
Expert Meeting, LLL-Forum

Are we going in the right direction?

Krakow, Poland, 13 April 2015

Report

The LLL-Forum in the context of „The Lifelong Learning HUB” project was organised in Krakow, Poland on the 13th of April, 2015. Discussions were conducted in the meeting hall of the Malopolska Council under the leading theme “Are we going in the right direction?” The event was held under the patronage of the Marshal of Malopolska. The LLL-Forum brought together 55 experts, representatives from various sectors – private sector, educational and training institutions, policy-makers, public authorities in order to ensure high quality debate. A moderator made sure for participants to deliver their input.



Forum ran from 9:30 AM until 4 PM and was divided into two parts:

- **Strategic panel** – “Poland – Malopolska: the evaluation of the Europe 2020 Strategic Framework implementation” – as it involved representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the European Commission, EUCIS-LLL and the academic community and brought the opportunity for grassroots level actors to exchange views with decision-makers;
- **Workshop** – preceded by the presentation of the research outcomes based on the LLL-Lab (desk research, interviews and questionnaires)

Participants (smaller audience, as some of the panel participants had left) were divided into two groups discussing the following topics as set out in the LLL-Forum Methodology:

Session 1: National Frameworks for lifelong learning: towards flexible pathways and comprehensive education and training systems

Session 2: Lifelong learning actors: taking a jump towards learner-centred systems

Second group discussed

Session 3: Towards a relevant educational provision - Links between education and the labour market (we added this one extra session in order to be consistent with our desk research which covered four topics)

Session 4: Lifelong learning communities: partnership and shared responsibility

During the above mentioned sessions the experts shared their ideas on the four different topics. The outcomes of these working sessions were recommendations drawn up by our experts. After all the topics had been discussed, both groups gathered together in one room and the main findings were presented.

Among good practices of which the implementation was discussed during workshop were:

- **Malopolska Partnership for Lifelong Learning** - a collaboration platform of 142 educational, training and labour market institutions, who regularly work on improvement of adult learning policy in the region;
- **Malopolska Labour Market and Education Observatory**, which conveys various research projects, monitors the career of vocational schools' graduates etc.,
- the pilot implementation of a **training voucher**,
- quality mark of **Malopolska Educational and Training Services Standards**,
- an **integrated system of qualifications in Malopolska** – a pilot of selected aspects of the system

Recommendations resulting from the LLL-Forum:

- Increasing the participation of employers in the LLL policy implementation, especially in the following fields:
 - Recruitment and recognition of competences;
 - Formulation of educational offer and identification of competency gaps;
 - Providing vocational training. It is also important to strengthen the employers awareness of the necessity of their staff's skills development and their responsibility for taking action in this regard;
 - Competences validation - by including employers in the validation process itself (their role could be to determine the requirements in given industries and sectors) and by building their understanding of the necessity of validation and consequently their trust in the process;
 - Cooperation at the strategic level, ie. employers' involvement in LLL policymaking.
- Promoting various LLL solutions among learners – an offer should be prepared for the widest possible audience and tailored to their needs.
- It has been argued, on the one hand, that there is no long-term planning. On the other hand, employers are not able to predict the long-term development of the market situation and its

impact on employment policies. As a solution to this problem the development of universal competences that can be applied in many industries was proposed as well as development of workers' adaptability skills. However, this does not reduce the importance of specialist training according to market demand.

- The quality of training determines the value of learning outcomes. There is a need for standardisation of training services so that the educational offer is of the highest quality. What's more, learning process should ensure the gaining of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills - the certificate granted on completion of training should guarantee the acquisition of practical skills. This implies that both knowledge and skills had been verified through relevant tests/exams before the certificate was granted.
- Educational and labour market personnel (guidance counselors, training institutions, trainers, lecturers and teachers, etc.) should continuously develop their knowledge and awareness of LLL issues. They should continuously be made aware of their responsibility for promotion of pro-educational attitudes. Equally important is to promote LLL among adults, children and adolescents.
- The effectiveness of the implementation of LLL activities aimed at is higher if the action is carried out by institutions cooperating in partnership involving actors from different sectors (government, business, NGO's). It is valid to directly indicate the barriers to this cooperation and seek effective solutions to their elimination.
- Small partnerships have the advantage that they unite institutions which share the same vision of common benefits and speak the same language.
- It is equally important to not only promote learning of people, but also learning of institutions. Institutions, especially commercial ones develop their expertise through research and evaluation of their staff training needs. Such an approach should be promoted as standard as it leads to improvement of the institution and its offer.
- The information about education and training is very scattered – it is important to integrate it, systematise and improve its accessibility (eg. through central database of training or training institutions portal).