
Figure 13: level of cooperation on a sectorial or trans-sectorial basis (n=201)

The survey unfortunately does not tell which level of cooperation is the most frequent and it would be interesting to conduct further investigations on whether forums and platforms aim at gathering several sectors to discuss lifelong learning issues. This is a very important question. Sectorial cooperation is obviously the most developed, as we can deduce from the qualitative feedback related to figures 12 and 13. What is more difficult to analyse is if cooperation is more frequent between stakeholders of the same kind or between different types of actors. We assumed here that the survey was not collecting answers from civil society only so the question, "With whom do you cooperate?" (supposed to analyse a multi-stakeholder partnership) is hedged.
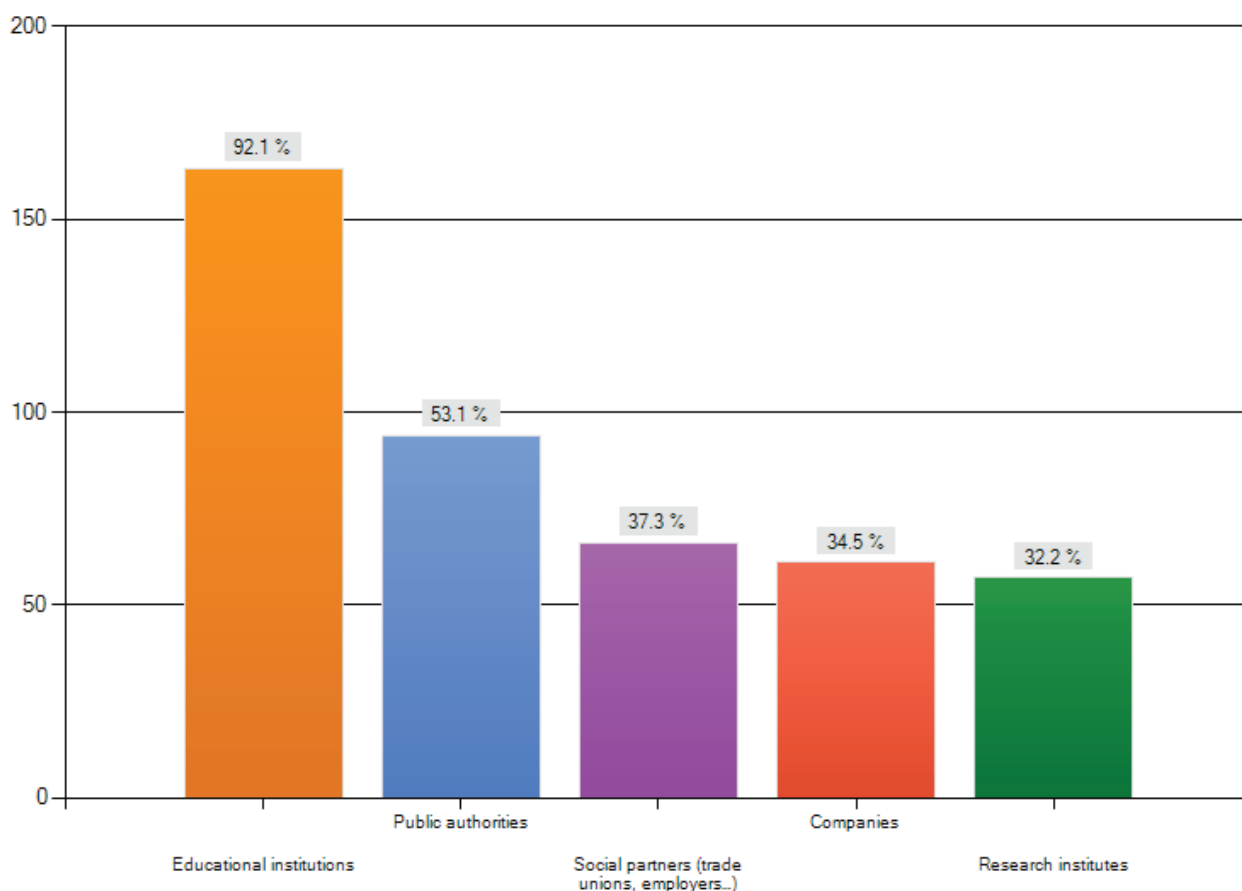
Figure 14: main actors involved in cooperation (multiple choices) (n=177)

Figure 13 could suggest, with all the methodological precautions mentioned above, **a general trend for collaboration between stakeholders from different kinds, the most involved being educational institutions (chosen as a partner at 92.1%)**. Of course, there is a probability that educational institutions were the most numerous to give this answer and that this result only shows a partnership between the same kind of stakeholders, that are educational institutions of the same level; because they are part of the same learning community, they have the same public, funding, organisation, etc. This is verified on a local basis, "*We work with all the secondary schools in the city*" (The Mount School, EUROCLIO, United Kingdom) or at a national level, *"All higher education schools in Slovenia keep cooperation and transfer of knowledge"* (Šolski Center Novo Mesto, Višja Strokovna Šola, EURASHE, Slovenia).

As for civil society, which is not among the answers proposed for the reasons explained above, we also found some good testimonies of cooperation between them. For instance, youth civil society organisations collaborate on a regular basis because they understood what mutual benefits this synergy could bring: "*On the local level, we cooperate with other organisations on a regular basis, because we need their competences and they need ours. For instance, we have an exchange with the local association of "Languages Coffee", we send them the Erasmus students we are taking care of, and they send us people who wish to find contacts with European Youth*" (AEGEE Toulouse). Thus we have proof that sectorial cooperation between the same kind of stakeholders works well.

Cooperation between organisations of the same kind is sometimes simply not possible because of a power struggle, as the example of the Italian social cooperative UNISER (CONTACT 2103) shows: *"Organisations working in our sector are generally competitors and it is hard to cooperate. However, in the development of our learning mobility projects, we adopt more and more a multi-stakeholder involvement approach: local and regional public institutions, stakeholders from the business world, companies, schools, universities, etc."* Sometimes it might be just for funding opportunities.

Academic research and qualitative feedbacks show that **social partners (third main actors involved in cooperation with 37.3%) are also used to working together in the same sector**: "*Every time we (the three school student unions for upper secondary education in Denmark) have a common cause we cooperate (for instance the limit of students in a classroom). We even have our offices in the same building*" (EEO, OBESSU, Denmark). The survey confirms this theory: **63.6% of OBESSU respondents say they cooperate with social partners (against 37.3% when all answers are analysed**).

What is slowly developing is a partnership approach between different types of stakeholders. Researchers are needed for expertise, companies for funding and educational institutions for practitioners' inputs… This is a very positive trend because stakeholders get to see the big picture and the multiple stakes of their own sector, identify allies and complementarities, build projects and share good practices. This is a start for the approach that EUCIS-LLL wants to develop with forums and platforms - even though this type of cooperation has often nothing to do with discovering new perspectives.

As shown by figure 13, **public authorities are the second most involved in cooperation (53.1%):** "*We collaborate with public authorities mainly as support for our projects, but not on a policy basis*" (AEGEE France). In the same logic, national lifelong learning agencies are often mentioned.

Companies are the fourth most involved in cooperation (34.5%), obviously also for financial reasons: "*We often get financial help for our organisations from different companies and other organisations*" (MAKOSZ, Union of Hungarian High School Students from Romania, OBESSU, Romania). "*Our conferences need sponsoring. Therefore we try to have a big number of companies, of persons helping us*" (Montessori Europe, *effe*, Germany). On the other hand, companies are structurally involved in cooperation within the VET sector to welcome their apprentices.

Cooperation with research institutes seems to be the least common (32.2%) but the approach has more to do with what EUCIS-LLL advocates between different stakeholders; it is really **a partnership for mutual learning**: "*We do research with research institutes, for example this year we are doing research with Turku University on students' employment after graduation*" (SAKKI, OBESSU, Finland); this knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation is strongly advocated by the EU2020 Strategy.

What EUCIS-LLL really aims at developing is a trans-sectorial approach, between similar stakeholders and then between different types of actors:

"*What is needed is an attitude to share synergies among organisations from different levels. I mean universities, organisations in charge of adult education, VET and technical colleges, small and medium companies, clusters and also technological centres should take part in a common forum to design policies for LLL and to share strategies in management, training, innovation, use of ICT, etc. My impression is that if everyone is working in their own forum, we are losing a lot of time, energy and money.*" (TKNIKA, Institute of Innovation for VET and LLL, E*f*VET, Basque country)

EUCIS-LLL itself started by gathering civil society organisations at all levels of education and training: if it is the voice of civil society in the European decision-making, it also represents today the whole range of different educational actors. Because we do need to moderate our ambitions if we want to make a credible proposal for the forums, they will first be aimed at lifelong learning civil society organisations as EUCIS-LLL started on the European level, and then bring other types of actors into the game.

The essence of the forums, their *raison d'être* is first and foremost the trans-sectorial approach to foster a lifelong learning community of stakeholders. This is crucial to be able to discuss EU strategies as "*the challenge is to find the balance between specificity and coherence*[59]": no sector should be privileged, especially with the new "Erasmus for all" programme coming up. A holistic approach needs to be found to defend equal learning opportunities from cradle to grave.

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59 Ibid.

6/ Launching National Stakeholders' Forums on EU lifelong learning strategies

So far the survey has proved several elements:

- **The stakeholders have the same understanding of lifelong learning (LLL)**
- **But they need coordinated consultation mechanisms to express their ideas about LLL**

- **They are already monitoring education and training national policies**
- **But they need more information on EU LLL strategies**

- **They are already cooperating within their own sector**
- **But they need to foster a trans-sectorial vision of LLL**

The forums and platforms designed by EUCIS-LLL have been thought to fulfil those needs. As a first step, EUCIS-LLL will focus on the implementation of annual forums on a national level to evaluate the number of people interested, the EU added value and the possible impact on consultation cultures, etc. If the forums are a success, more permanent platforms of cooperation may be set up. EUCIS-LLL already tried to measure the stakeholders' enthusiasm throughout the survey. As a matter of fact, **88.2% of the respondents would be interested in the forums and 67.1% would be ready to be an active partner of a general consortium to organise them**, which is very promising.

Would you be interested in participating in national/regional consultation forums that would allow you to express your views on the EU "Education and Training work programme" ("ET2020") and its concrete implementation at the national level?

88.2 %   11.8 %

- Yes
- No
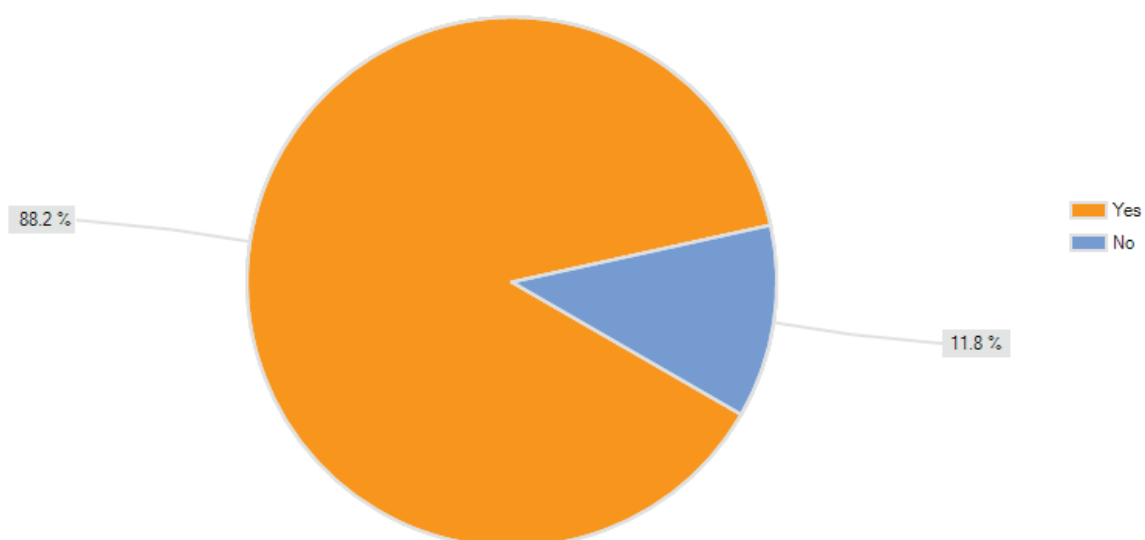
Figure 15: enthusiasm about a National Stakeholders' Forum (n=246)

Then we tried to suggest an exhaustive list of general benefits of the forums for the stakeholders and the results were also very satisfactory. **All the reasons mentioned were found "very useful" or "quite useful" with a large majority.**
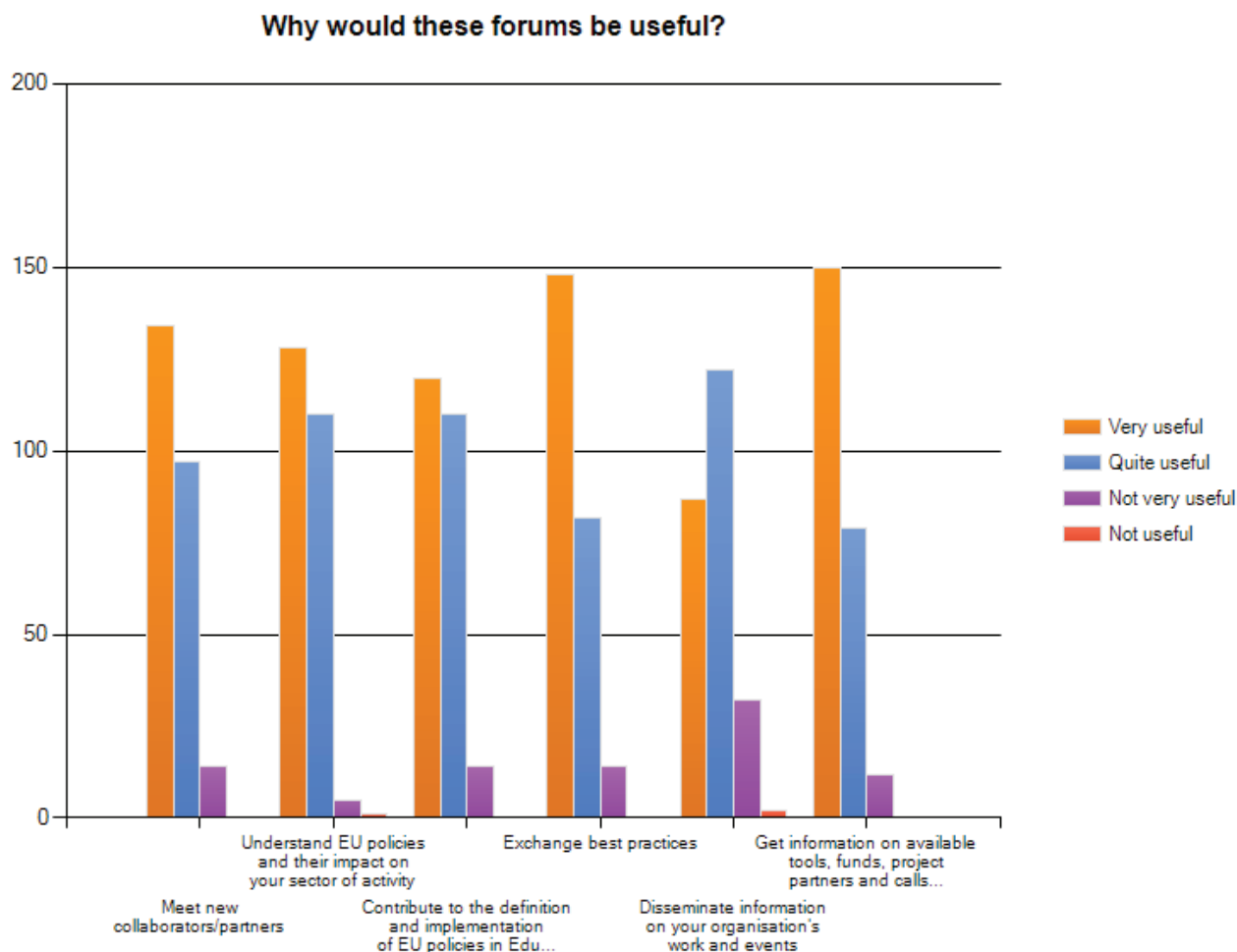
Figure 16: useful reasons for a National Stakeholders' Forum (multiple choices) (n=177)

The least popular proposal (very useful at 35.8%) was surprisingly the one suggesting that the stakeholders could disseminate information on their organisation's work and events. It seems that their willingness to see that kind of forum implemented is more driven by real intentions of learning and cooperation than opportunism. **Getting information on EU policies (very useful at 52.5%) and contributing to their definition and implementation (very useful at 49.2%) are not very popular either:** we have to take into account that the initial approach of the initiative might not be adapted to the reality of the stakeholders' real needs. Indeed, it seems that they do not want to come to be given a lesson on the European Union or even try to influence their implementation, especially when they do "not really" or "not at all" know about the ET2020 strategy (understanding of and influence on EU policies are for them only "quite useful"). The lobbying perspective is not theirs; in fact**, they are interested the most in getting information on available tools, funds, project partners and calls for proposals (very useful at 62.2%).** Those results lead to the conclusion that the European level is very much synonymous with funding opportunities, far more than a support for the organisations to become watchdogs in their country. Their main concern is naturally the sustainability of their organisation, as pointed out by the civil society coalition that reacted to the "Erasmus for all" programme and some national organisations through the survey like Montessori Europe (*effe*) in Germany: "*We often try to get money out of the Jean Monnet Programme. It is impossible but we do not know why and get no help. Because we are working as a non profit organisation we do not have the manpower to do all this work by ourselves.*"

The second most popular argument for participating in the forums would be an exchange of best practices (very useful at 60.7%), which confirms the idea that stakeholders want peer learning, not activism. Added to a context of incredible contrasts between EU consultation cultures, conveying political messages is thus probably not realistic.

Further reflection has to be conducted on the content and the organisation of potential forums. A project-based approach seems more interesting for stakeholders: several good initiatives could be discussed, good practices would emerge and opportunities to launch the same kind of projects would be presented. However EUCIS-LLL does not want to lose the EU added value of the forums, which is a key criteria in the framework of any EU (funded) initative.

It is the role of the forums to make the stakeholders understand that not only can they find funding in the European Union, but also a huge amount of information and resources for their work, their sector and the general interest of lifelong learning fields.

7/ Deepening cooperation with permanent national platforms

If the forums prove to be successful and sustainable, more permanent mechanisms of cooperation may be set up between civil society organisations of all fields of education and training and all other interested parties. That would mean continuous exchanges of information and practice over the year and thus more important funding (while the forums would almost not need financial support), a different organisation (a permanent secretariat could be considered) and very active partners within the Member States. This last element is crucial since getting involved once a year and providing regular substantial outcomes is a very different thing. **It is very positive to observe that stakeholders are as enthusiastic about the platforms as they are about the forums, since 95.1% of them think that they would be useful.**
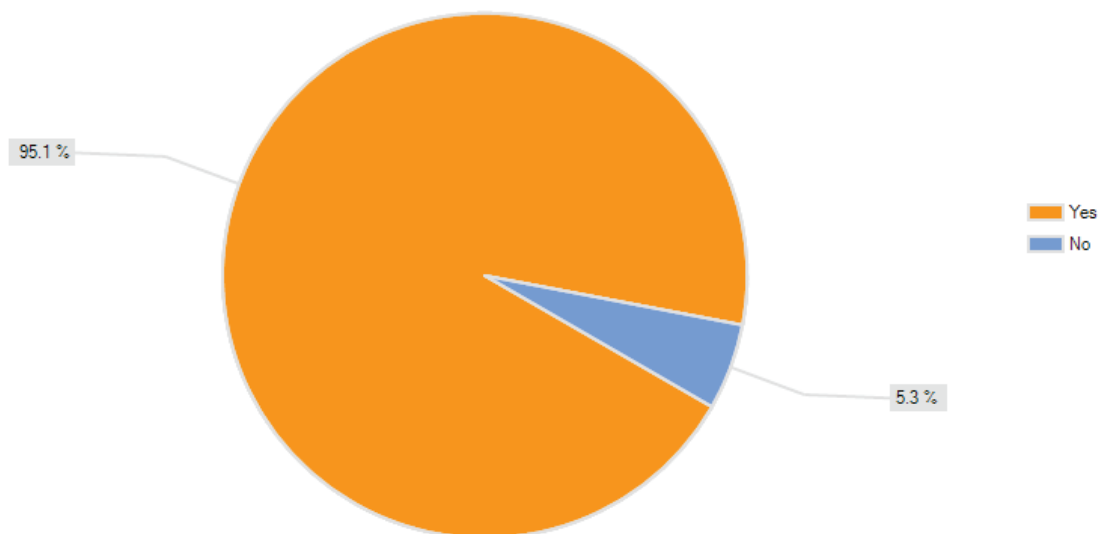
Figure 17: enthusiasm about National Stakeholders' Platforms (n=206)

However, only 41.4% of them are able to mention existing organisations that promote regular cooperation between civil society organisations of all sectors. When they do know such structures, only half of them (54.1%) participate. These results show that this type of cooperation mechanisms is not very well known or very popular among national stakeholders, as opposed to the European level with structures like EUCIS-LLL. This means that even though educational actors show interest in the platforms, they might not get fully involved in the process and as we saw above, commitment is essential for the success of such initiatives. Another factor has to be considered: the stakeholders that do know

similar structures often say that their own organisations, umbrella associations or state consultative bodies are already playing this coordinating role. In some countries such as the UK or Slovenia, adult education organisations (see Norman Longworth's and Mrs Pahernik's testimonies) are responsible for lifelong learning initiatives. In others such as France (see Arnaud Tiercelin's testimony), the power struggle between civil society organisations is so strong that a hundredth platform could hardly become legitimate. Perhaps **thematic alliances** could be more conceivable.

If the hypothesis of a platform becomes more concrete, its added value has to be very clear to avoid duplication and conflict with existing organisations. For instance, the platform could be the first and only one to focus exclusively on EU issues and to adopt a trans-sectorial approach to lifelong learning.

Conclusions

- **Key fact no.1**: stakeholders share the same holistic definition of lifelong learning (EUCIS-LLL's one), which is crucial to building a community around a shared meaning and legitimate EUCIS-LLL's role to lend impetus to the forums

    o *87.5% think that lifelong learning (LLL) is "any kind of learning taking place throughout life be it formal, non-formal or informal" and 83% describe their organisation as a LLL one.*

- **Key fact no.2:** stakeholders share the same lifelong learning values (as a priority in times of crisis): they already do informal monitoring of national policies and have political opinions on their own country's situation: austerity measures and focus on formal (higher) education are not the solution; a global vision of lifelong learning benefits is.

    o *97% think LLL should be a priority in their country but 44.6% think it is not the case.*

- **Key fact no. 3**: the first purpose of the forums is to foster trans-sectorial cooperation with a multi-stakeholder approach: the respondents are interested first and foremost in sharing practices to build solid projects, and this exchange should not be limited to one sector.

    o *62.2% of respondents find the forums' idea very useful to "get information on available tools, funds, project partners and calls for proposals".*

- **Key fact no.4**: the second purpose of national forums should be pedagogical on European educational policies in general and ET2020 in particular: stakeholders know very little about EU policies and when they do, it is thanks to their European network. It backs up the idea that EUCIS-LLL's role is to be even more pedagogical through the forums and give them the tools to understand EU strategies and enable them to be active citizens in the European debate.

    o *27% of respondents did not know ET2020 at all.*

- **Key fact no.5:** the third purpose of national forums should be increasing cooperation between civil society and public authorities: very diverse consultation cultures across Europe do not explain weak consultation mechanisms. This situation can rather be explained by a lack of communication and coordination, more than a lack of trust. The forums would increase the participation of national, local and regional organisations by reactivating their European citizenship and giving them a voice in the national debate about European strategy implementation.

    o *55.5% of respondents feel "no awareness of public authorities of the benefits of [their] participation".*

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"*I am interested in being informed on your EUCIS-LLL initiatives in a regular way and to keep in contact for further collaboration in both ways. Thanks to you*!" (International Peace Bureau, Geneva)

"*Congratulations on the initiative. It is really important to "hear" the citizens."* (Centro de Informação Europeia Jacques Delors, Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Pt LWG, Portugal)

"*Looking forward to new development in this area!"* (ESN Romania)

"*Thanks for such a great project."* (AEGEE Baku, Azerbaijan)

"*Thanks to EUCIS-LLL for doing this valuable research."* (Arbeiskreis deutscher Bildungsstätten, EAEA, Germany)

"*We would like to get brief, concrete information about this programme and it is plans for further years. Thank you!"* (AEGEE Ogre, Latvia)

"*Lifelong learning - one of the best ways to become a real human."* (ESN Czech Republic)

"*Good luck!"* (Şişli Technical and Vocational School, EƒVET, Turkey)

"*Take care and good luck. It is a fascinating task."* (TKNIKA (Institute of Innovation for VET and LLL), EƒVET, Basque Country)

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4// Feasibility study on National Stakeholders' Forums

A. FUNCTION

This section is dedicated to the concrete implementation of a national stakeholders' forum in each EU Member State. The creation of more permanent platforms of cooperation is not considered in depth here inasmuch as this is a possible, optimistic outcome of the forums that would need greater involvement from all parts. The idea is to test first to see if all the conditions of a sporadic partnership are fulfilled before reflecting upon a more sustainable cooperation. The four functions of the forum take up the added values seen above:

- To create a lifelong learning community of understanding and values

- To structure dialogue dedicated to the European policy agenda

- To foster trans-sectorial, multi-stakeholder cooperation

- To be a facilitator for civil society consultation mechanisms

1/ To create a lifelong learning community of understanding and values

As largely developed before and illustrated by the survey, the essential prerequisite for the forum is mutual recognition of lifelong learning peers. "*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*"[60]. This very broad definition encompasses all stakeholders involved in education and training but the perspective, as well explained in the definition, has to be the same for all participants of the forum. The testimonies were in that sense very surprising because, even though most of the respondents think of lifelong learning from this holistic point of view, many of them think that their government did not emphasise all educational fields in recent reforms. Norman Longworth (lifelong learning researcher) explains this gap between his conception and the local authorities' vision very well:

> "*They (cities in general) are not Learning Cities but they do lifelong learning. The problem is that their definition of lifelong learning is not mine. Their conception is just an improvement, an extension of adult education. Mine is a wide cradle to grave activity, and schools and even primary schools should be involved in preparing people for lifelong learning.*" (Norman Longworth, lifelong learning researcher)

The focus on adult education is also very obvious in Slovenia since the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education works in close cooperation with the government and is in charge of a Lifelong Learning Week. The institute has tried from the very beginning to broaden the scope of the week to make it a real lifelong learning festival:

> "*First we promoted mostly adult education (through the Lifelong Learning Week) but we thought we should be careful and promote other ages (…) We had seventy providers of events the first year, and at the time they had already contacted kindergartens and secondary schools. So those institutions in fields other than adult education were already present the very first year.*" (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)

In some other countries, on the contrary, adult education is a field that has been neglected by the government according to some respondents, as the emphasis was mainly put on formal education. In Iceland for instance, the Ministry of Education also thinks of lifelong learning as adult education but sees it as a challenge to implement:

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

"I realise that much that I have said is geared toward the formal education sector in Iceland. You represent stakeholders and lifelong learning and I think it is important to underline that we have also included representatives from the lifelong learning sector (adult and non-formal education) since the adult education legislation was implemented. We face the challenge of trying to connect the different sectors so that all learning is recognised and validated in Iceland. This is a challenge for us. I think it is important that the same people are working with formal education systems and adult education, lifelong learning. We are working in a holistic manner." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

Other Member States like Spain and Slovakia have seen difficult debates about adult education as our respondents seemed to think that adult education was barely included in the authorities' definition of lifelong learning. In Slovakia, the National Agency for the Implementation of Lifelong Learning programmes has been approached by the social partners to defend this sector:

"The Strategy adopted in 2009 in Slovakia was not focused on adult education, training, qualifications or unemployed people. For us, somehow, it was too narrow. We wanted to involve a wider audience, more target groups on the lifelong learning issue. The employers' representative associations came to us because in the document adopted by the government, their views were not respected. So we tried to involve also training institutions at all levels, higher education, further ongoing education, trade unions… We just widened the scope of the people involved. The main problem in Slovakia is that we have quite good primary, secondary and higher education systems covered by the legislation but a very weak legislative basis for adult education. So if we wanted to speak about lifelong learning, we needed those three branches." (Irena Fonodova and Dagmar Augustinska, "National Forum as a tool for improving LLL strategies" project, National LLL Agency, Slovakia)

"After the momentum marked by the release of the Lifelong Learning Memorandum (2001), Spain and its regions did not prioritise adult education to the extent that the LLL approach has never been integrated or implemented in the education system." (Rosa M. Falgàs, ACEFIR: Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research, EAEA, Spain)

The example of adult education is the most frequent illustration of the fact that the concept of lifelong learning, even though it has been commonly used for more than a decade, does not have the same meaning for all stakeholders, especially public authorities. The Icelandic and British testimonies also make much mention of vocational education and training (VET) as a sector that is often disadvantaged. In a much more decentralised Member State like Germany for instance, the focus on VET and the conception of lifelong learning in general depend on the decision levels:

"In Germany due to the federal system, the understanding of LLL is extremely split: the Länder put their main focus on formal education, VET and higher education; the federal level is more or less only involved in VET, higher education and connected research; a broad understanding of LLL as an overarching issue containing formal, non-formal and informal learning is almost missing." (Arbeiskreis deutscher Bildungsstätten, EAEA, Germany)

Thus working with the same terminology is essential in understanding that lifelong learning is a puzzle where all sectors should be included as matching pieces. Yet it takes more than common concepts to build a community of people eager to meet once a year and cooperate: it takes values. Behind lifelong learning lie beliefs in equal opportunities, social cohesion and personal development that EUCIS-LLL is promoting. A respondent from Sweden to the survey gives a definition of lifelong learning in terms of "beliefs" that has much to do with active citizenship:

"Even though ESN is primarily concerned with higher education we firmly believe in lifelong learning, emphasising the importance of learning throughout all life's stages. Furthermore, we have a holistic approach to learning, believing that the best learning can only be reached through a combination of formal, non-formal and informal learning." (ESN Sweden)

The glue for a forum on lifelong learning is thus made of civic purposes: defining itself as a lifelong learning organisation is not neutral; it supposes a certain vision on life and learning to be promoted, a commitment. Some would say that what makes people gather are common interests, not common values. Yet what the forum initiative really aims at

achieving is a community of values. If all kinds of stakeholders are involved from all sectors, divergences in interests are natural and even healthy for further debate. The forums are not about imposing any dogma but about encouraging fruitful exchanges between peers that recognised each other as potential partners. The FLLLEX project first conducted a survey among various stakeholders (learners, LLL providers, businesses…) and figured out that all of them globally had the same vision of lifelong learning. Successful debates on the concept were then organised in several European universities with quality outcomes:

"For the FLLLEX project, we adapted the European Commission's definition of lifelong learning. It is important for our self-assessment group to work on a definition of lifelong learning and for the higher education institutions involved to reflect upon it because it is a broad concept in general. People talk a lot about it but they have different visions of it. If lifelong learning is narrowed to continuing education, the scope of the students is different than if it focuses for instance on adult education. Within a university college, we found that discussion helpful because we really saw the focus groups of students and teachers commenting on the definition of LLL. We observe that their conception was too much a management, policy point of view, not adapted to the practice of the university colleges." (Margriet de Jong, FLLLEX project, EURASHE, multilateral partnership)

2/ To structure a dialogue dedicated to the European policy agenda

The eve of the European Year of Citizens 2013 is an opportunity to re-think the people's adherence to the whole European project, the way they perceive their European identity and its benefits. The field of education and training reflects the general feeling towards the European Union, as Arnaud Tiercelin puts it:

"Europe is seen more in France as an opportunity to finance actions than a political space to invest." (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

The Commission is very well known for funding opportunities and, stakeholders, whilst grateful that their projects can be supported, still complain that the procedure to obtain grants remains technocratic and not transparent enough, especially evaluations. Paperwork is seen as a time-consuming burden:

"For Edge, given that we have our own money, we do not have to worry about the deadline for getting EU grants." (David Harbourne, VQ Day, Edge Foundation, United Kingdom)

"We often try to get money out of the Jean Monnet programme. It is impossible but we do not know why and get no help. Because we are working in a non-profit organisation, we do not have the human resources to do all this work by ourselves." (Anonymous, Survey)

Since the main interest of the stakeholders in creating a forum is to obtain resources and tools to build projects and that they see first and foremost financial support in the EU, the first mission of the forum is to give them the knowledge and savoir-faire to elaborate credible initiatives, especially in the framework of the new "Erasmus for all" programme that will adopt a project-based approach and grant those that have the best EU added value. Faced with small civil society organisations that do not know how to comprehend the EU technical jargon, it is the role of EUCIS-LLL national forums to make them familiar with the vocabulary, the advocacy techniques of Brussels to convince and gain funding.

As for the political vision of EU citizenship, a lot remains to be done. The European Union is instrumentalised by national governments when they successfully implement European strategies, as Arnaud Tiercelin noticed for the EU Key Competences Framework adaptation in France:

"Europe had a structuring role when it comes to key competences: early school leaving. It inspires national policies but people are not always aware of it. Key competences are inspired by European convergence but this is not presented as such by the French Government that wants to take credit for this action. (…) People think that education is not a European business; it is not a field of competence, it comes more to subsidiarity, but it has concrete effects like the Lisbon process, the Open Method of Coordination. People have to know that those are structuring streams even though they are not regulatory." (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

"Lifelong Learning is promoted as a government policy." (Skole og Forældre, EPA, Denmark)

Yet in times of crisis Brussels becomes the scapegoat for European citizens, as a technocratic, liberal and opaque machine. The European Union is a political argument to support or blame national reforms that comes back sporadically in the debates, but is never presented as a structuring pillar of decision-making, while the EU strategies are at the source of the majority of national policies. It comes down more to some kind of fashion depending on the political context, in high spheres of debate that barely reach the local level, like in Eastern Europe where several countries joined the EU:

"At the very local level, talking about EU policies is not relevant, except when Slovenia joined the EU in 2004. Back then, talking about EU accession was a recommendation from the government and all institutions that applied for funds had to try to talk about it. Now that being part of the EU has become normal, people at the local level are not so much interested anymore in EU policies. At the level of coordinators and municipalities, it is very important because all strategies are linked together." (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)

"When you work on more classical coordination levels on education issues in France, it is very rare to talk about the Europe. People are in fact not aware of what is at stake, of what Europe triggers." (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

This situation is even truer when it comes to education and training. These have always been welfare state competencies and the European Union does not have much more than soft power through initiatives in this field. People do not see any reason for a liberal Europe to interfere in national education and training policies that are often a very sensitive issue, essential in the shaping of a national identity; or they do not understand why the EU does not intervene to help them fight important budget cuts by their governments:

"Education is so central in the history of the French Republic, it is a structuring element of the national political identity in France. There is almost mistrust in Europe while thinking it could interfere in that field. It is almost a renunciation to active citizenship. Europe is seen as much too liberal to handle education policies. Or Europe does not help us to lead a fight against a liberal government, while this is an emergency in France. Everything is reproached to Europe though, from being too liberal to being too interventionist." (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

Thus if the forums are aimed at going further than a project building facilitator, the message that it should convey to the stakeholders is that the European Union is the origin of all major education and training reforms that are actually being conducted. If it represents an important source of funding, this is because Brussels has a certain vision of what should be done to achieve a European area of lifelong learning; and this vision may not only be a liberal one but also enriched by stakeholders like EUCIS-LLL that defends the interests of many civil society organisations and other educational actors across Europe. The European debate and the stakeholders' daily lives being strongly interconnected, they should start using their right to participate in the democratic life of the Union, as one of the objectives of the European year 2013. Discussions on lifelong learning directions should be brought to the very local level to be fed with input from actors of the field and become concrete.

"There is a real problem of organisation at the national level. So there is a work for us to do, to become familiar with the European culture and its issues that we usually consider as national matters. Rather than invent another platform that will deal with European questions, the issue here is really to get familiar with interdependences. Often, communication on the European question is too technocratic. Maybe we will have to do some political pedagogical work on the European question, to provide a panorama on what Europe has been doing for the past ten or fifteen years to make people aware and convince them, make Europe their own." (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

3/ To foster a trans-sectorial, multi-stakeholder cooperation

The survey did not prove to be a good tool for identifying cooperation between certain types of stakeholders since the questions on that topic were hedged by the profile of the respondents. One could only deduce that social partners were closely working together. But the testimonies showed that even within the same educational sector, cooperation between different kinds of stakeholders was not very common simply because they were not aware of each other, as

revealed by the FLLLEX and NatLog projects:

"We found out that lifelong learning providers were not aware of the competitiveness on the market: they just stand alone, they do not collaborate with other providers (like employment agencies, sectorial organisations that organise courses). We tried at the beginning to broaden the scope and we asked the institutions to map providers in their region: that turned out to be very difficult for them. Even though I know that this is not the case for all institutions, the level of cooperation for ours was very low, they never really thought about partnerships." (Margriet de Jong, FLLLEX project, EURASHE, multilateral partnership)

"We have a national VET committee composed of chairmen from twelve vocational councils conducting work related to policy-making in Iceland. They represent different sectors. As far as I can tell, they tend to be in agreement on what is important in VET but the main problem there is that they may not possess the necessary knowledge about each other. Representatives from traditional trade may be aware of problems in different sectors but not of newer professions that have come to the forefront in the last few years in education like healthcare, social professions, environment, agriculture, tourism... That might be perhaps a hindrance." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

The lifelong learning networks tried to establish this link between several kinds of actors in the field of vocational education. The project was making educational institutions open up to different partners to broaden their perspective on their students' learning path and foster a common understanding of the links between the successive education levels they were going through:

"Transition is supporting the move from further education to higher education, recognising that it is quite a different culture, a different learning environment. The work of Lifelong Learning Networks (LLN) was focused upon supporting students in vocational education. (…) The LLN initiative was about enabling universities and further education colleges to work together in a specific area, they are also linked to local councils and other organisations in the locality. At the time when the initiative you had regional development agencies that covered a specific area, the universities and the colleges were also linking up on a regional level." (Claire Newhouse, Lifelong Learning Networks, National Forum, England)

Partnerships, however, have been acknowledged by the EU Institutions as a crucial element of a successful implementation of ET2020 and the forums would provide concrete spaces of dialogue to build efficient synergies. Whether or not the stakeholders are cooperating with their peers or with other types of stakeholders, existing partnerships are often developed within the same sector and prevent them from having a global vision of what are the actual issues of lifelong learning policy implementation in their own country. Once a common terminology of lifelong learning has been established, it should be much easier for the stakeholders to perceive what their sectors have in common, what European project they want to build, on which values. By presenting partners, good practices and tools, the forums would pave the way for *ad hoc* or long-term partnerships and increase trust between stakeholders. It comes down to using EUCIS-LLL organisations as flagships for the initiative and fostering a civil society in the broad sense, involving more and more different actors, as the Ministry of Education did in Iceland. The link between education and training and the labour market was especially important for the Icelandic government in times of crisis:

"We needed to speak to the companies that provide work-based learning, to schools, teachers, students, guidance counsellors; we needed to have the different sectors of education talk to each other, because we felt that we were at risk to have strained relations between the schools and the labour market in this period of crisis." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

On a practical side, this would also mean the EU having to avoid granting similar projects (that could be jointly coordinated). Beside, more partnerships would not only mean sharing grants but also sharing staff, activities or knowledge. Duplication is a concern when critical factors for policy implementation are analysed. Greater cooperation through the forums would be cost-effective in the sense that resources would be better allocated. The sharing of practices as the main added value of the forums has been proven by the survey and will be developed later on.

4/ To facilitate the coordination of civil dialogue between public authorities and civil society

The survey has therefore shown that the stakeholders are more interested in sharing practices than becoming activists in their own country to monitor the implementation of lifelong learning policies. Besides, fostering a permanent platform of cooperation would take a great deal of time and mutual trust and this should indeed not be rushed if one wants to see a credible actor emerge in the national civil society landscape. Most of the project coordinators interviewed were already involved in close cooperation with the government; sometimes they were public authorities themselves. Indeed, coordinating a civil dialogue often works when Member States express the willingness to do so and they contrast a lot with each other, as academic research showed. If the French example of consultation culture is a real power struggle for organised civil society, it has been much easier for stakeholders to be heard by the Icelandic Government that understood the mutual interest of the dialogue downstream of the decision-making process, to implement the provisions of the recent legislation on educational fields:

"There is a huge challenge ahead of us to include all the stakeholders in Iceland. We needed to bring out the message to all those involved in education, especially in VET (…), try to explain what we have been doing and what we want to do. The initial seminars that we organised were geared towards twelve major sectors in the labour market in Iceland and we took the opportunity to ask them what their needs were, how they were seeing the relevance of education in their field, their comments on our actions. We have also included the students who told us how they were seeing their own education. We got valuable lessons from them and it will help us to continue with these kinds of projects. It has been a learning experience for us: it was important to run the project by ourselves so that we could get the essence of learning. What is important as well is that the participants have been so grateful for this opportunity. For instance, crafts & design is a typical sector of small companies. They have a very weak organisational structure behind them. We have brought them together and they wanted to renew the experience." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

The forums are therefore the first step in providing visibility for all actors involved and fostering mutual understanding with public authorities. A possible political outcome of the forums would be the creation of a thematic coalition that would not involve stakeholders permanently but rather make them agree on a certain vision of lifelong learning and request sporadic contributions. The point here is less creating a political counterweight to national authorities than making educational actors aware of the benefits of their European citizenship. Increased participation and visibility for the smallest organisations and bringing local and regional level players to the forefront of the European debate is the first step in giving them a voice, so that what has been developed within the forum does not get lost. It is only when participant stakeholders are empowered as active European citizens that they can attempt to be associated with the implementation of European strategies at a national level. Such public recognition could allow more funding for the initiative and perhaps make the participants reflect on further, permanent cooperation with public authorities and institutionalised consultation mechanisms. The Slovakian Association for International Cooperation or the Slovenian Adult Education Association were legitimised as credible partners by the government:

"We are now preparing from those discussions a proposal to improve the action plan for the Lifelong Learning Strategy. (…) We will choose some elements of the action plan and make them concrete. We had to agree upon them with our partners for the project, mostly social partners (for instance the Union of Employers of Transport, Post and Telecommunications of the SR, or the non-profit organisation Start covering the trade unions working for many EU policies on education areas)." (Irena Fonodova and Dagmar Augustinska, "National Forum as a tool for improving LLL strategies" project, National LLL Agency, Slovakia)

"There is an Adult Education Masterplan in Slovenia, a sort of strategic document that has been designed for the period 2004-2010. The government is working now on the new one supposed to last until 2015 or 2020, mentioning three priority areas and infrastructural activities. Lifelong Learning Week is mentioned as an activity." (Zvonga Pangerc Pahernik, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association)

B .Organisational aspects

1/ Initiative

Identifying contact persons in each Member State that could initiate the forums' initiative is the trickiest step of their elaboration. The mapping of the national member organisations of all EUCIS-LLL's European networks is the tool enabling a clear vision of who is already involved in lifelong learning activities in each country and therefore who would be willing to participate in the forums' launching. The interviews that have been conducted show that relying on an existing network is the best way to develop a new initiative since the partners already know and trust each other. This process has proven to be effective in the past:

> "We held a register of those involved in the Lifelong Learning Networks (LLN) community to create the links between the networks. There might be one network working in a particular area and we facilitated links to other practitioners with a specific expertise or sector focus. (…) It was quite easy at the beginning because there were already informal contacts between the established networks as the initiative developed, through discussion regarding how to put a business plan together, how to work in specific areas. Because the national forum was linked to a funding stream, all of the local networks were announced nationally, and we did not have to search contacts, etc." (Claire Newhouse, Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum, England)

> "Our organisation is an umbrella organisation. We knew that we were not strong enough to attract other fields of education by ourselves so we relied on our partners." (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)

> "We did know personally some of the networks involved in the initiative through contacts I have made in the past forty years, for instance people working in the ROCs (VET-institutions). Because we are recognised in the Netherlands for our activities on associate degrees or the transfers from VET to higher education for instance, it was relatively easy for us to get some people and organisations together. We are not new…" (Hans Daale, DUCIS-LLL, Leido, EURASHE, the Netherlands)

The DUCIS-LLL project is specifically interesting since its coordinator Hans Daale and EUCIS-LLL have already made steps for further collaboration to elaborate a stakeholders' forum. This identification is not enough though. Commitment, as stated before, is essential because the forums will be another time consuming initiative on a voluntary basis; it will require some effort for the organisers and the participants before, during and after the forums to produce some working material. The survey helps in spotting stakeholders that may be interested in getting involved: 67.1% would be ready to be an active partner of a general consortium to organise the forum, and EUCIS-LLL is able to identify the organisations they come from. The survey was also an opportunity to make EUCIS-LLL known as their umbrella organisation, introduce the idea of the forums and get people familiar with the initiative, based on the legitimacy of EUCIS-LLL member networks. Norman Longworth's Socrates project had the same kind of pedagogical approach, using a questionnaire to acquaint stakeholders with the concept of Learning Cities:

> "The INDICATORS project (Socrates) is the one where we put together stakeholders' audits. The word audit is a very loose term because it is a document teaching people while they are actually going through the questionnaire. We ask them what they think about things while they are going through it. (…) There was a shorter version of it just explaining what a Learning City was and a longer one for people that wanted to go further with the idea and implement it. It would be used to help local authorities to communicate the idea internally and externally, what sort of contribution can you make, how would you use this as an investment opportunity, what kind of technologies could be used… in about ten aspects like that." (Norman Longworth, lifelong learning researcher)

If finding motivated members of the EUCIS-LLL network is a big step, it comes down also to targeting organisations that have established a solid reputation in the educational field, as credible, legitimate partners for civil society organisations but also for all other stakeholders and public authorities. Indeed, most of the persons interviewed were already supported by the government in their initiatives. The LLL networks were created by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Cork City Development Board developed the Cork City Learning Forum, the Slovakian Association for International Cooperation became the National LLL Agency, etc. EUCIS-LLL has therefore to rely on the strongest national members of its European networks to implement forums in order to have as much impact

as those successful projects. Not only will they be listened to and trusted if they promote such an initiative, but they will also be able to mobilise many actors of different kinds, from various sectors. Members of networks like OBESSU have been considered as social partners of public authorities for a long time and have far more visibility and credit than other stakeholders. La Ligue de l'Enseignement is a historical member of French civil society and has recently proved once again that it was able to federate many stakeholders around common values and interests:

"Your forums will not be consultation forums; they will coordinate the drafting of proposals for civil society that will have to be enhanced through a power struggle. We recently created an inter-institutional coordination named the Bobigny Call during the National Education Assizes (Assises nationales de l'éducation*). It is an extremely large configuration because it is composed of teachers' trade unions, all trade unions, local authorities' representatives (French Network of Educating Cities), and all popular education movements. The aim is to call upon decision-makers from all wings to build a coherent education and youth project. The initiative is initially coordinated by La Ligue, the French Network of Educating Cities and the Pupils' Parents Federation* (FCPE, Fédération des Parents d'Elèves) *to structure a power struggle to make proposals." (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)*

The identification of powerful, motivated national members should also take into consideration, if possible, the sectors they represent to build balanced consortiums in a holistic perception of lifelong learning. This identification process could also be a good tool to target Member States to experiment with the implementation of forums, where EUCIS-LLL already has the most reliable partners, like in the Netherlands. The chosen countries shall also reflect different civil society consultation cultures to produce representative outcomes in order to assess further developments of the initiative.

Next steps

- Identify stakeholders that have high legitimacy in their own country, a strong power of mobilisation and a willingness to collaborate with EUCIS-LLL and commit in the forums' initiative;

- Develop a consortium in each country bringing together two or more identified stakeholders;

- Provide them with instructions from EUCIS-LLL on concrete measures for further development.

2/ Statutes and resources

In its manual for policy-makers and stakeholders, *"Establishing and developing national lifelong guidance policy forums* (2008)"*, the CEDEFOP proposes among other possible statutes two different viable ways of organising the forums.

An experimental/project-based initiative

The experimental/project-based body would be the most optimistic scenario because **co-funding would be provided in the framework of a European project**. On top of the beneficial effects of a financial support, the label of an EU project would guarantee a certain amount of **credibility** for stakeholders to get involved and for public authorities to pay attention to the outcomes of the initiative. Besides, the national consortiums of stakeholders could benefit from this solid start to try out the forums as a legitimate mechanism of cooperation and consultation and convince the educational community that there is a need for those spaces of dialogue over the much longer term. After having launched a European project, the Icelandic Ministry of Education recognises the advantages of this grant and is willing to keep on developing consultation mechanisms:

"I think that this project (which we call Natlog, an acronym for National Dialogue) is something that we would have never done unless we had the support from the European Union. We had the possibility to hire a project manager who was in charge of organising the seminars and help us with this, because it was a huge task." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

In many testimonies indeed, the stakeholders speak about a single administrator, paid (the Estonian Education Forum, the Cork LLL Festival) or not (the LLL Networks). As the project has to be realistic, the national consortiums shall be ready to work on a voluntary basis but **a remunerated coordinator** seems to be the best way to go to supervise the pilot initiatives. Of course, the Icelandic ministry also speaks about the severe criteria it had to fulfil, the reports to the

Commission that had to be written, as **inevitable bureaucratic burdens** to cope with. The search for calls for proposals to ensure the sustainability of the project is something that the other stakeholders interviewed had also to come across at the national level:

> *"We actually get some very limited funding from the state. We have to apply for the funding every year. Mainly we are working on a voluntary basis. The support of the government is related to very concrete events, for instance seminars or working groups." (Krista Loogma, Estonian Education Forum, Estonia)*

> *"If I come across some organisations and tell them there is no financing, they will not cooperate, while in this case they can apply for funds under certain criteria. There is a call for tenders and they can apply directly to the ministry for the events they want to organise for the LLL Week." (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)*

If the forums obtain an EU grant, the main obstacle is to find co-funding and **fundraising work** should be included in the working calendar before answering a call for proposals. Professional expertise on fundraising or a specialist detached from EUCIS-LLL networks may be very helpful. A partnership with national governments is to be considered. If the project is successful, sustainability is the next threat because alternative resources will have to be found, as the LLL networks experienced:

> *"The activities were originally funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. We still have a link with partners who were running the Lifelong Learning networks, through the LLL National Forum but some networks are not in operation anymore, and some of them are now funded by universities and colleges. The HEFCE support was just a bit of initial funding to start the initiative." (Claire Newhouse, Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum)*

If the forum does not obtain an EU grant, the easiest way to go may be to build **an *ad hoc* structure** in selected countries with the support of the consortiums, following the model of a simple stakeholder conference. This type of initiative is certainly the simplest because it is not submitted to any European requirement of voluntary association statutes; coordination would be for instance much easier to implement. On the other hand, a very important emphasis has to be put on communication so that the forums are not seen as any other conference with no follow-up. The forums should be perceived as a sustainable mechanism of trans-sectorial cooperation and consultation on European issues.

Setting up a voluntary association

The statute of national **voluntary association** is optimal for setting up a national forum in each of the pilot countries if we see the event in a longer-term perspective with the possibility to launch thematic coalitions or even permanent platforms in the future. As there is not yet a European statute for associations (see on that topic the work of the European Alliance for the Statute of the European Association, notably the 2010 written declaration of the Parliament and the 2011 ECOSOC Public Hearing[61]), that would mean that each of the pilot forums would have to **register with public authorities as a national association**. In this case the legitimacy of the forums is no longer ensured by a European seal of quality and EUCIS-LLL would all the more have to **rely on strong national members** of its European networks to give credibility to the initiative.

The **funding** is of course the main hindrance in this scenario. The consortiums could apply for national calls for proposals: that would mean taking the risk to be dependent on public authorities and therefore have less room for manoeuvre to criticise their activities; that is what VOV with "Licht op Leren" or the Edge Foundation wanted to avoid:

> *"The money comes mostly from VOV. We tried to get sponsorship from privates companies (consultancies, training providers) that took part in the project and we had limited funding from the government, but using our own means allowed us to be more flexible." (Jan Weverbergh, "Licht op Leren." (Light on Learning), VOV, ETDF, Belgium)*

> *"Edge wants to be independent from the political parties and the government. If the government paid for VQ Day, it would start telling us what to do. But on the other hand, we invest thousands pounds in the event, so it is quite difficult for the politicians not to come, they must show that they support it. We create a good relationship with them. (…) On the other hand, if we did not have funds of our own, we would probably accept government money to support VQ Day, because everyone agrees on the value of vocational education. But Edge must not be seen as a puppet of the government." (David Harbourne, VQ Day, Edge Foundation, United Kingdom)*

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61 http://www.easea.eu

In the same line, the Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week organisers have no issues with public funding since the authorities more or less have to show that they share the stakeholders' views on education and training and promote that kind of event. The question of values is also essential when it comes to fundraising targets. If the forums are set up on an *ad hoc* basis or as national associations, important fundraising work has to be done, even more than in the case of co-funding for a European project. All European networks from EUCIS-LLL and their national members in the selected countries should be mobilised. The Cork LLL Festival is also experiencing financial troubles:

> *"The festival's two main sponsors are Cork City Council and the City of Cork Vocational Education Committee which runs schools and colleges and other education schemes. I have an office at the City Council but my salary is paid by the VEC, so it is very much a joint enterprise, it is a partnership really. We also get very small amounts of funding from the private sector and each year we have to try to do some fundraising. Our costs are mostly printing and a bit of advertising. We have put in an application this year to get funding for the first time directly from the Department of Education but we are not very hopeful. One of our sponsors, FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council), has been absorbed into another organisation this year because of all the economic turmoil here, so they cannot sponsor us anymore: so we are 7000 euros short. We are trying to replace that money and our hope is to get something from the private sector." (Tina Neylon, Cork LLL Festival, Cork City Council/VEC, Ireland)*

Next steps

- Fundraise in the public/private sector for co-funding for a proposal/resources for a voluntary association; if needed, ask for expertise and specialists;
- Find an appropriate call for proposals from the European Commission (make sure that previous steps have been accomplished (building consortiums);
- If not successful, build up an *ad hoc* experimental structure (if short-term perspective) or apply for a voluntary association statute (longer-term perspective).

3/ Coordination

As for the daily steering of the forums, several hypotheses can be considered. Choosing a form of voluntary association would make the organisation quite complicated as each of the pilot consortiums should respect strict national statutes that may require electing a general assembly for instance. For a first experimentation, the project-based body and the *ad hoc* initiative are much more informal and allow room for manoeuvre to orchestrate the work to be done. The tasks would be sporadic throughout the year but preparation and follow-up of the forums may require continuous involvement; some minimum organisational structures are needed, that may turn into regular cooperation channels if the initiative is successful.

EUCIS-LLL and its European networks could ensure a general, **transnational supervision** of the consortiums as the initiative and the research comes from the platform. A list of all stakeholders involved in the European member organisations in each of the pilot countries could be provided, so that the consortiums can map which national actors could be mobilised. They could also benefit from the experience that EUCIS-LLL acquired after the European Stakeholders' Forums organised with the European Commission since 2008, and many other events. Of course, EUCIS-LLL would also provide all the expertise related to the contents of the forums on European issues and especially on ET2020 and its implementation at the national level.

The consortium would ensure the daily secretariat for the organisation of the forums. They are the key players, the pivots that articulate the European initiative and the concrete elaboration of the initiative at the national level: as the work is voluntary, the greater the number of its members, the less of a burden it will be for each of them. One contact person should be selected to lead operations and keep in touch with EUCIS-LLL. The activities can be very diversified. Providing some expertise on the content is the main priority: what European lifelong learning policies are the most relevant to speak about in the national context, what is the evolution of their implementation in the country, etc. The consortiums would also have to build an active communication and fundraising strategy in their country with the support of EUCIS-LLL, to find additional partners, guests and resources. Last but not least, they shall care about pragmatic details: finding a venue for the forum is the very first thing to do; once the forum is set up, material, catering,

and invitations for instance should also be taken care of.

A steering committee could be set up for important decisions. This type of structure has many advantages. It could be composed of a representative from each educational sector (primary and secondary level, higher education, adult education, VET, non-formal education, training businesses, human resources…) appointed by the consortium. A balance should be found between the various sectors and levels of education and training. The legitimacy of those representatives may be an issue here but motivation and commitment would be the first criteria for being selected. A chairperson would be elected, one from a different sector every year to ensure that the forum is not always driven by the same interests. This structure would be representative of the majority of education and training stakeholders in each country but would not have to be as heavily involved as the consortium. That means that the latter could only be composed of two or three persons but the main decisions (content, relationship to policy-makers…) would be taken in a more democratic way. This committee would not have to meet more than once or twice a year.

"There is a group of senior representatives from the networks who get together to set the agenda, what the themes are and what practitioners would benefit from. We would then organise a workshop in response to what is needed. We used to have three of us in the team but now it is just me for half a day a week. We are just responding to what is needed in terms of workshops. I am myself responsible for the network in York so have the experience of that role." (Claire Newhouse, Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum, England)

"I am the only person who is paid to be involved and am employed on a part-time basis for 42 weeks a year, full-time for 10. Everyone else is voluntary. I have a steering committee, drawn from a variety of learning providers; we meet every two or three months and more often around the time of the festival. I'm in touch all the time with the core group and we organise a few events ourselves for the festival." (Tina Neylon, Cork LLL Festival, Cork City Council/ VEC, Ireland)

If the forums are successful and lead the way to further, more permanent cooperation and consultation, additional structures could be considered. To deepen cooperation mechanisms, **working groups** could be set up to lighten the work of the consortium if more stakeholders are ready to get involved. To institutionalise a consultation process, **a general assembly** could involve policy-makers, members from accredited consultative bodies, EU representatives, experts, etc.

"We have a national coordinating body with members of the ministries, of the institute, one from the network of coordinators, one from the Chamber of Commerce. Every year we inform them about the last report and the annual plan for the next festival. The members of the board have obligations, like attending the opening event. This body is the link between the ministries and the network. They provide the financing and we provide the expertise. The executive body is actually made of all people from the institute, but we consult the network of coordinators through the national board and they are welcome to give recommendations as far as the annual plan is concerned. But that does not usually happen. The preparatory meeting is usually in February or March, where the annual plan is given and we discuss everything there but the network does not cooperate in the organisational work except when it comes to making the events happen, they have enough work at the local level." (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)

Next steps

- Appoint a contact person in each of the pilot countries' consortiums;
- 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.

4/ Participants

As stated before, "educational stakeholders" involves all of "those concerned by the policy" following the definition of EU Institutions. This means that all actors involved in lifelong learning from cradle to grave should be able to participate if they wish to do so. If the whole educational community is concerned by the national implementation of European policies, every one of its members is entitled to get informed and involved in the process.

"We have not discussed what your idea of stakeholders was and what mine was, but I think they are pretty similar: they are schools, universities, local authorities, adult education, business and industries, civil society organisations, voluntary organisations, community centres... This is a broad church, everybody is a stakeholder. Everybody has or should have an interest in lifelong learning. If you can use the stakeholders as vectors of your message... that is what stakeholders are there for, right? That is immediately a problem, you are competing with so many different people that want to convey their message themselves." (Norman Longworth, LLL researcher)

The goal is to set up a trans-sectorial, multi-stakeholder approach. Ensuring broad participation is the best way for the forums to be known as an open, inclusive mechanism of cooperation and consultation. Besides, the choice of participants has to remain voluntary in order to find possible contacts, partners and allies for future forums. Here is a non-exhaustive list of stakeholders, inspired from the mapping EUCIS-LLL realised by all the national member organisations of its European networks:

- Educational institutions (kindergartens, schools, *gymnasiums*, colleges, universities...)
- Vocational education and training (training centres...)
- Folk education institutions; Adult Education; Workers' Education; Popular Education
- Social partners (students, teachers unions...)
- All kind of lifelong learning civil society organisations (parents' associations, students' associations...)
- Youth and leisure time centres
- Guidance organisations
- Human resources business and associations
- Labour market representatives
- National, regional, local authorities
- Institutionalised consultative bodies
- Researchers and academics
- ...

The list is endless and a balance has to be found between the different sectors and the different kinds of stakeholders and especially between practitioners, researchers and policy-makers within a knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation).

"The participants of the Pascal European Network conference were a mix of practitioners and academics but it was not equal because it is very difficult to make practitioners come to conferences like that. Most of them were coming from universities and further education colleges. We invited academics because the local authorities needed some expertise for the project before going ahead." (Norman Longworth, LLL researcher)

Yet one has to be pragmatic: if all kinds of stakeholders are invited, that does not mean that any individual can participate and speak on behalf of their own category of actors or their own sector. As a basic democratic principle, the floor is only open to the speakers who have been designated as legitimate representatives within their own community – otherwise the debate initiated by the forums would not be credible and have no chance to be heard by decision-makers. Learners, for instance, must not be forgotten but they should be represented by student unions for instance. That is why the consortiums should contact civil society organisations. Firstly because the forum is meant to be the voice of civil society on the implementation of lifelong learning policies at the national level, as EUCIS-LLL is at the European level. Secondly

because the consortiums are going to be strong national civil society organisations themselves and likely to know many similar kinds of stakeholders which they already cooperate with. A lot of the projects initiated in the interviews have been launched with the help of existing networks:

"We decided in the very first year to start using our network which regularly works in the field of adult education. The adult education network in Slovenia is composed of folk high schools (that are now mainly called Adult Education Centres), enterprises and secondary schools that deliver adult education. Those are the main partners. We also have cooperation with NGOs, clubs, etc. and we invite them all to the LLL week." (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)

"At the moment we have just invited networks (organisations) which are also members of a European Network, participating in EUCIS-LLL. Besides that we have already invited two other organisations: Scouting Gelderland (that works for young people as volunteers in scouting, based on recognition of informal learning to be used for a formal diploma) and NRTO – the Dutch Council for Training and Education (the formal association which represents all private institutions in the Netherlands, offering non-formal and formal education at all levels). This is an important network because 90% of the budget for lifelong learning (training, courses etc.) is spent in such institutions." (Hans Daale, DUCIS-LLL, Leido, EURASHE, the Netherlands)

If the forums grow up and turn out to become sustainable platforms of cooperation, the consortium may quickly broaden its conception of civil society organisations, as EUCIS-LLL did. Furthermore, the European Stakeholders' Forum that EUCIS-LLL coorganises with the DG EAC is much broader than its own membership. It gathers civil society organisations including European civil society networks but also social partners. Hence, participation in the forum could be enlarged to include more social partners, consortiums of educational institutions, etc. This openness characterises many successful experiences:

"Of course we can have also contact, besides our members, a list with stakeholders interested in lifelong learning and related issues according to the Dutch situation. We will inform them, send them invitations for national and regional activities, and so on. Growing big is not the first phase…" (Hans Daale, DUCIS-LLL, Leido, EURASHE, the Netherlands)

"We tried to invite external organisations for the first project but we noticed that most working groups were made of our members, so we only work with them now. However we stimulate them not to talk only between themselves but also to external stakeholders." (Jan Weverbergh, "Licht op Leren" (Light on Learning), VOV, ETDF, Belgium)

"We have people from schools, kindergartens, universities, institutions of adult education, representatives of local governments and sometimes even employers. Our organisation is flexible, that is why in some periods we can also have different kinds of memberships. Some members are stable but some can change from time to time. To be a member, it is not very limited but of course the membership is related to our concept." (Krista Loogma, Estonian Education Forum, Estonia)

Next steps

- Identify all kinds of stakeholder representatives (civil society organisations) in every educational sector possibly interested in participating in the forum;
- Invite them to participate in the forum;
- Give them the opportunity for further involvement before, during and after the forum (preparation, background expertise, panel participation, projects presentations, follow up…).

5/ Frequency and level of decision-making

The forum has been imagined in the shape of an annual conference on the model of the European Stakeholders' Forum and of several initiatives presented during the interviews. However during this phase of the research, many stakeholders initiated pre-forums and regional hearings to collect local input from the field and enrich their global picture on the educational situation there before their national meeting. Often, the idea was also to organise sectorial seminars to have a holistic point of view on policy implementation. As for Iceland and Slovakia, public authorities did

both regional and sectorial pre-meetings because they felt that the combination would enable a better perspective on geographical and sectorial contrasts. The same is planned in the Netherlands with the future DUCIS-LLL platform:

"We are beginning to organise regional meetings in different parts of the country with different profiles. We will be talking there to local representatives from the communities, schools, labour market, regional governments (about thirty persons in each meeting) to hear what the specific needs of this area are. The focus is the region itself because each region may have different kinds of companies and professions so we will want to hear what is important for this specific area, how we can help. Then we will have a final national conference in April where we will gather the lessons from both the sectorial seminars and the regional meetings in a keynote speech, try to fit it with the policy that we are promoting at this time - and have discussions on how to proceed." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

"We organised three regional/sectorial seminars concerning the three main regions in Slovakia to go to the target groups. Topics were different, according to both the main areas covered by the LLL strategy and the problems specific to the region: quality, new skills and motivation for vocational education and training. We wanted to have a realistic overview of the national situation." (Irena Fonodova and Dagmar Augustinska, "National Forum as tool for improving LLL strategies" project, National LLL Agency, Slovakia)

"We imagined one national seminar a year – in general about LLL and related issues and developments. But regional seminars will also be necessary, because in some regions the issues related to LLL are much more important." (Hans Daale, DUCIS-LLL, Leido, EURASHE, the Netherlands)

Another argument for launching regional seminars first is that the local level works better, especially in decentralised Member States like Spain:

"At the local level, the situation is different; for example, the Barcelona Regional Council has helped to organise the Local Plan for Adult Learning. ACEFIR has actively collaborated. We are also participating in the City Education Project (CEP) that the city of Girona is preparing." (Rosa M. Falgàs, ACEFIR: Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research, EAEA, Spain)

But Arnaud Tiercelin and Norman Longworth issue a warning: going local does not mean that participative democracy is better implemented there. Civil society organisations, project coordinators' initiatives do not make their voice heard in a better way because consultation mechanisms are found even less frequently than at a national level, and lobbying with local authorities demands a lot of resources for civil society:

"You might try a cascade idea in the sense that you have a national forum that goes down to local level eventually. The stakeholders will only work at the local level because local initiatives work better but people have to be convinced. The problem with local authorities is always that one or two people have seen our initiative and agreed but their hierarchy has not and does not go further. Those authorities have their own educational sources. They normally do not welcome organisations that try to come and tell them what to do. We suggest what might be a good idea and sometimes they agree and implement it. But it is all very ad hoc; it is never put down to a strategy, or very rarely." (Norman Longworth, LLL researcher)

"Consultation culture is poorly set up in France. This is not a habit in the deconcentration and decentralisation systems. The more local it is, the less organised it gets because there is no strength to do it. Theoretically, the local level is the best to be heard, but it demands a lot of means for associations to be present everywhere to have a structured dialogue. And this is not because you come closer to the local level that democracy is functioning better. At all levels, there is the temptation of electioneering instrumentalisation. Proximity does not fix the problem; the suspicion of policy-makers using consultative bodies to legitimate their actions will always be there." (Arnaud Tiercelin, La Ligue de l'Enseignement, EAEA/SOLIDAR/EFEC, France)

Thus organising regional/sectorial forums prior to the Stakeholders' Forum would be very useful for having a better insight into the national situation when it comes to lifelong learning policies, because huge contrasts exist between the different European regions. Yet, as relevant as this initiative would be, it necessitates a lot more work for the national consortiums or active partners at the local level – this scenario will highly depend on the financial resources obtained for the initiative.

Next steps:

- Identify regional and sectorial contrasts in each of the pilot countries;
- Include those specific issues in the national conference;
- Reflect upon a future scenario of pre-forums.

6/ Concrete organisation

In order to concretely organise the forums, several elements of this research have to be taken into account, starting with the initial ambition: EUCIS-LLL aims at ensuring the broad consultation of the various E&T stakeholders in the Member States on ET2020 implementation. This goal is to be found in two of the main added areas of value of the forum: to structure dialogue dedicated to the European policy agenda and to facilitate the coordination of civil dialogue between public authorities and civil society. But the survey results should be equally considered as it has shown that the stakeholders' main motivation in attending such an event is to create a space for collaboration and exchange of good practices, tools, funding opportunities, etc. There we find the two other forms of added value of the forum: creating a lifelong learning community of understanding and values and fostering a trans-sectorial, multi-stakeholder cooperation. Thus the whole point of the forum is to bring policy and practice, expertise and experience closer together and the programme should be designed with this in mind.

Possible planning of a National Stakeholders' Forum

Day 1: ensuring the broad consultation of the various E&T stakeholders in the Member States on ET2020 implementation

EUCIS-LLL provides its expertise/experience to the consortium: *keynote speeches and panel on EU2020, ET2020 and its concrete implementation in the selected Member State.*

Following the example of the European Stakeholders' Forum jointly organised by EUCIS-LLL and the European Commission, the National Stakeholders' Forums should start with interventions from European and national policy-makers and experts on the general framework (ET2020 but also EU2020 flagship initiatives related to education etc.). Since 67.4% of the survey respondents do not know "at all" or "not really" the ET2020 strategy, one should not forget that the national stakeholders that will participate in the forum are not as informed as the ones that attended the European Stakeholders' Forum. The morning of the first day shall therefore be dedicated to keynote speeches from one EU representative and one representative from national public authorities to give a general idea of the situation in the selected Member State when it comes to lifelong learning policies inspired from the EU level. A panel discussion could follow with experts and the possibility for participants to intervene.

> *"At the national forum, first our minister makes a presentation in which she gives a kind of overview of what is going on in education, what are the plans, what happened during the last year, with the crisis... Then we have a panel of experts which gives input for the forum." (Krista Loogma, Estonian Education Forum)*

> *"The seminars started with a presentation of the situation by representatives from the Ministry of Education and a representative of one of the EU Institutions on the given topic. Then there was a panel discussion with the people that came to the seminar." (Irena Fonodova and Dagmar Augustinska, "National Forum as a tool for improving LLL strategies" project, National LLL Agency, Slovakia)*

As they remain the least interactive part of the day, keynote speeches and panel discussions could be shortened to an hour or two to give more floor time for participants to work on their feedback. A good way to inform stakeholders prior to the conference is also to send them background papers on European strategies. The Slovakian lifelong learning agency also had the idea of making the participants fill in a questionnaire to prepare the stakeholders to give their feedback:

> *"We set up a preliminary questionnaire on the specific topic; the questions were basically concerning the main barriers in accessing lifelong learning, potential problems for the current situation, ways to improve it and enhance VET at all levels. Different target groups were asked to fill it in, like secondary schools, higher education institutions,*

temporary employment agencies, employers' representatives… Their answers were used as a basis for our seminars. This research was also used for a study that we published on our website." (Irena Fonodova and Dagmar Augustinska, "National Forum as tool for improving LLL strategies" project, National LLL Agency, Slovakia)

The stakeholders provide expertise/experience: *workshops and world café with feedback on EU2020, ET2020 and its concrete implementation in the selected Member State.*

Once they are properly informed about the situation, the stakeholders are offered the possibility to give their feedback on the implementation of ET2020 in their own country. This is really the part of the forum when they get a chance to express their opinion, bring their experience from the field and be heard by policy-makers by formulating key messages. The best way to collect them is to follow the model of the European Stakeholders' Forum. First the participants will gather in working groups to reflect on the four priorities of the ET2020 strategy and the way they influence national policies. To make ET2020 more concrete, the background documentation as well as the content of the working groups should relate the four priorities of the strategies and benchmarks to the national policies that are actually implemented. For instance, a focus could be made on national qualifications frameworks in the working group "Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality" since they represent a key priority in many Member States at the moment.

"The new act on adult education of 2010 closes the policy circle of lifelong learning in Iceland. Thus all forms of learning are covered by legislation. But we still need to implement the different provisions of these acts and that is a huge challenge because this is a shift of paradigm: we have to express our goals in learning outcomes and define a national qualifications framework. We have brought that up in our seminars, because the EU2020 strategy has implications for our own. We have our own 2020 strategy with benchmarks relating to dropout rates. For instance, people without formal qualifications represent 30% of the labour market in Iceland, and our aim is to make it fall to 10% by 2020." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

"Each year we choose specific topics or areas to focus on. We have actually discussed quite a range of different problems. We tried to focus the course on some challenges that our education is facing. The challenges can be very different in scope: they can focus on teachers, schools, and regional arrangements of education, whatever it may be." (Krista Loogma, Estonian Education Forum, Estonia)

Another option is to organise a **world café session**. On the basis of a set of questions asked on the implementation of the European strategy, participants dialogue to foster the debate between them and to elaborate concrete messages to be conveyed to policy-makers. Of course, this process has to be well prepared in advance by the consortium and requires good animation techniques.

It is crucial for the organisers to **translate "EU jargon"** or technical terms into something more concrete that the actors can understand and identify with.

The "Light on Learning" project is about bringing policy and practice closer together with regard to LLL organisations. We start to look at the Flemish regional policies, which are basically a translation of European policies with a local accent. We talk to some policy-makers and government agencies to know more about the policies and main initiatives that are being launched for the coming years. Then we present them to our members and discuss what it would mean for the learning organisations. We try to translate those policies into something they can understand because they are a lot more abstract that what people are doing so we turn them into real procedures. We chose three topics they want to work on in depth, something simple to explain and encompassing a lot of stakeholders. The aim is to make a practical connection between the policy-making level and the concrete reaction of our members. The project is very valuable because the outcomes are what they can use to prepare themselves for new political initiatives." (Jan Weverbergh, "Licht op Leren" (Light on Learning), VOV, ETDF, Belgium)

Day 2: to create a space for collaboration and exchange of good practices, tools, funding opportunities, etc.

EUCIS-LLL provides its expertise/experience to the consortium: *tutorials on EU project-building, funding, etc.*

The second day remains in the spirit of combining expertise and experience but focuses more on the stakeholders' willingness to exchange good practices and get information on tools to elaborate a good European project. Organising a second day of seminar may be more expensive and time-consuming but listening to the stakeholders' needs is

indispensable to make the forum an efficient tool for cooperation and consultation.

The first part of the second day could therefore be dedicated to tutorials on project-building. The stakeholders often have trouble finding appropriate grants, understanding the European jargon or filling in intermediary reports. This is the role of EUCIS-LLL to play the intermediary between the European bureaucracy and the people on the field, especially with the new Erasmus for all coming up and its expected stricter demands concerning grants. Either general presentations are given by EU experts such as EUCIS-LLL members on how to answer a call for proposals, how to elaborate a good project, where to find funding opportunities, etc. Participants then split up again in small groups to work on the same tutorials, or different ones according to their interest; but that would require more experts being available. Background documentation like leaflets on different funding opportunities or info notes should be available during the day on a stand.

The stakeholders provide expertise/experience: *presentation of four good practices to make ET2020 a reality*

The second part of the day could be dedicated to presentations of good projects run by national stakeholders to illustrate the morning session with successful initiatives. The forums would end on a positive note, showing that building good European projects is possible and that it is a good way for civil society contribute to make ET2020 a reality but also to compile policy recommendations for decision-makers. Many persons interviewed confirmed the survey results and talked about the sharing of practices as the main added value of their initiative:

> *"During the process, they learn new innovative approaches on learning and development from other organisations, from research... They learn also some practical things about group interaction and dynamics." (Jan Weverbergh, "Licht op Leren" (Light on Learning), VOV, ETDF, Belgium)*

> *"The national forum was about bringing together all of the LLL networks of England so that they could share practice. (...) This is why we created the forum. It enables people not to work in isolation and share what is going on but also things not to do, why they might go wrong. When a new initiative is introduced, it enables them to reflect on how they might work on it with their colleagues in their own university or college. We also bring the networks together so that they can talk to national organisations as well. We enable them to look at evaluations, marketing, communication as a group rather than independently." (Claire Newhouse, Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum, England)*

> *"I give them (the participating organisations) directions and I try to encourage them to learn from each other. If a type of event worked well, I sort of suggest they try something similar (...) They build on what they learned from one year to the next so it is evolving all the time." (Tina Neylon, Cork LLL Festival, Cork City Council, Ireland)*

> *"I would say the added value is mostly about partnership, the possibility to meet and talk about education in a formal and non-formal way. The possibility of identification is also very important. More and more providers try to involve their learners in talking to visitors. Visitors see people who have carried out projects, they can identify with them." (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)*

Four projects could be selected according to the four priorities of ET2020, to work in line with the previous day. For instance, a project that focuses on disadvantaged groups and enhances inclusive education could illustrate the priority "Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship". The project coordinators should also come from different sectors of education and training. The learners involved could participate.

Next steps:

- Identify EU and national experts for keynote speeches, panel and tutorials;
- Identify coordinators of four valuable European projects;
- Gather background information on EU strategies and grants and reflect upon a pedagogical way to present it.

A matrix of the National Stakeholders' Forum's content

			EUCIS-LLL contribution	stakeholders contribution
D A Y 1	**EUCIS-LLL's ambition: ensure the broad consultation of the various E&T stakeholders in the Member States**	*To structure a dialogue dedicated to the European policy agenda*	Keynote speeches and panel: EU2020, ET2020 and its concrete implementation in the selected Member State	Workshops and world café: Feedback on EU2020, ET2020 and its concrete implementation in the selected Member State
		To facilitate the coordination of civil dialogue between public authorities and civil society		
D A Y 2	**Stakeholders' demand: create a space for collaboration and exchange of good practices, tools, funding opportunities…**	*To create a lifelong learning community of understanding and values*	Tutorials: EU Project-building, funding opportunities	Presentations: four good practices to make ET2020 a reality
		To foster a trans-sectorial, multi-stakeholder cooperation		

7/ Political ambition, dissemination of outcomes and pathways to permanent cooperation

The follow-up is an important step of the process since key messages elaborated during the forum have to be conveyed to major stakeholders so that the outcomes have an impact in the lifelong learning community. The dissemination tools depend on the public being targeted. The first ambition of EUCIS-LLL is to make the voice of civil society heard by decision-makers. Raising politicians' awareness of the challenges raised during the forum and the solutions the participants came up with is essential in creating a real consultation mechanism. In this spirit, the future DUCIS-LLL platform that may be the Dutch articulation of the forum initiative aims at keeping the balance between a role of collaborator and watchdog:

> *"We plan to keep in touch with decision-makers (we have to find out how, in the next period) as Leido has done for a long time: keeping them informed, talking with them (as board of the organisation), inviting them to presentations, workshops, discussion-sessions, etc. To be independent, critical (sometimes) but also willing to participate, to give ideas, comments… that is important. We are trying to be a reliable partner for the Dutch ministries responsible for the national strategy on LLL." (Hans Daale, DUCIS-LLL, Leido, EURASHE, the Netherlands)*

The national consortiums could attract politicians to the forum while playing on the fact that the importance of education and training should be unanimously recognised, especially in times of crisis; it could give them a good free press, like in Slovenia and Great Britain:

> *"In this concrete case, our values are pretty much the same as the ministries. They are obliged to promote education. We work in the same direction but sometimes we have to make sure that the balance between education and training for work and general education is respected. We believe that it is our task to influence the political scene." (Zvonka Pangerc Pahernic, LLL Week, Slovenian Adult Education Association, EAEA, Slovenia)*

> *"The Lord Mayor of Cork is Festival Patron, and we ask the mayor to launch the festival programme every year in the Council Chamber at City Hall. We also have an opening on the first day of the festival week. Last year the President of Ireland Mary McAleese opened the festival. The year before, we had the Minister for Education and the year before that we had the Junior Minister for Lifelong Learning. We always invite local TDs (members of parliament) and city counsellors. Lots of them will turn up for events in their area; some of them actually open local events during the festival. Local politicians are very much aware of the festival. They like to be associated with positive events, especially now." (Tina Neylon, Cork LLL Festival, Cork City Council, Ireland)*

"We invite politicians from across the political spectrum. It is one of the occasions where they set aside their differences because they have a common opinion on the importance of vocational education. They make encouraging speeches about the importance of vocational education and thus we make sure that the media talks about it too." (David Harbourne, VQ Day, Edge Foundation, United Kingdom)

Reaching decision-makers is also crucial for the sustainability of the forum in terms of financial, moral support and credibility. The interviews show that the perennial projects are the ones that are built on an existing, solid partnership with public authorities. As seen before, some organisations are already involved in a real civil dialogue and recognised as reliable collaborators by the government like in Slovakia (national lifelong learning agency), Slovenia (project of national importance) and Estonia (social partners). Being considered as a trustworthy partner of public authorities, as observed earlier, takes much time and resources. That is why, once again, EUCIS-LLL should count on national civil society organisations that already have a history with public authorities to build credible consortiums and perhaps be heard by them after the forum, as the FLLLEX coordinators did:

"So far, 8 out of 9 institutions applied the tool we created and provided a report which is now examined by a panel: this panel is composed of one person from another institution, an expert in the field of lifelong learning and a representative from education policy-making bodies. This last person is important for the dissemination of the project, and ultimately giving out policy advice, both for institutions' management and ministries to help them have a view of how national policies are implemented, the day-to-day practice, what the problems encountered are. Most of the time we managed to include them in the project because our higher education umbrella organisations (like Vlhora for Flanders and WOSCOP in Scotland) were already close to the ministries. The representative here in Belgium was from the Flemish Government and showed a lot of enthusiasm for the project. He was happy to visit the institution, exchange information and see how people work in practice, where the problems are; he observed that it should be done more often." (Margriet de Jong, FLLLEX project, EURASHE, multilateral partnership)

Therefore the political ambition of the forum should be thought of in that particular context and remain modest unless the consortiums established in the selected countries are very powerful. Indeed, information, dialogue and consultation are three very different steps. Conveying political messages shall be seen as a future perspective of the forum when the initiative will be solidly anchored in national civil society landscapes. The forum could be rather inspired by projects driven by different aspirations, that is to say providing the government with a good expertise to gain legitimacy rather than imposing political proposals:

"We are not really a lobby but we do have some values because we and our members believe in certain ways of learning, for instance the importance of informal learning in the workplace. We do not influence policy-makers directly but we provide them with expertise and our thoughts on learning." (Jan Weverbergh, "Licht op Leren" (Light on Learning), VOV, ETDF, Belgium)

"We do try to convey messages through structures the forum has (a Director's group, a Steering Group and Strategic Relationship group). We form responses and conclusions as a group and but these do not seem to have had very much influence; no politicians come to the LLL forum events. The forum is an internal support mechanism for practitioners; we are more focused on publishing and disseminating results." (Claire Newhouse, Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum)

There would therefore be a slight change of paradigm in the design of the forums: the emphasis on the communication of results would be put on the coordination aspect rather than the consultation aspect. Practitioners, experts and even the broad educational community would be targeted by the dissemination of outcomes on an equal footing with decision-makers. The key messages produced by the first day of the forum would be aimed at deepening the public debate on national lifelong learning challenges and be useful for a large audience of stakeholders. The dissemination tools have to be carefully designed according to this broader target, especially given that the financial resources may be limited and may not allow for expensive communication strategies, unlike the VQ Day project. The first material that comes to mind to present the key messages is an exhaustive report with the stakeholders' input and recommendations. Many of the persons interviewed wrote one (Cork LLL Festival, LLL Networks, Slovenian LLL Week…) and the national forums should produce one too like the European Stakeholders' Forum because this is the handiest form of dissemination. But

most of the coordinators such as Norman Longworth note that it may not be the most efficient way to ensure long-term effects for their project, because it is not an active way of spreading the word. If EUCIS-LLL is willing to engage in sustainable cooperation and maybe consultation processes with the forum, innovative ways of dissemination have to be found. For instance, The FLLLEX and the LILLIPUT projects produced impressive learning material to be used for further partnerships:

"We are currently defining another project with EADTU, an organisation for open and distance learning universities. They did a similar project on business models for lifelong learning. We chose to help some institutions to implement the strategy, to use our tool as a good practice. It is a bottom-up approach, we disseminate the results, make them public, and show this is a good example." (Margriet de Jong, FLLLEX project, EURASHE, multilateral partnership)

Even if the forums do not have the ambition to produce a quantity of learning material within one day, this bottom-up approach with good practices should be kept in mind. For instance, the tutorials on project-building could be used as a basis to produce info-notes and leaflets to help stakeholders to decipher European bureaucracy, but also as promotional material for the forum. The media are of course another efficient way to advertise for the forum. VOV used the "Licht op Leren" project to write some articles in the Flemish local specialised press. The internet is also a very powerful channel to link with other stakeholders, as the Icelandic ministry understood:

"There is a website dedicated to the meetings. We have sort of put all the sectorial seminars on the website with documentation, presentations, comments etc. that are very useful for the participants in the meetings. We have done that for the participants, we told them to go and check out the website before having a follow-up meeting to see what we can develop further." (Olafur Kristjansson, NatLog project, Ministry of Education, Iceland)

A significant part of the budget dedicated to the forum shall be therefore used to elaborate a communication strategy, to disseminate the results but also to attract more stakeholders to the pilot initiative and to future forums. Professional expertise may be needed. Here are some leads to advertise for the forum: material presenting it (logo, flyers, posters) should be elaborated before the first experiment. Mailing lists, calls, physical visits to civil society organisations are essential, as well as the creation of a website, even though it may mobilise a lot of human and financial resources from EUCIS-LLL and the consortiums. Clear mentions of the powerful organisations involved in the consortiums should be made to ensure visibility and legitimacy.

Those reflections lead to the hypothesis of more permanent ways of cooperation and consultation, that is to say a National Stakeholders' Platform. Communication is crucial because it enables thinking of the forums as initiating a sustainable mechanism to reflect on lifelong learning policy implementation. Financial resources shall be put into communications because alternative funding and an increased number of motivated stakeholders will be essential in providing the sufficient financial and human resources to make the forum perennial.

"We would have quite regular contacts between the networks eighteen months ago but this has decreased significantly since the funding ceased." (Claire Newhouse, Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum, England)

"We had a starting conference but we are not planning a final conference because we do not want to end the initiative at the end of the project. Activities will happen after the project. We have already planned follow-up and dissemination activities. For that, we will try to get money from employers' representatives or the Ministry of Education." (Irena Fonodova and Dagmar Augustinska, "National Forum as a tool for improving LLL strategies." project, National LLL Agency, Slovakia)

A very good initiative has been in place by the Estonian Education Forum for many years. They set up an e-forum where the debate between stakeholders is vivid and democratic and where decision-makers sometimes have a look. It demands a little initial funding but the maintenance only requires one moderator sometimes and the results have proven to be very effective:

"The e-forum was established many years ago. One of our members is enthusiastically taking care of it and he tries to guide the forum discussions too. Sometimes the discussion is not very related to education topics at all, some people just try to express their frustration but participants are mostly working in education and have to discuss

under their real names there. Once a year, we issue a collection of our publications and we produce conclusions from the discussions in the forum. Usually, people bring out topics by themselves on the forum. It is a good tool because it gives people the opportunity to have a discussion. Without the forum, we would not understand what kinds of topics are important to people and we have noticed that policy-makers are not taking part of the forum but they follow it very carefully." (Krista Loogma, Estonian Education Forum, Estonia)

Therefore the internet is probably the most innovative, effective and low-cost way of ensuring permanent cooperation between the stakeholders involved in the forum. Academic research has also proven that the web was more and more used for public consultations by governments. E-tools could then be very useful for horizontal cooperation and vertical consultation.

Next steps

- Identify targets to convey the forum's key messages;

- Elaborate a communication strategy;

- Produce promotional material.

Swot analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Support of EUCIS-LLL, a powerful network • Support of a strong national member CSOs • Strong added-value: first trans-sectorial, multi-stakeholders debate on LLL policies	• Low visibility of EUCIS-LLL at a national level • Need for a strong, time-consuming commitment • Lack of a professional communication and fundraising expertise
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Development of pluralist consultation cultures • Launching of the EU Year of Citizens 2013 • Possible interesting European calls for proposals	• Various European consultation cultures • Little interests of citizens for European issues • Sustainability after initial funding has ended

Conclusive recommendations

- The forum's initiative should be launched in a limited number of pilot countries by a consortium of strong civil society organisations supported by EUCIS-LLL.

- An appropriate European call for proposals should be answered to launch the forums with prior fundraising efforts to ensure co-funding.

- The consortiums shall act as key pivots in the selected country and do a great deal of research work on LLL national policies and mobilisation of additional financial and human resources.

- The audience of the forums should initially be composed of civil society organisations from all educational sectors and they should be able to commit further in the organisation of the next one.

- The forum should take regional contrasts into account in its analysis of the implementation of LLL policies. Regional/sectorial pre-forums may be considered.

- The content of the forums should put on an equal footing EUCIS-LLL's expertise and the stakeholders' experience. The optimal configuration is a national two-day conference per year.

- The dissemination of the forum's outcomes should be seen from a bottom-up approach with a communication strategy based on expertise material before trying to convey political messages.

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Annex 1: Survey results

Would you like to have your say in lifelong learning policies?

SurveyMonkey

1. What is your name ?
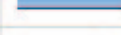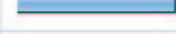
	Response Count
	285
answered question	285
skipped question	8

2. What is the name of your organization ?

	Response Count
	293
answered question	293
skipped question	0

UNIQUE		0,3%	1
Other organization		10,9%	32
	answered question		293
	skipped question		0

3. What is the name of your European network ?

		Response Percent	Response Count
EAEA		6,8%	20
EAICY		0,7%	2
ECSWE		0,3%	1
EFEC		0,3%	1
EFFE		1,4%	4
EFVET		5,1%	15
EPA		0,3%	1
EUROCLIO		18,8%	55
AEGEE		13,7%	40
ESHA		0,7%	2
ETDF		1,0%	3
EUCEN		0,7%	2
EVTA		0,3%	1
FEECA		1,0%	3
FICEMEA		0,0%	0
IAEC		0,0%	0
ISCA		0,3%	1
SOLIDAR		1,4%	4
FREREF		0,0%	0
EURASHE		1,0%	3
CONTACT 2103		0,7%	2
ESN		27,6%	81
OBESSU		6,5%	19

4. What is your sector of activity ?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Schools (early school, primary and secondary levels)		27,3%	80
Higher education (including professional higher education)		49,8%	146
Adult education		19,1%	56
Vocational education and training (training centres, professional colleges, etc.)		20,8%	61
Non formal education sector (workers' education, popular education)		25,9%	76
Youth and leisure time activities		27,6%	81
Human resources (companies, guidance advisors, etc.)		7,2%	21
Other (please specify)		11,6%	34
		answered question	293
		skipped question	0

5. What is your country of origin ?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Austria		2,7%	8
Belgium		2,0%	6
Bulgaria		2,0%	6
Cyprus		3,1%	9
Czech Republic		3,8%	11
Denmark		5,5%	16
Estonia		2,0%	6
Finland		1,7%	5
France		5,5%	16
Germany		7,5%	22
Greece		3,8%	11
Hungary		0,7%	2
Ireland		0,7%	2
Italy		6,5%	19
Latvia		1,7%	5
Lithuania		0,7%	2
Luxembourg		0,7%	2
Malta		0,3%	1
Netherlands		7,2%	21
Poland		1,0%	3
Portugal		3,4%	10
Romania		5,1%	15
Slovakia		1,4%	4

7. If yes, from whom did you get information ?

		Response Percent	Response Count
My European network		74,3%	113
Personal research		6,6%	10
Colleagues/friends		11,2%	17
EUCIS-LLL website or Facebook page		1,3%	2
EUCIS-LLL newsletter		6,6%	10
	answered question		152
	skipped question		141

6. Do you know EUCIS-LLL?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		48,1%	140
No		51,9%	151
	answered question		291
	skipped question		2
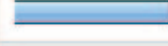
8. How do you understand lifelong learning ?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Formal education		11,3%	31
Adult education		15,6%	43
Vocational / continuing education for adults and professionals		23,3%	64
Non-formal and informal learning		23,6%	65
Any kind of learning taking place throughout life be it formal, non-formal or informal		87,6%	241
Other (please specify)		0,7%	2
	answered question		275
	skipped question		18

9. Do you consider your organisation as a lifelong learning organisation ?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	82,8%	227
No	17,2%	47
Why ?		187
answered question		274
skipped question		19

10. Would you consider yourself as well informed about the "Education and Training work programme 2020" ("ET2020") ? (This is the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("open method of coordination") at the European level until 2020).

	Response Percent	Response Count
Very well	2,4%	6
Quite well	30,1%	74
Not really	40,2%	99
Not at all	27,2%	67
answered question		246
skipped question		47

14. Would you like to get more involved in EU debates?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	86,6%	213
No	13,4%	33
answered question		246
skipped question		47

12. Are your interests represented at the EU level by an organisation or network?

	Response Percent	Response Count
I do not know	39,3%	95
No	7,4%	18
Yes (which one ?)	53,3%	129
answered question		242
skipped question		51

13. Do you feel EU institutions take your interests into account?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, always	1,2%	3
Yes, often	17,4%	42
Yes, sometimes	59,3%	143
No, it is rare	20,3%	49
No, never	1,7%	4
answered question		241
skipped question		52

15. Would you be interested in participating in national/regional consultation forums that would allow you to express your views on the EU "Education and Training work programme" ("ET2020") and its concrete implementation at the national level?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88,2%	217
No	11,8%	29
answered question		246
skipped question		47

16. Why would these forums be useful?

	Very useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Not useful	Rating Average	Response Count
Understand EU policies and their impact on your sector of activity	52,5% (128)	45,1% (110)	2,0% (5)	0,4% (1)	1,50	244
Contribute to the definition and implementation of EU policies in Education and Training	49,2% (120)	45,1% (110)	5,7% (14)	0,0% (0)	1,57	244
Meet new collaborators/partners	54,7% (134)	39,6% (97)	5,7% (14)	0,0% (0)	1,51	245
Exchange best practices	60,7% (148)	33,6% (82)	5,7% (14)	0,0% (0)	1,45	244
Get information on available tools, funds, project partners and calls for proposals	62,2% (150)	32,8% (79)	5,0% (12)	0,0% (0)	1,43	241
Disseminate information on your organisation's work and events	35,8% (87)	50,2% (122)	13,2% (32)	0,8% (2)	1,79	243
				Other (please specify)		7
				answered question		246
				skipped question		47

17. The EU proposes financial grants to support activities (i.e. conferences or seminars like this Stakeholder's Forum) to work on the ET2020 implementation at national level. Would you be ready to be an active partner of a national consortium to organise that kind of Stakeholders' Forum?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	67,1%	161
No	32,9%	79
answered question		240
skipped question		53

18. Are you following national policy debates in the field of lifelong learning / education and training?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		69,4%	143
No		30,6%	63
	answered question		206
	skipped question		87

19. Do you consider that lifelong learning is a priority in your country?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		44,3%	90
No		57,1%	116
	Why ?		118
	answered question		203
	skipped question		90

20. Should it be a priority?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		97,0%	196
No		3,0%	6
	answered question		202
	skipped question		91

21. Is your organization consulted by public authorities when it comes to national policies in education and training?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Always		5,8%	12
Often		30,1%	62
Barely		48,5%	100
Never		18,9%	39
If always or often, could you give an example ?			53
	answered question		206
	skipped question		87

22. According to you, do public authorities consider participation and consultation of organizations like yours as...

		Response Percent	Response Count
Important		10,2%	21
Necessary		16,5%	34
Normal		30,1%	62
Non-relevant		28,6%	59
Useless		4,9%	10
It depends on the levels (local, regional, national) : please explain		9,7%	20
	answered question		206
	skipped question		87

23. According to you, what are the main challenges/barriers to improve the dialogue between organizations like yours and public authorities?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Lack of trust		17,7%	34
No awareness about the benefits of your participation		55,7%	107
No real will for your participation		29,2%	56
Belief that no comprise can be found		7,3%	14
Bad reputation of civil society organisations		5,7%	11
Lack of consultation culture in your country		36,5%	70
Other (please specify)		15,6%	30
	answered question		192
	skipped question		101

24. Would your organization wish to get more involved in the definition of public policies?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		88,8%	183
No		11,2%	23
	answered question		206
	skipped question		87

25. Do you know about national platforms, organisations or alliances that promote regular / permanent cooperation between civil society organizations from the different sectors of education and training (adult education, schools, universities, non-formal education, etc.) in your country?

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		58,6%	119
Yes (which one ?)		41,4%	84
	answered question		203
	skipped question		90

26. If Yes, are you participating in it?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		54,1%	66
No		45,9%	56
	answered question		122
	skipped question		171

27. Do you think it would be useful to have such National Platforms of cooperation?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		95,1%	196
No		5,3%	11
Why ?			81
	answered question		206
	skipped question		87

28. Do you cooperate with other organisations/institutions in your own sector and or with other education and training sectors/actors?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very much		22,4%	45
Quite a lot		50,7%	102
Not really		26,9%	54
Not at all		2,5%	5
Could you give an example ?			99
answered question			201
skipped question			92

29. With whom do you cooperate?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Educational institutions		92,1%	163
Companies		34,5%	61
Public authorities		53,1%	94
Research institutes		32,2%	57
Social partners (trade unions, employers...)		37,3%	66
Could you give an example ?			73
answered question			177
skipped question			116

30. Thank you very much for your time, your help will be precious for EUCIS-LLL. Feel free to add any comments that might have come to your mind while completing the survey.

	Response Count
	22
answered question	22
skipped question	271

Annex 2: Standard questions for interviews

1. Do you consider your organisation/forum/project as a lifelong learning one? YES/NO Why?

2. What are the values that your organisation/forum defends when it comes to lifelong learning?

3. Who initiated the forum/organisation/project?

4. What is its statute?

5. How is it funded? How did you advocate getting this funding?

6. How do you organise it? How much time does it take? Is there a permanent secretariat?

7. What is the frequency/the level of decision-making? Why?

8. What was your communication strategy to promote it?

9. What is the size? Who participates / does not participate in your organisation/forum? (National associations, institutions, social partners, authorities, LLL agency, private sector…) Why? Is it sectorial/transversal?

10. What is the relation to national/local authorities and the EU Institutions?

11. What is the political ambition?

12. Which themes are generally evoked? Do you talk about EU lifelong learning strategies?

13. How does it work in practice? What are the activities? How do you sort out key messages?

14. Do you often work together with the other stakeholders involved? Do you communicate a lot?

15. What are the outcomes and what is the follow-up? To whom and how do you convey it?

16. Why do you think this forum/project/organisation is useful? What is the main added value?

Thank you for your participation!

Annex 3: Presentation of the stakeholders interviewed (good practices)

Mr Arnaud Tiercelin – La Ligue de l'Enseignement – member of EAEA (European Association for Adult Education), EFEC (European Federation for Education and Culture) SOLIDAR – France

Brief overview of the organisation

La Ligue de l'Enseignement is a large French NGO specialised in lifelong learning that brings together 30 000 educational associations in France. It is a confederation of 102 provincial federations and 30 000 local association members in France that deals with education, training, culture, youth and communication. It manages 600 educational centres, leisure centres, discovery classes all over France, as well as around 60 vocational training centres. It organises major educational events in France such as the European Educational Fair in Paris that gathers some 500 000 visitors each year. La Ligue de l'Enseignement is the head of this national network. It works as a resource centre directed at its network of educational associations, for which it regularly designs methodological and pedagogical tools (training books, web pages, exhibitions, etc). Moreover, la Ligue runs several national and local programmes against illiteracy, programmes of education against racism, etc.

Good practice

Created in 1866, La Ligue has been present in the civil society landscape for more than one and a half centuries. It is a founding member of the Permanent Conference of Associative Coordinations (CPCA) which was created to promote the right of association and the benefits of associative life in society. It participates in important national campaigns with other stakeholders to promote inclusive education and youth policies and civil society participation in decision-making. It is active in European networks such as the European Federation of Education and Culture that gathers European Ligues, SOLIDAR and EAEA.

La Ligue organises major national events like the European Education Fair and the National Meetings for Education. The Fair gathers representatives of parents, schools, universities, popular education mouvements, the Education Ministry, Paris City Council, guidance services, libraries, etc. More than 500 000 visitors come each year, mainly young people looking for guidance. Many conferences, seminars and workshops are also organised for educational actors during the 4 days of the Fair. Director of the Education sector at La Ligue, Arnaud Tiercelin has been a great help in understanding the stakes of the consultation culture in France and evaluating the feasibility of the forums.

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Campaign «No Education No Future»

Ms Tina Neylon – Cork Lifelong Learning Festival – Cork City Learning Forum – Ireland

Brief overview of the organisation

Established in January 2003 under the auspices of the Cork City Development Board (CDB), the Cork City Learning Forum brings together all those involved in education and training in Cork City, from early childhood to higher education, community education to work-based learning initiatives. The forum directly addresses Theme 7 of the CDB's Strategy – ie "Cork as a City of Learning". Learning is a key strategic theme within the strategy (entitled "Imagine our Future"), which sees Cork as a place where: *"access to learning is available to all levels and ages, where there is a provision to address the diversity of learning needs within the city, where there is an ethos of quality underpinning the provision of continuous learning opportunities for all, where the city will become recognised as a centre of learning nationally and internationally, and where information and knowledge are available to act as catalysts for creativity and learning" (Cork City Development Board, 2001).* The Learning Forum is a key mechanism in achieving this vision. By bringing together all the stakeholders – policy-makers, education providers and learners – it facilitates an integrated and citywide view of issues affecting learning in the city.

Good practice

The Learning Forum set up three working groups: one of them on lifelong learning. Its key achievement has been the development of the Cork Lifelong Learning Festival which has taken place since 2004. The aim of the festival is to promote and celebrate learning in all its forms, and to raise awareness of the wide range of learning opportunities available for all age groups in Cork City. In particular it seeks to target people who may not normally participate in education or training, and helps bring learning out into the open with accessible events in city centre and local venues. During the week all events are free. Learning is promoted as fun with events including performances, debates, taster sessions, tours, displays and demonstrations. Organisations & individuals take part on a voluntary basis, and come from the private sector as well as state-funded education & training at all levels from pre-school to post-retirement. Events take place right across Cork in a variety of venues indoors and out, including on water, and in shopping centres, libraries, museums, resource and community centres, parks, sports grounds and on the streets. Gradually a small fringe has developed with events in satellite towns. The festival is supported financially by Cork City Council, the City of Cork VEC, until 2011 FETAC (Further Education & Training Awards Council), Ballyphehane Credit Union, O'Callaghan Properties, Cork Institute of Technology, University College Cork, the NAPD (National Association of Principals & Deputy Principals), HEA (Higher Education Authority), Blacknight Solutions, and Ernst & Young; some City Councillors contribute from their ward funds.

It is twinned with Féile an Phobail in Belfast and Hume Global Learning Village in Melbourne, Australia. Tina Neylon has sent very helpful documentation on this wonderful initiative and brought significant input to the report on co-ordination and resources for instance.

Contact

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Mrs Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik – Lifelong Learning Week – Slovenian Institute for Adult Education – member of EAEA (European Association for Adult Education) – Slovenia

Brief overview of the organisation

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education is the main national institution for research and development, quality and education, guidance and validation, and promotional and informative activities in the field of adult education. It was founded by decree on 27 September 1991. At the end of 2011 they are thus completing their second decade of successfully promoting the development of adult education and cooperation in establishing a culture of lifelong learning. SIAE drafts professional bases and evaluations, and monitors the development of the adult education system, develops various non-formal and formal forms of learning, develops programmes to improve adult literacy, and pays particular attention to improving access by vulnerable groups of adults to education and learning. In doing so, it develops the necessary infrastructure to support learning, develops models for the self-evaluation of quality and the validation of prior learning, and provides professional education and training for adult educators.

Good practice

The Lifelong Learning Week (LLW) is the most prominent promotional campaign in the field of education and learning in Slovenia. For twelve years now it has been paving the way for a profound understanding and implementation of the culture of lifelong learning by attracting public attention to inspiring educational, promotional, information and guidance, as well as social and cultural, events. What started in 1996 as a rather idealistic initiative by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE), which gained the response of about 70 (mainly adult) education providers, has progressively become a movement which annually involves up to 500 institutions, NGOs, interest groups and other stakeholders throughout the country. Partners in this complex performance have taken up the challenge of raising public awareness of the omnipresence and importance of learning, attempting to surmount the stereotypical notion of learning and education, presenting the diversity of educational and learning supply, its varied and innovative contents, forms and sources. Zvonka Pangerc Pahernik is the national coordinator of the Slovenian Lifelong Learning Week. Recently, she has also been involved in projects related to policy issues such as indicators and benchmarks in the field of education and training. Her advice was particularly helpful on stakeholders' involvement and partnership with public authorities.

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Mr Olafur Kristjansson – National dialogue on structural sustainability in education and training (NatLog project) – Ministry of Education - Iceland

Good practice

In 2010, the national legislature of Iceland, Althingi, adopted a new act on Adult Learning. With this act, legislation for all levels and all forms of learning was completed, as acts on pre-primary, primary and upper secondary education were adopted in 2008, along with an act on qualifications of teachers. Implementing these new acts is a major challenge for all those who work in education and training in Iceland. At the same time, the onset of the present economic crisis poses further challenges for everyone involved, as there are severe cutbacks in spending on education, with dire consequences for students, teachers and families. This has also led to setbacks in forms of cooperation and for the spirit of coming together for different sectors of education, representing different forms of learning. For this reason, increased cooperation, dialogue, coordination and commitment is necessary in order to be able to reach common goals and to move on towards goals in education set by the government to be reached by 2020.

National dialogue is foreseen, encompassing all relevant stakeholders, from businesses, professional sectors, schools, communities, that will focus on the implementation of the acts on upper secondary education and on adult learning. On the one hand, this dialogue will deal with the lifelong learning strategy in Iceland and the tasks that emanate from that strategy. On the other hand, they will, sector-wise, take up different challenges posed by the present crises, such as unemployment, exclusion, crisis of the apprentice system, etc. Seminars will be organised for different sectors of the labour market, to take up specific problems. Local meetings will also be held for the broader public in order for mutual understanding and consensus building. Fora will be established, based on provisions in both acts previously mentioned, that will formalise cooperation and continued dialogue. A national conference will be held at the end of the project, bringing together concrete results of the exercise and to pave the way forward. A written report will be produced in Icelandic and English to summarise the project. The impact foreseen is that of greater cohesion, mutual understanding, better cooperation and coordination of efforts to implement a national lifelong learning strategy.

This will hopefully lead to the bringing down of barriers between different forms of learning, making it easier for those without formal qualifications to access education and to have their previous experience validated and recognised. Furthermore, it is hoped that formal structures of cooperation will be established, making coordination of efforts more successful and to lay basis for commitment to improve education and lifelong learning in Iceland. Many thanks to Mr KRISTJÁNSSON, Advisor in the section "Adult Education and VET section", and the ministry for having been willing to talk about this innovative consultation mechanism in a future EU Member State.

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE

Mrs Margriet de Jong – FLLLEX project – EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) – Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium

Brief overview of the organisation

EURASHE was founded in Patras, Greece, in 1990. It has the status of a non-profit international association according to Belgian law and its secretariat is located in Brussels. **EURASHE** is the European Association of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that offer professionally-oriented programmes and are engaged in applied and profession-related research within the Bologna cycles. Currently, more than 1,200 higher education institutions in 47 countries within and outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are affiliated to EURASHE. The association is present mostly through National Associations of Higher Education Institutions and individual institutions, such as universities, (university) colleges and universities of applied sciences, as well as through other professional associations and stakeholder organisations active in the field of higher education. EURASHE's mission is to represent the views of **professionally-oriented institutions and programmes in the higher education systems in countries of EHEA**, either in binary HE systems (professional or vocational higher education) or in unitary 'university' systems. Its aim is to promote the interests of professional higher education in the EHEA and to contribute to the progressive development of the European Higher Education and Research Area (EHERA).

Good practice

The FLLLEX consortium is made up of 24 partners from ten different EU countries. The project was initiated and is supported by EURASHE. The project addresses the challenges and implications of Lifelong Learning incorporation into European higher education institutions. How flexible are those institutions when it comes to Lifelong Learning? Lifelong Learning opens up a multitude of new possibilities for higher education institutions but the impact on the organisation as such remains understudied. What is the role of higher education in the wider landscape of Lifelong Learning? What are the institutional changes for the future? What strategy can the project propose to other higher education institutions and what policy advise to European and national players? The FLLLEX project (The Impact of LifeLong Learning Strategies on Professional Higher Education) is an EU funded project in the framework of the Transversal Programme, Key Activity 1. It has started on the 1st of January 2010 and will run until 31st of August 2012. As one of the outcomes of the project, a self-evaluation instrument has been developed and tested by the different partner institutions. The results of the evaluation as well as the experiences in using the instrument were discussed with external review panels. Mrs de Jong works for the Catholic University of Leuven and kindly agreed to visit EUCIS-LLL's offices for a fruitful exchange that has been extremely valuable in deepening lifelong learning concepts and dissemination of results for instance.

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Mrs Claire Newhouse - LLL National Forum – LLL Networks - England

Brief overview of the organisation

Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) focus on progression into and through vocational education, following an initial idea of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). They aim to create new learning opportunities; forge agreement across institutions on how qualifications are valued; and produce publicity to help people understand how they can progress through the system. Networks will clarify existing progression opportunities and engage in collaborative curriculum development in order to meet the needs of the vocational learner. Initial guidance for LLNs can be found in HEFCE/LSC Circular Letter 12/2004, which asked partnerships of HEIs and FECs (along with key partners such as Aimhigher, Regional Development Agencies, Sector Skills Councils, and local employers) to develop network proposals. LLNs are supported through funding provided from the Strategic Development Fund. The HEFCE identified the core characteristics which they expect an LLN to include but fully expected different and innovative approaches to be taken. To achieve their overall objective, LLNs undertake the following specific activities: curriculum development to facilitate progression; alignment that removes barriers to progression and bridging provision that forms part of the HE offer; and new HE curriculum development involving employers (foundation degrees, work-based learning, e-learning, collaborative modules); information, advice, guidance and learner support systems that allow LLNs to engage, and track, learners in the context of lifelong learning opportunities; production of network-wide progression agreements underpinned by agreement on credit that defines clearly the expectations about progression that learners can reasonably hold and makes institutional commitments that these expectations will be met.

Good practice

HEFCE agreed funding to support the National Lifelong Learning Network Practitioner Forum in March 2006. Hosted by Higher York, the forum was established as a network for sharing ideas, good practice, policy developments, and is a two-way conduit with others in pursuit of the wider objectives of LLNs. In addition to holding an annual conference, the forum has facilitated regular, themed and subject based meetings of practitioners ('workstrands'); held a register of those involved in the LLN community to facilitate experience sharing and self-help; provided a focus for evaluation and research around the work of LLNs, including the co-ordination of peer evaluation; sought other means of sharing good practice and influencing the development of LLNs; acted as a resource and mechanism for supporting and informing HEFCE in the development of LLN strategy. Mrs Newhouse gave useful explanations on exchange of practices and peer learning for instance.

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Mrs Krista Loogma - Estonian Education Forum – member of the European Network of Education Council (EUNEC) - Estonia

Brief overview of the organisation

The Estonian Education Forum (in Estonian *Eesti Haridusfoorum*) started its activities in 1995. Estonian Education Forum (EEF) is a think-tank type NGO representing all the most important interest groups in educational policy. The main aim of the EEF is to support the democratic processes like participation, partnership and social agreement in Estonian education policy. So far, EEF has established a functioning co-operation network that consists of more than fifty interest groups and innovative organisations in the field of education. During 1999-2000 EEF in co-operation with different public and private organisations, including the Ministry of Education and different NGOs elaborated the Concept and Strategic Development Plan for the Estonian Education System.

Good practice

One of the main forms of activity for EEF is the annual educational forum – a set of preliminary forums and the plenary forum where the situation in the education system (lifelong learning system), the education policy and the labour policy issues in Estonia are discussed and solutions developed. As a result of preliminary forums, draft documents and proposals for the plenary forum are prepared. These shall be presented to the EEF for decision-making on educational policy issues. Such an approach enables the moulding of a common understanding which shall be formulated in the adopted resolutions.

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Mr Norman Longworth - Lifelong Learning Researcher

About Mr Longworth

Mr Longworth is an honorary professor of lifelong learning at Stirling University and the Managing Director of Longlearn Limited. As the former president of the European Lifelong Learning Initiative, he has reflected for many years on the implementation of lifelong learning policies at the local and regional level. His work has been indeed mainly focused on Learning Regions and Cities (project management, development and application of tools and audits, development and application of learning materials for local and regional authorities…). He helped a great deal on the definition of lifelong learning and the reflection on the different decision-making levels where the forums could be implemented.

Recent research/consultancy:

- TELS (Towards a European Learning Society) Audit Tool for 80 Learning Cities.

- LILLIPUT, development of 200 hours of learning materials in 14 modules.

- PALLACE, Linking Learning Cities and Regions on 4 continents.

- INDICATORS – developing Stakeholder Audits for Transforming Local Authorities, Schools, Universities, SMEs and Adult LILARA (Learning in Local and Regional Authorities), developing Audit Tools to find Learning Needs of local and regional authority personnel and their stakeholders.

- PENR3L (Pascal European Network) Workshops and Conference to establish a European Network of Academics and Practitioners in Learning Cities/Regions.

Selected publications:

- 'Lifelong Learning- new vision, new implications, new roles' (Kogan Page (now Taylor and Francis) 1996)

- 'Lifelong Learning at Work: Learning Cities for a Learning Century' (Kogan Page (now Taylor and Francis) 1999)

- European Policy paper on the Local and Regional Dimension of Lifelong Learning (DG EAC 2001)

- 'Lifelong Learning in Action – Transforming Education in the 21st century' (Kogan Page (now Taylor and Francis 2003)

- 'Learning Cities, Learning Regions, Learning Communities – Lifelong Learning and Local Government' (Taylor and Francis 2006)

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Mr David Harbourne – VQ Day – Edge Foundation – United Kingdom

Brief overview of the organisation

Edge is an entirely independent education foundation, dedicated to raising the status of technical, practical and vocational learning. They want all young people to have the opportunity to achieve their potential, to ensure that the UK's future workforce is equipped with the skills to succeed. Edge believes that there are many paths to success. They believe that 'learning by doing' should be valued equally with academic learning and that all young people should have the chance to learn in a way that suits their strengths. Edge wants to see fundamental changes in the education system. They believe that practical, technical and vocational learning should be part of every young person's education. They want all young people to learn the skills they need for life and work, improved educational facilities, better careers guidance for young people, more opportunity for learners' voices to be heard, increased employer engagement at all levels and improvements in teacher training, particularly in practical and vocational subjects.

Good practice

VQ stands for Vocational Qualification. A VQ means a recognised qualification at any level relating to a particular line of work or specific job role. These qualifications have an emphasis on the assessment of practical skills and knowledge. Examples include BTECs, City & Guilds, NVQ/SVQ, OCR Nationals, Apprenticeships, HNC/HNDs, degrees with a largely vocational content and professional qualifications awarded through a recognised professional body. They cover subjects that range from agriculture to accountancy, business to beauty therapy, care work to construction and many more. Vocational qualifications have never been more important to the economy and the individual; they deliver the trained, talented employees businesses are crying out for and ensure young people have the skills needed to succeed in education and work. Edge wants everyone to come together to recognise how high quality VQs can enhance life and work chances. That is why the VQ Day was initiated by Edge, with support from many of the leading players in the vocational education community. VQ Day 2011 was a great success: over 300 schools, colleges and work-based providers got involved in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The next VQ Day will take place on Wednesday 20 June 2012. Mr Harbourne helped EUCIS-LLL by reflecting on resources and communication for the forums.

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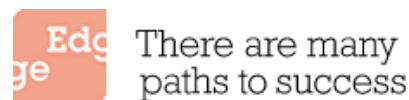
Rosa M. Falgàs – ACEFIR (Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research) – member of EAEA (European Association for Adult Education) - Spain

About the organisation

ACEFIR, that is the Catalan Association for Education, Training and Research, a social initiative that brings together a team of professionals from different fields with the common interest of working for education, training and research related to youth, adults and older people. Mrs Falgàs kindly took the time to write an explanatory note on the decentralised Spanish system and the implementation of lifelong learning for EUCIS-LLL.

Aims:

- To develop and launch activities aimed at youth, adults and older citizens in the fields of education, training and research.

- To make institutions, media and society more sensitive to the importance of lifelong training and education.

- To promote international cooperation among different cultures.

- To offer support and advice to any other organisations working in the same field.

Activities:

We promote our own training courses and projects.

We receive and direct other organisations' projects.

We develop projects with other organisations and cooperate in training activities.

We offer courses promoted by private and public institutions.

We carry out research studies in the field of educations and training.

We advise organisations in the preparation and development of transnational projects.

We take part in campaigns with an interest in education, training, culture or social issues.

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Mr Hans Daale – DUCIS-LLL platform – Leido – member of EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) – The Netherlands

A good practice

Mr Daale has recently started up (December 2011) the Dutch Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (DUCIS-LLL) as the national reproduction of EUCIS-LLL. The DUCIS-LLL initiative has been extremely valuable for this report as it is the precise model of platform that EUCIS-LLL wishes to implement in each country if the forums are successful. Further cooperation will be set up with Mr Daale in line of a long and fruitful partnership already in place between EUCIS-LLL and EURASHE. There were 12 people present during the first meeting, representing all together 8 national networks. Another 4 networks are interested in the idea of starting a DUCIS-LLL in the Netherlands. A DUCIS-LLL can be based on the following structure and ideas:

- The members of DUCIS-LLL are networks in the Netherlands which are also members of a European network - and this network is a member of EUCIS-LLL.
- A membership is possible for Dutch networks involved in LLL and non- and informal learning but who are not a member of a European network.
- The basis for the activities of DUCIS-LLL is the same as for EUCIS-LLL. They are focused on 'lifelong learning' as mentioned in the 'statutes' and the documents of EUCIS-LLL.
- DUCIS-LLL will be a platform (network), representing the members in the Netherlands – as a platform to discuss issues concerning LLL - trying to have a voice on a national level for the strategy on LLL.
- Possible instruments are:
  - Using the documents, activities, reports, events, forums by EUCIS-LLL.
  - Participating in international activities and projects – organised by EUCIS-LLL and by its European networks.
  - Discussing national developments concerning LLL and use the outcomes for new ideas, plans and programmes on a European level (to be discussed in EUCIS-LLL). Future National Stakeholders' Forums and Platforms may be used for this specific purpose.
  - Being a partner in national discussions, based on new programmes and other initiatives by the European Parliament – to be implemented in the Netherlands.
  - Being a partner in international discussions, through the members and their own European networks – or, if relevant and possible, as DUCIS-LLL.
  - Trying to be an independent and reliable partner for the Dutch ministries responsible for the national strategy on LLL and non-formal and informal learning, the NQF, instruments.

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Ms Dagmar AUGUSTINSKA and Mrs Irena Fonodova - National Forum as tool for improving LLL strategies – National Lifelong Learning Agency - Slovakia

A good practice

In the Slovak Republic the strategy on LLL and lifelong guidance (LLG) was accepted by the government in April 2007. It presents proposals of systems, objectives, financing of LLL and LLG, quality assurance and validation of non-formal and informal learning's results. Consequently, in December 2009 the Act on LLL was adopted. After a short period of implementation there is a strong need for the revision of these documents, and involvement of the wider public into the discussion on how to update them. Many of the key players and stakeholders expressed concerns and objections due to problems the strategy caused in practice. There is a generally accepted need for a LLL and LLG system to be established, reflecting also EU policies in VET, esp. ECVET and EQARF.

The consortium of several Slovak institutions representing sectors of education and labour decided to establish national structures involving stakeholders interested in the following topics: improvement of the National LLL and LLG Strategy, setting the priority tasks for implementation and identification of the key factors, development of the action plan, feasibility study on implementation of EU policies, esp. ECVET and EQARF in the Slovak education setting, its publication in electronic/paper form and presentation at seminars, research at selected schools and employers aimed at data collection for an inter-sectorial discussion on the issues of skills need for the new jobs, its publication in electronic/paper form and presentation at seminars, involvement of the actors from the world of work - creation links between LLL strategy and other sectorial strategies (e.g. employment and/or social inclusion strategy).

The main tasks will be establishment of the network in Slovakia - involvement of institutions and experts from various sectors, organisation of three regional/sectorial seminars on LLL. Contacts with other networks established abroad will be aimed at exchanging experience and examples of best practice. An integral part of the projects are dissemination activities at the national and international levels. The envisaged impact is reflecting the main expected results of the call - better established and implemented LLL strategies and policies in Slovakia, promoted by awareness-raising activities, as well as better coherence and coordination in the process of implementing national LLL strategies trough the establishment of fora and other activities. Ms Augustinska and Mrs Fonodova have kindly agreed to speak together about how their organisation became the Slovakian LLL Agency and the way they influence the implementation of national LLL strategies, as well as their unique initiative of the National Forum as a great source of inspiration for that of EUCIS-LLL.

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Mr Jan Weverbergh - Licht op Leren (Light on Learning) – VOV – member of ETDF (*European Training and Development Federation*) – Belgium

Brief overview of the organisation

With 900 members VOV is today the largest member organisation in the human resources field in Flanders. Members are active both within the world of training & development and training manager, trainer or training in companies, organisations or public agencies. Almost 30% of the members are independent trainers and consultants. The network is constantly changing: every year there are new members. The VOV learning network focuses on the substantive changes in learning and promoting development; the development of people in organisations and society; the sustainable development of the theory and practice of successful and result-oriented development; the discipline and professional development to give more visibility and clout in organisations.

Good practice

Licht op Leren (Light on Learning) is a biennial forum where the VOV learning network brings practices and policies closer together. It is a participatory project in which members themselves elaborate VOC content and processes. In this way it makes the translation of policy into practice as concrete as possible. Aims:

- Formulate recommendations and commitments for training, HR policies aimed at decision-makers (like the government);
- Inform on policy developments in the field of training & development;
- Describe best practices and develop new knowledge and practices;
- Create an open debate in which different views and positions are discussed;
- Identify trends and innovations in the field;
- Encourage dialogue with external stakeholders.

Light on Learning was already twice in a row a great success, in 2008 and 2010. The main findings of the participants have been compiled in a report (Dutch). Mr Weverbergh kindly agreed to present this initiative that gave many good ideas for EUCIS-LLL report, about peer learning and dissemination of outcomes among other things.

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Annex 4: General overview of the civil society consultation culture in the EU27

EU27 Country	Civil society consultation culture		
	Legal/political framework	*Consultation tradition, level of dialogue*	*Consultation and the EU*
Austria	• Formal procedures regulated in laws • Adaptations of international conventions (Aarhus)	• Strong corporatist culture: real social partnership • Informative, consultative public participation and co-decision	Social partners are now also consulted on a wider range of EU topics
Belgium	• Federalisation: duplication of all CSOs • Association Chart of 2009 (French part)	• Strong interdependence between state and CSOs • Powerful, institutionalised, professionalised CSOs	Clear comprehension of the national impact of EU policies, substantial lobbying by CSOs
Bulgaria	• Project for improved public governance (inspired by 2002 EU General Principles…) • Socialism inheritance: weak participation	• Very recent consultation culture • Young, weak, unorganised CSOs	CS mostly supported by EU
Cyprus	• Turkish and Greek Cypriots: duplication • Legal framework for freedom of expression but no formal procedure for consultation • No economic and social council	• "Southern" model of government consultation: favourable attitude towards CSOs but weak, young CS, politicised and close to the state: public mistrust	• Strong belief in an EU catalyst for proliferation of CSOs since the nineties. • Impulse of the EU presidency 2012.
Czech Republic	• Strong role of CS in the democratic transition (Charta 77) • Methodology for public consultation (2007)	• Close relationship between state (at a local level) and CSOs since the nineties but no formal rules until 2007 • Among the strongest CSOs in eastern and central Europe	• Strong influence of EU accession in the consultation culture. • Impulse of the EU presidency 2009.
Denmark	• Willingness for no formal procedures for CS participation in decision-making but the situation is changing • No economic and social council	• Deep informal tradition of cooperation between state and CS, and social dialogue in the field of employment • Strong, very active CSOs	Several consultations within the National Reform Programme to fulfil the Lisbon Strategy

Estonia	• Civil society development concept (2002) • Civic Initiative Support Dvlpt Plan (2006) • No economic and social council	• Frequent national level CS consultations	Ad hoc consultative platforms for CS, often on EU issues
Finland	• Section 14 of the Constitution for participation	• Long tradition of cooperation between state and CS • Cooperative, well-organised, diverse CSOs (local level) • But citizens' participation lower than rest of Scandinavian countries	Most EU topics discussed through the Economic Council led by Prime Minister so limited influence of CS
France	• Late recognition of civil society (loi 1901): the state is in charge of the general interest • Economic, Social and Environmental Council is the institutionalised CS representative • High Council of Associative Life (CNVA) • Permanent Conference of Associative Coordinations (CPCA)	• Development of CS since the seventies • Remains a power struggle between CSOs for legitimacy and influence	• Regular consultations from the EU Minister. • Five European think tanks and some CSOs dealing with EU matters with financial support from the government.
Germany	• No economic and social council • Common rules of procedures of the Federal Ministries for participation • No economic and social council (too fragmented interests)	• Strong corporatist culture but CSO consultation is recent, more seen in a burden-sharing/expertise logic, remains quite informal • Focus on the citizen and the community level	Several top-down ad hoc initiatives but too sporadic (no real cooperation with CSOs in the National Reform Program to fulfil the Lisbon Strategy)

Greece	• No formal procedures for CS consultation	• "southern" model of government consultation: weak, underdeveloped CS, closely linked to politics; public mistrust (long tradition of corruption and clientelism) • Rare, ad hoc consultations; informative role of CSOs	EU accession is one of the reason of CSOs development since the nineties
Hungary	• Empowerment of CS with democratic transition • Constitution and several acts (Act on freedom of information) enforce participation since 2004	• Completely opaque decision process, bad will from policy-makers • Active lobbying from CSOs to be heard despite the low level of state cooperation	• EU support for CSOs • Most of CSOs active in EU matters
Ireland	• Task Force on Active Citizenship (2006)	• Corporatist structure; based on shared understanding and consensus • Active CS but strongly influenced by the state • Technical, close debates that need to be simplified and publicised	• Significant change since the introduction of the "active citizenship" concept. • 2008 Lisbon referendum: illustration of CS as a counter power
Italy	• Several ministries' consultative bodies • Indirect processes for participation	• "Statist" model: NGOs seen as contributors to solidarity • CSO still economically oriented but renewal • Expertise/information role	Opportunities for CSOs through the National Council for economy and work but no substantial involvement of the Council for EU affairs
Latvia	• Empowerment of CS (democratic transition) • Law on Associations and Foundations (2004) • Strengthening CS: Guidelines (2005) and Programme (2008) • Cooperation Memorandum (2005) • No economic and social council	• Trusting, tolerant and pro-democratic CS culture but elitist • Hard for CSO to find sustainable funding, especially after the crisis • Influence depends on cooperation and ministry contacts	• 2009: rules on development, approval and representation of national positions on EU matters: CSOs truly involved. • Decrease of CSO foreign funding since EU accession.

Lithuania	• Status of the Parliament guarantees participation	• No real interest from the state for CSOs • Rare consultations that are mostly informative for CS	General lack of interest from CSOs for EU issues
Luxembourg	• Law of 1975: Comité de conjoncture for social dialogue • No specific status or law for CSOs	• "Luxembourg model" since 70s: stable, consensual social pact with substantial outcomes, traditional social dialogue and CS participation seen as essential • Trilateral cooperation between government, employers' associations and unions	• EU issues mostly discussed through the Economic and Social Council. • Strong interest for EU among citizens.
Malta	• Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information • Voluntary Organisations Act (2007) • Council of the Voluntary Sector (2008)	• Trilateral cooperation between government, employers' associations and unions Long tradition of CSO consultation, regulated process • CSOs' role remain informative for citizens: mediation state/ citizen not that strong	Several initiatives from the government for CS participation in some policy areas (environment)
Netherlands	• Participation mainly through social economic council	• Long tradition of social dialogue and consensus: "Poldermodel" (tripartite cooperation: government, employers' associations and unions) • More and more ad hoc informal discussions and requests for experts	• CSOs fairly concerned about EU issues • But Europe still seen as a matter of specialists
Poland	• Legal act on Public benefit activities and voluntarism (2003), renewed in 2010 • Department of dialogue and social partnership • Increasing ad hoc consultative bodies	• Mix between "southern" and "statist" models: trends for formal procedures; so far, clientelism and closed debates but low level of social activism (mistrust); cannot be explained by post-communism anymore	Impulse of the EU presidency 2011

Portugal	• Constitution art. 48 • National councils (different fields)	• Lack of active cooperation because no regulations, more informal contacts, no coordination • No strong networks • A more regular consultation needs to be fostered	• More participation inspired by the Treaty of Lisbon
Romania	• Various consultative bodies • Laws on access to public information since 2001 • Adaptations of international conventions (Aarhus) • Department of Social Dialogue	• Public consultation process developing with the willingness of a transparent public administration • Tripartite social dialogue • Informal consultations by ministries with CS • Parliamentary committees are strong vectors for lobbying	• All EU acquis transposed at the national level supposed to go through public consultation
Slovakia	• Empowerment of CS with late democratic transition (1998 onwards) • Free Access to Information Act (2001) • Slovak Council for NGOs (99-2006)	• Corporatist/statist public consultation: some CSOs close to power, expertise role, no transparent procedures, so lobbies more involved than NGOs that play more an informative/implementing role • Post-communist legacy so distrust (like Cz, Pol, Hun)	• EU catalyst for proliferation of CSOs and public consultations
Slovenia	• National Assembly's committees • National Council • Gvt's commission for NGO relations	• Neo-corporatist style for economic and social issues • Pluralist style in other policy areas (education) • Recent development of CSOs (90s) so young, small, unstable, poor and not present in all regions	• Impulse of the EU presidency 2008 • Most EU topics discuss through Economic and Social Council
Spain	• Various consultation practices and bodies • But no strategic plan or general forum	• Weak civil society: only for social dialogue and lobbies • Central level where CS is institutionalised • Local level: simple consultation mechanisms from Municipalities	• Consolidation of democracy after EU accession • Most EU topics discuss through Economic and Social Council

Sweden	• No economic and social council • No formal regulation for lobbying	• Corporatism: strong tradition of social dialogue and many forms of civic dialogue • Highly organised civil society • But becomes less intimate and institutionalised: trend toward pluralism/lobbyism	• Central role in the implementation of EU policies
United Kingdom	• Code of Practice on Consultation (2000) • No economic and social council (pluralism)	• Pluralism: neoliberal model of social partnership; different interests represented via national organisations; lobbying logic (public information and policy-making influence); partners and counterweights of the state	• Same lobbying logic on EU issues but civic interests are the most heard

Source: *EU Member States' consultation with Civil Society on European policy matters*, directed by Didier Chabanet and Alexander H. Trechsel (European Union Democracy Observatory for the European Economic and Social Committee, European University Institute of Florence, October 2011)

// Personal notes

The European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning