

# Interim Evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013)

## Executive summary

### Introduction

The 2007-2013 Lifelong Learning Programme was designed on the basis of “Education and Training 2010” work programme with the aim to ensure that EU education and training policies would contribute to the objectives of the Lisbon strategy. The Programme which is comprised of four sectoral programmes, the Transversal programme and the Jean Monnet programme supports transnational mobility, partnerships and other cooperation projects in all educational sectors.

The interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme was launched by the European Commission following the requirements of Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning (the LLP Decision). The scope of this interim evaluation covers the entire content of the Lifelong Learning Programme, with all its sub-programmes and actions, over the implementation period of 2007-2009.

The Report was prepared under Service Contract No. 2009-5173-PPMI “Interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013)”. The evaluation was carried out by the Public Policy and Management Institute (Lithuania) and steered by the Steering Group involving the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

### Political context

#### Needs and challenges: promoting lifelong learning in the context of the Lisbon objectives

The Lisbon European Council emphasised the role of education and training in developing a competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. To this end the Lisbon and subsequent European Councils called for concerted efforts in modernising education and training systems. In order to guide progress on achieving the objectives set for education and training systems, the Council adopted five benchmarks to be achieved by 2010:

- EU average rate of early school leavers to be no more than 10%;
- Total number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology in the EU to increase by at least 15% (achieved in 2004), with a decreased gender imbalance in these fields;
- At least 85% of 22-year-olds to have completed upper secondary education;
- Percentage of 15-year-olds who are low-achieving in reading to have decreased by at least 20% compared to the year 2000;
- Average participation in lifelong learning to be at least 12.5% of the adult working age population (age group of 25–64 year).

Although the overall progress towards achieving these targets was substantial, it is likely that four ambitious targets have not been achieved by 2010. The decreasing levels of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading and falling levels of adult participation in learning are among the largest concerns. Moreover, a comparison of the EU-level averages reveals rather significant development differences between Member States’ education and training systems. One example is an aggregate measure of participation in lifelong learning, which captures levels of participation in formal and non-formal learning of populations aged 4 to 64. Available figures indicate that Sweden is the best performing country in this respect and its lifelong learning index is almost 30 points above the EU average, whereas Bulgaria is more than 16 points below the average. The regional grouping of countries shows that Northern and Western European countries are among the best performers, while Southern and Eastern European Member States (with some notable exceptions) tend to lag behind the EU average.

The above discussed differences indicate that the countries lagging behind have substantial scope for improvement. Since the Member States have responsibility for the content and organisation of ET, there is a substantial need for European Union measures in supplementing national efforts by the promotion of policy learning, spread of best practice, interchange, mobility and cooperation between the Member States.

#### EU policies in the area of lifelong learning

The period between 1957 and the Maastricht Treaty (1992) witnessed a number of important policy developments, such as the adoption of the Directives on the recognition of regulated qualifications (e.g. doctors, engineers, etc.), the development of the first Community action plan on education (1976) and the launch of the first Community programmes in the area of education and training (e.g. Erasmus, PETRA, “Youth for Europe”, Lingua and others). Nevertheless, the development of policies in this area was slow and experienced numerous setbacks. This was largely due to the need to develop effective modes of cooperation between: (a) the Commission, which lacked a clear mandate and (b) the Member States, maintaining diverse national systems. The Maastricht Treaty provided a new impetus to the development of European education and training policy by giving a clear mandate to the Community to support and supplement national policies in line with the principle of subsidiarity. This fostered expansion of the Community programmes, the development of new policies and the establishment of a separate Directorate-General in the European Commission responsible for education and culture. However, it was not until the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy that education and training (and lifelong learning in particular) became one of the top priorities of the EU.

Following the conclusions of the Lisbon and Feira Councils, the Commission published the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, which initiated an EU-wide consultation on a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning policies. The results were streamlined by the Communication “Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality”. Meanwhile the Stockholm European Council laid down three concrete objectives for education and training policies:

- Increasing the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union;
- Facilitating the access of all to the education and training systems;
- Opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

These strategic objectives were operationalised by the “Education and Training 2010 work programme” adopted in 2002. The Programme re-emphasised the importance of lifelong learning and provided a concrete framework for further development of Community education and training policies by:

- Breaking down three strategic objectives into 13 associated objectives, identifying the timeframe for their implementation and setting-up the system of agreed-upon indicators for measuring progress;
- Underlying that the open method of coordination should be applied to implementing Community education and training policy by relying on such instruments as indicators and benchmarks, exchanges of best practice, periodic monitoring and peer review.

The aforementioned strategic developments had profound impacts on practical measures and programmes implemented by the Commission. While the second generation of Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes has substantially broadened their scope and successfully integrated a number of previous programmes during the 2000–2006 period, their design did not explicitly take into account the Lisbon agenda. It was the launch of the Lifelong Learning Programme for the 2007–2013 period that signalled a breaking point in terms of putting the newly developed Community policy objectives into practice. The Lifelong Learning Programme integrated the previous Community programmes and actions in the area of education and training into a single programme. This was done with the view of ensuring closer links between interventions in education and training so that all stages of learning from pre-school to post-retirement were coherently covered.

The Community-level policies ran in parallel to intergovernmental cooperation in the area of higher education. The Bologna process, initiated in 1999, could be an example of it. Although different origins and mandates of Community policies and intergovernmental cooperation prevented the possible merger of this initiative, a number of the EU strategic documents explicitly aim at creating

synergies with the Bologna process. Europe 2020, with its focus on inclusive growth, also channels cooperation in the area of education towards directing EU resources to expanding access to education and key competences for all. Its headline targets address education and research financing, reducing early school leaving, and poverty reduction. Europe 2020 also places emphasis on closer cooperation between education and the labour market. It frames Education and training 2020 and important education-related flagship initiatives: Youth on the Move, and Agenda for New Jobs for New Skills.

#### Education and Training 2020, the Youth on the Move initiative

The future framework for European education and training policies is outlined in “An updated strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training” (ET2020) that was adopted in 2009. It provides a follow-up to the “Education and training 2010 work programme”. The strategic framework clearly shows the EU commitment to making education and training one of its top priorities and providing new instruments for the implementation of policy in this field. The new strategic objectives are:

- 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.

In line with this, a post-2013 Lifelong Learning Programme will constitute an important contribution to the ‘Youth on the Move’ flagship initiative, which aims to “enhance the performance and international attractiveness of Europe’s higher education institutions and raise the overall quality of all levels of education and training in the EU, combining both excellence and equity, by promoting student mobility and trainee mobility, and improve the employment situation of young people”. This initiative set out actions affecting young people in three main areas: education and training systems; mobility (both for learning and jobs); a new framework for youth employment. ‘Youth on the Move’ also focuses on disadvantaged youth. The initiative does not financially sponsor activities on its own - instead it aims at aligning and focusing on youth-related activities, acknowledging that a vast majority of the Lifelong Learning Programme budget is spent on youth (initial and higher) education.

## Programme description

#### Structure of the Programme

The Lifelong Learning Programme is comprised of four sectoral programmes, the Transversal programme, which encompasses four key activities, and the Jean Monnet programme encompassing three key activities. The sectoral programmes cover all educational sectors: school education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), vocational education and training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig). The Transversal programme supports several cross-cutting areas (policy cooperation and innovation in lifelong learning, languages, development of innovative ICT, dissemination and exploitation of results), and the Jean Monnet programme - teaching, research and reflection around European integration respectively.

#### Objectives of the Programme

The LLP Decision stipulates that “the general objective of the Lifelong Learning Programme is to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, while ensuring good protection of the environment for future generations”. This global objective is instrumental in achieving the objectives set in the Lisbon Strategy.

The Lifelong Learning Programme also seeks to foster interchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the EU. This intermediate objective of the Programme should be achieved through the implementation of specific and operational objectives outlined in the LLP Decision.

#### Target groups of the Programme

According to the LLP Decision, the Programme covers all learners (pupils, students, trainees and adult learners, people in the labour market) in their specific learning environments and teachers,

trainers and other staff of education organisations. In addition, the Programme targets disadvantaged groups (such as socially excluded persons, persons with disabilities, young people excluded from the education and training systems etc.).

#### Main activities of the Programme

The Lifelong Learning Programme supports eight different categories of action: mobility (mobility of individuals and its organisation), bilateral and multilateral partnerships, multilateral projects, multilateral networks, unilateral or national projects, observation and analysis of policies and systems in the field of lifelong learning and related activities, operating grants and various accompanying measures in line with the objectives of the Programme. In 2009, the Programme supported around 60 actions. In addition, the Programme provides charters and certificates that are pre-conditions for participating in the Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci programmes.

#### Financial scope of the Programme

The indicative financial envelope for the Lifelong Learning Programme was set at EUR 6.97 billion for its total duration. The monitoring data for the period 2007-2009 indicate that Erasmus (44% of the 2009 Programme budget) and Leonardo da Vinci (26% of the 2009 budget) are the largest sub-programmes in terms of financing followed by Comenius (17%) and Grundtvig (6%). The remaining part is distributed between the Transversal (5%) and Jean Monnet (2%) programmes. On average, 14% of the total Programme budget is allocated to the centralised actions, and the remaining 86% – to the decentralised actions.

#### Implementation and management structure of the Programme

The Lifelong Learning Programme is implemented through an indirect centralised budget management mode. A general legal framework for the Programme implementation and management system is laid down in the LLP Decision and the Commission's Decision C (2007) 1807. Administrative provisions are further specified in regulatory and guidance documents issued by the European Commission.

The main bodies engaged in the Programme implementation are the European Commission, the LLP Committee, the National Authorities, the National Agencies and the Executive Agency. The division of tasks among these institutions is as follows:

- The European Commission (Directorate-General for Education and Culture) is responsible for ensuring the effective and efficient implementation of the Programme;
- The LLP Committee (comprised of representatives of the Participating Countries and chaired by the Commission) assists the Commission in the Programme implementation;
- The Executive Agency is responsible for the operational management of the so called "centralised actions";
- The National Authorities (usually responsible ministries in each participating country) monitor and supervise the work of its National Agency/-ies, provide assurance to the European Commission on proper management of the "decentralised actions";
- The National Agencies (one or more in each participating country) are responsible for operational management of the decentralised actions, lifecycle management of the projects, monitoring and evaluation at the national level.

In addition, the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in Thessaloniki supports the European Commission by coordinating the implementation of study visits of the Transversal Programme at the EU level.

#### System of monitoring

Monitoring is carried out at the project and programme level. Project-level monitoring (monitoring and support to beneficiaries) is carried out by the National Agencies for the decentralised actions, and the Executive Agency for the centralised actions of the Programme. Monitoring at the programme level (monitoring and support to National Agencies and to the Executive Agency) is executed by the European Commission, in the case of decentralised actions in cooperation with the Participating Countries and their respective National Authorities. Monitoring at the programme level is closely coordinated with programme evaluation activities.

The main information sources of programme monitoring are the yearly NA reports, the Executive Agency reports, relevant information systems (LLPLink for the decentralised actions, Saykiss for the centralised actions, other IT tools specific to the sub-programmes and actions of the Programme – Rap4Leo for the Leonardo da Vinci sub-programme, Erasmus Database for the Erasmus sub-

programme) and reports on the implementation and impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme in respective Participating Countries presented by the National Authorities in 2010 and 2015. The main sources of monitoring information at the project level are progress and final project reports presented by the grant beneficiaries.

**Targets and monitoring indicators** Four quantified targets were set for the four sectoral programmes of the Lifelong Learning Programme in the LLP Decision:

- Comenius should involve at least three million pupils in joint educational activities, over the period of the programme;
- Erasmus should reach a total of three million individual participants in student mobility actions since the programme began;
- Leonardo da Vinci should increase placements in enterprises to 80,000 per year by the end of the programme;
- Grundtvig should support the mobility of 7,000 individuals involved in adult education per year by 2013.

The system of the Programme monitoring indicators was further developed by a special working group of the LLP Committee and the European Commission on impact monitoring. Based on its proposals for the monitoring framework, a new system of the Programme monitoring indicators was approved by the LLP Committee. The approved set of indicators is based on factual information that is being collected from the grant beneficiaries.

## Purpose and scope of the evaluation

**Objectives of the evaluation** The objective of this evaluation was twofold, namely to provide a *retrospective* and a *prospective* analysis:

- The *retrospective analysis* took the form of an interim evaluation of various qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and the results achieved;
- The *prospective analysis* examined the strengths and weaknesses of the Lifelong Learning Programme as well as provided recommendations on the continued implementation of the current Programme and the design of the successor Programme.

**Scope of the evaluation** The scope of this interim evaluation included the evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme with all its sub-programmes and actions. Since the interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme was performed in 2010, it emphasised the Programme implementation as well as products and results achieved in the 2007-2009 period.

The interim evaluation answered three sets of evaluation questions identified in the Terms of Reference:

- *Relevance* (covering continued relevance, European value added as well as coherence and synergies inside and outside the Programme);
- *Effectiveness* (including the achievement of vertical and horizontal objectives, contribution to political priorities and the European Educational Area, the Programme integration, reaching target groups, awareness of the Programme in the education and training community);
- *Efficiency* (including the implementation and management structure, the monitoring mechanisms and management support tools as well as cost-effectiveness of the Programme).

In addition, during the interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme a special monitoring task was carried out, whose main purpose was to propose a practical monitoring approach for both the continuation of the current Programme and the future Programme based on the information needs of the European Commission.

## Methodology

**Framework for analysis** The intervention logic of the Lifelong Learning Programme covers four levels of objectives: global objectives, intermediate objectives, specific objectives at the individual, institutional and European/national system level, and operational objectives of the sectoral programmes, the Transversal programme and the Jean Monnet programme. The intervention logic is based on the principle of subsidiarity: the Programme takes action only in the areas and in so far as the lifelong learning objectives cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States alone.

There are potential spill-over effects between the individual, institutional and system levels across the different Programme objectives. For instance, the mobility of teachers, trainers, researchers and other staff could – in addition to individual-level results – produce improvements in the performance of the institutions. Also, the institutional performance could be affected by European cooperation initiatives in the area of education and training as well as national education and training systems, whose reform is shaped by the open method of coordination.

**Methods for data collection and analysis** The interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme was a mixed methods evaluation, employing both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods. Evaluation data were collected and analysed using the following methods:

- Desk research,
- Case studies,
- Interviews,
- Surveys,
- Expert assessment,
- Other methods of policy analysis.

The *desk research* reviewed EU policy documents, previous studies and evaluations of the sub-programmes and actions, institutional reports at various levels of the Programme implementation, procedural documents, monitoring and statistical data. A separate part of the desk research was devoted to *the synthesis of the National Reports*, combining and comparing the information presented by the Participating Countries concerning the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

16 *case studies* were carried out during this evaluation, covering two horizontal case studies, four case studies of the centralised actions and ten case studies of the decentralised actions of the Programme. The case study design ensured a balance between the different sub-programmes and actions, horizontal and vertical issues of the Programme content, while acknowledging the diversity of the Participating Countries. The studies assessed the performance of the Lifelong Learning Programme in a particular national or sectoral context.

During the interim evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme, 119 interviews were carried out. The interviews were conducted with two main types of respondents:

- *EU-level respondents* from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education and Culture), the Executive Agency, EU-level social partners and grant recipients of the centralised actions (38 EU-level interviews);
- *Respondents at the national level*: respondents from the National Authorities and the National Agencies, social partners, other relevant national stakeholders (e.g. various associations, non-governmental organisations, etc.), grant beneficiaries of the decentralised actions (81 national-level interviews).

*The survey programme* of this interim evaluation consisted of the following surveys:

- A survey of the organisational and individual beneficiaries of the Lifelong Learning Programme;
- A survey of the National Authorities and the National Agencies involved in the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

The first survey collected responses from the individual and institutional beneficiaries of the Programme. About 30,000 contact persons of the Programme projects were invited to participate in the web-based survey. The total response rate of the institutional beneficiaries was around 26% (7,862 answers) with some variation across the sub-programmes. 6,949 answers were received from the individual beneficiaries of the Programme.

The survey programme of the National Authorities and the National Agencies measured opinions and perceptions of these institutions regarding issues of the Programme design and implementation. The response rate of the survey was 60%, with 22 replies from the National Authorities and 26 replies from the National Agencies.

The evaluator further used a number of *policy analysis methods* during the interim evaluation: analysis of the intervention logic, analysis of main external factors, analysis of main alternatives, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme.

#### Strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used

The main strength of the evaluation methodology is the fact that it mixed a number of qualitative (desk research, case studies, interviews) and quantitative (surveys, analysis of the monitoring data) evaluation methods. Furthermore, the interim evaluation of the Programme featured intensive steering of the evaluation progress from the Steering Group as well as active involvement of the Programme stakeholders involved in several evaluation methods (the survey and interview programmes, expert assessment, etc.).

On the other hand, since the interim evaluation covered the entire Programme (with its sub-programmes and actions), the evaluation methodology emphasised width rather than depth. However, the evaluation design addressed this methodological challenge through the application of specific methods (e.g. the case studies). Also, the evaluation design enabled balancing all sub-programmes during the interim evaluation of the whole Programme.

Another methodological challenge was related to the broad scope and social nature of the Programme, which made it difficult to identify main causal links between different actions of the Programme and its global and intermediate objectives. Therefore, the intervention logic was reconstructed based on extensive desk research as well as a few interactive methods of evaluation involving main Programme stakeholders.

Another evaluation difficulty was related to gathering monitoring data, processing this data into an up-to-date database and producing analysis of the 2007-2009 monitoring data. This was associated with the ongoing development of the LLP's monitoring system and its support tools during the evaluation process.

Overall, the evaluation results and conclusions are considered to be robust. All evaluation conclusions are strongly or moderately supported by the evaluation data. This was made possible by applying the principle of triangulation, using different sources of data on the same finding or conclusion.

## Main conclusions

### Relevance

#### Relevance of the Programme objectives

Retrospective analysis revealed that the objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme were highly relevant. First, they were closely linked with the priorities identified in the EU-level strategic policy documents. Second, the Lifelong Learning Programme objectives were coherent and supportive to the policy developments in the Participating Countries. More specifically, the National Authorities argued that internationalisation and higher quality of education and training were among the most important objectives of the Programme within national contexts. Third, from the point of view of the institutional beneficiaries the most relevant Lifelong Learning Programme priorities included: promotion of active participation in lifelong learning and development of quality as well as performance and innovation in provision of the lifelong learning opportunities. Fourth, the individual beneficiaries of the Lifelong Learning Programme also argued that the Programme was

pertinent to their needs, particularly to language learning, personal fulfilment and developing a sense of European citizenship.

#### Intervention logic

The prospective analysis revealed that the logic of intervention of the future Programme in the area of lifelong learning could be enhanced in several areas. First, the Lifelong Learning Programme should be very closely linked with the priorities of “Education and Training 2020”. Second, the number of objectives should be reduced and the objectives should be streamlined with the view to focusing on concrete outputs and outcomes. In the 2007-2013 period the objectives overlapped, covering a very wide range of areas, and logical links between higher-level and lower-level objectives are weak. In the intervention logic of the future Programme the intermediate objectives could follow the priorities of the ET 2020, the specific objectives could focus on three main types of Programme instruments (interchange, cooperation and mobility), and the operational objectives reflect the main types of Programme outputs.

#### Programme value added

The evaluation revealed that the European added value of the Lifelong Learning Programme was considerable in three major areas. First, in the absence of the Lifelong Learning Programme, policy cooperation and interchange between the Participating Countries would have been considerably lower and fragmented. Second, the Lifelong Learning Programme supported the development of a European dimension in education and training. The value added of the European dimension was reflected by: more intensive cooperation between providers of education, changing structures and practices of the educational institutions, catalysing the emergence of new national and multi-national mobility programmes and creating a sense of European citizenship among mobile learners. Third, the Lifelong Learning Programme complemented similar international, bilateral and national programmes (where they existed).

#### Links between the LLP and EU level political priorities

The evaluation revealed that overall the links between the Programme objectives and the priorities established in “Education and Training 2010”, “Education and Training 2020”, other EU-level and national strategies and initiatives are rather strong. However, the structure and actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme did not sufficiently reflect the priorities related to enhancing the openness and links between different education and training sectors as well as accessibility and increased participation in lifelong learning by the disadvantaged groups (the low skilled, the elderly, etc.).

#### Synergies and overlaps

The evaluation revealed that the integration of previous programmes into a single Lifelong Learning Programme considerably strengthened coordination and the coherence of efforts. There were also important synergies between the sub-programmes, which could not have occurred in the case of a separate implementation of these sub-programmes. The most visible synergies occurred in the areas related to administration and promotion of the Lifelong Learning Programme. Further exploitation of synergetic effects was prevented by the segmentation of the Programme. The evaluation did not find any considerable evidence that the sub-programmes and supported actions duplicated each other. In fact, the integration of the previous programmes and the development of unified databases proved to be instrumental in avoiding possible duplications.

### Effectiveness

#### Progress towards the objectives and targets

In its first three years of implementation the Lifelong Learning Programme successfully progressed towards its objectives. Up to 96-100% of the earmarked funds were used in the initial years of the Programme implementation. The supported projects corresponded to the objectives and priorities of the sub-programmes, and the institutional beneficiaries pointed to the benefits of improved content and practice of education and training. However, less progress was made in addressing the horizontal priorities of the Programme in the area of equal opportunities.

In addition, there is a risk that some of the Programme quantified targets will not be reached, owing to the insufficient size of the LLP’s budget and other important barriers. Based on initial data available for the evaluated period, the risk of not achieving its target might be highest for the Comenius programme. Although Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci are in a better position, increasing unit-costs may change their chances of achieving their targets. Meanwhile, as the implementation of new Grundtvig actions gain momentum, this sectoral programme faces the lowest risk of non-achieving its quantified target.

### Contribution to the EU priorities

In its first three years of implementation the Programme contributed to all the priorities of “Education and Training 2010”. Its contribution to the priority of “Opening up education and training systems to the wider world” was stronger, but weaker to the priority of “Facilitating the access of all to education and training systems”. Furthermore, the Programme enabled an increasing volume of mobility and cooperation in the European Educational Area in terms of grants awarded under the Lifelong Learning Programme. The Lifelong Learning Programme supported important initiatives of transversal and sectoral cooperation at the EU level, including the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, among other ways, by contributing to increased knowledge about EU policymaking (directly through Transversal KA1 and indirectly through Jean Monnet).

The largest impact of the Lifelong Learning Programme’s decentralised actions was found on the individual and institutional level with the impact at the system level being rather small or moderate. Continued cooperation and interchange between the institutions under the Lifelong Learning Programme was affecting changes of services, pedagogies, contents and practices in the provision of lifelong learning opportunities at the system level, but the scope of these changes was small or moderate, depending on a particular sectoral programme. Centralised sub-programmes were even more disconnected from national policies, but their focus on system-level change lead to increased knowledge and debate about education and training in the EU.

The achievement of the “Education and Training 2010” objectives also depends on the open method of coordination and its effectiveness. The Programme contributed to EU policy in education and training by raising the competences of the main stakeholders as well as informing policy making at the EU or national level under both mechanisms of the open method of coordination influence (European benchmarking and evidence-based policy making as well as of peer learning activities and other fora of learning). Key Activity 1 of the Transversal programme is directly aimed at contributing to EU policy (especially the actions of policy cooperation, with the need to improve the effectiveness of studies and comparative research).

### Reaching the target groups

The Lifelong Learning Programme is responsive to the needs of the target groups - mainly the education and training community. Evidence shows that in the 2007-2009 period the Programme was successful in reaching staff and learners in formal education and training as well as meeting most of their needs with regard to the quality of learning, the acquisition, recognition and validation of skills and competences, personal development, language learning and social skills. More moderate success was achieved in providing tangible career benefits for the target groups.

Due to its design and contextual factors, in the 2007-2009 period the Lifelong Learning Programme was not successful in reaching people outside of the formal education and training community, such as people in and outside the labour market, early school leavers, and enterprises, with the exception of the Grundtvig programme. While the involvement of enterprises can be further encouraged by providing incentives and reducing administrative burden, access for groups of potential beneficiaries outside the formal education and training community, mostly adult learners, calls for more focus on non-formal and informal learning, a distinction between “full-time” and short-term mobility as well as further efforts to identify the needs of these target groups.

The evaluation found that the success in reaching various target groups and addressing their needs was heavily influenced by external factors. Among the most important ones are language competences, administrative barriers, awareness of opportunities and national policies. Language barriers were identified by all relevant data sources as the key obstacle for participation. This factor especially affected pre-primary and primary education as well as adult education. In addition, administrative barriers to mobility hindered participation of some beneficiaries, particularly from the candidate countries and in non-standard situations (e.g. apprentices).

### Contribution to equal opportunities

The contribution of the Programme to equal opportunities is limited. On the one hand, the Programme contributes to achieving a gender balance in science and the education and training community, gender equality is more successfully addressed than other horizontal policies. Furthermore, the Jean Monnet programme supports the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education which is an advanced platform for transnational collaboration and policy development in the field of special needs education. On the other hand, the participation of

individuals of both genders mirrors horizontal and vertical gender-based segregation in the education and training community. Based on the monitoring data, applications addressing at least one equality dimension (designed to meet the needs of persons with special needs or living in rural or remote areas) had better chances of being selected. However, most applications did not include any of these dimensions (most institutional beneficiaries surveyed found them irrelevant). Furthermore, the Lifelong Learning Programme is committed to combating discrimination and prejudice as well as contributing to social cohesion across the EU. Equality themes are expected to be mainstreamed into all actions. However, the awareness of the situation of various relevant groups is limited. Therefore, there is a need for needs analysis, better guidance at all levels and specialised incentives for better inclusion of the horizontal priorities.

**Programme integration** The Programme integration has been quite successful. During the 2007-2009 period a certain integration has occurred across the sectoral programmes. As a result, the Programme has become more flexible, meeting the needs of the beneficiaries and the target groups. However, the Programme has become very complex, currently supporting a total of about 60 actions. Also, there is no clear distinction between different types of cooperation actions (partnerships, projects or networks) supported by the Programme.

Integration across the educational sectors remains limited, and the lifelong learning perspective is not fully exploited in the Lifelong Learning Programme. The Programme remains a bundle of the sectoral programmes, predominantly focusing on the formal educational sector providing initial education. The main benefits of integration occurred in overall management of the Programme (including the dissemination of information to the target groups). Moreover, the high visibility of the previous programmes has been kept. The Jean Monnet programme, for instance, stands out as an international brand which signals excellence. The Transversal brand, however, is not yet very well recognised.

The Programme integration should be continued, taking into consideration the importance of better connecting formal and non-formal learning into the lifelong learning perspective recognised at the EU level. Further integration could be pursued with regard to the Programme content and its implementation.

**Multilingualism** The Programme also aims to address the themes of multilingualism and linguistic diversity. The Programme contributes to this horizontal policy on several levels and in several ways. First, Key Activity 2, Languages of the Transversal Programme supports multilateral projects, networks and accompanying measures aiming to improve the quality of language learning in several educational sectors and finding ways to motivate learners to learn languages, especially the less widely used and taught languages. This Key Activity is implemented according to the plan: the available funds were used, and supported projects and networks receive positive evaluations.

Second, the centralised actions of the sectoral programmes provide possibilities for beneficiaries to set up projects and networks focused on language learning and related topics, even though they are not specifically targeted at these themes. In practice this means that the centralised actions sporadically support projects and networks addressing language learning instead of structurally supporting beneficiaries from this particular thematic context. Besides, in the selection of language projects there is a limited alignment between the different sectoral programmes.

Third, the decentralised actions of the sectoral programmes contribute directly (through language courses) and indirectly (through mobility actions) to the language skills of individual beneficiaries. Thus, people who travel to other countries as part of a mobility action often automatically increase their language competences of the country of destination. At the same time, language is also seen as one of the main barriers to mobility and to participation in the Programme. Language learning could also be addressed by other non-mobility decentralised actions.

**Dissemination and exploitation of results** All stakeholders involved in the Programme implementation agree that the dissemination and exploitation of Programme results is crucial for increasing the effectiveness of the Programme. To encourage this process, an elaborated framework for dissemination and exploitation was put in place, covering the centralised and decentralised actions. This framework consists of the following parts:

- Supported projects and networks should prepare and implement their own dissemination and exploitation plans;
- the accompanying measures of the sectoral programmes provide opportunities to set up targeted dissemination and exploitation projects in the educational sectors addressed by the respective sectoral programmes;
- the Key Activity 4 of the Transversal Programme supports large-scale, long-term projects aimed at dissemination and exploitation covering two or more educational sectors;
- the European Commission, the Executive Agency and National Agencies undertake their own specific dissemination and exploitation activities (such as the Annual Lifelong Learning Programme conference or the Success Stories publication).

These efforts contributed to greater sustainability of the Programme results, more synergy between the different sub-programmes and better involvement of key stakeholders in the activities of dissemination and exploitation. These efforts also led to some improvements in horizontal and vertical mainstreaming of results or more active adoption of results by other organisations and policy makers.

However, most efforts were found in the dissemination of results, while the exploitation and mainstreaming of results remains under-exploited. Although information about results was distributed widely and successfully, the results were not always adopted or implemented by other organisations or integrated within policy. There is a gap between the institutional beneficiaries and key decision makers within and outside of the Programme. Furthermore, the projects and networks set up within the Key Activity 4, which target large-scale exploitation processes, do not always include the necessary large-scale actors needed to access key actors in a specific field. In general, there is a need for increased top-down coordination of exploitation activities.

### Efficiency

#### Implementation and management structure

Although the overall framework of the Programme management and control system remained unchanged, the initial years of the Programme implementation were characterised by a change of both substantial and technical requirements applicable to the management of the Programme. Desk research, surveys and the synthesis of the National Reports strongly support the conclusion that changes in these requirements rather than the requirements themselves caused a substantial share of the administrative workload and problems. Additionally, these changes essentially improved the functioning of the management and control system.

The synthesis of the National Reports and the survey of the National Authorities point to the conclusion that the role of secondary controls was not clearly defined in the regulatory framework and guidance documents for the 2007-2009 period. This evaluation did not audit or assess the secondary control system aimed at establishing whether it was functioning correctly (this is an audit function) and whether it assures the legality and regularity of the LLP's expenditure. However, it established that the level and type of secondary controls substantially varied among different Participating Countries, while underlying control activities in a number of cases led to duplication in control and supervision efforts of the Commission itself. This fact undermined and limited the overall efficiency of the secondary controls system. Importantly, since the exercise of the 2009 declaration of assurance, the situation improved as a result of revised (complemented) guidance to the National Authorities and other related Commission's efforts.

#### Supervision, control and monitoring

A regulatory framework of both the centralised and decentralised actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme provides for clear and sound attribution of the Programme management functions. Despite the fact that the initial years of the Programme were affected by late guidance and changes, the beneficiaries are very positive about the Programme management arrangements and the guidance received from National Agencies and the Executive Agency. As a result, the project supervision and control arrangements over project beneficiaries are seen as effective and proportionate. On the other hand, all stakeholders agree that from now on the period of change should be substituted by a period of stability. The latter should allow bringing multiple improvements to the management and control system.

The analysis suggests that the large number and the wide variety of the Programme actions complicated its administration processes. As a result, the administrative arrangements of the Programme highly benefited from a wide use of grants based on fixed costs (lump sums and flat rate grants). It resulted in a decreased administrative workload both to the Programme managers and grant beneficiaries and contributed to the regularity of expenditure.

The system of the LLP's indicators and monitoring framework was not developed until 2010. Although the approved indicators further specify the quantifiable targets set in the LLP decision, they do not sufficiently reflect the results and impacts of the Programme. Moreover, existing regular and structured monitoring of the decentralised actions both at the programme and project level primarily focuses on administrative aspects (compliance with administrative and financial regulations) and outputs. Meanwhile, the monitoring of policy content (i.e. benefits accruing due to the delivery of outputs and potential impact to wider groups) is less systematic.

#### Allocation of funding and the cost-effectiveness

The risk that some quantified targets will not be achieved is mainly a result of the inappropriate size of the Programme budget and individual budgets of the separate sectoral programmes. In addition, annually increasing unit-costs reduce the chances of target achievement. Further progress towards the quantified targets depends on the allocation of additional funding to some sectoral programmes, improving the cost-effectiveness of their actions and making the duration of mobility shorter and more flexible. The Comenius programme, whose progress towards the quantified target seems to be lagging behind the most, could be prioritised in the allocation of additional funding during the implementation of the current Programme.

At the same time, the evaluation showed a particular cost-effectiveness of some actions, such as Jean Monnet KA 1. With a low annual budget allocation of €5 million it is the centralized Programme action with the highest number of applications, thus increasing the visibility of the EU around the world in a cost-effective manner. Meanwhile, recent results of Leonardo da Vinci "People in labour market" and "VET professionals" actions is an example of increasing cost-effectiveness of some actions within the sectoral programmes.

Although the evaluation findings suggest that the Programme funds are allocated rather appropriately and, therefore, no major re-allocation across the sub-programmes is necessary in the preparation of the future Programme, certain changes are possible. There is a consensus that the actions of mobility as well as the Grundtvig programme have insufficient funding. Their financial expansion would allow more people to benefit from mobility (as provided in the 'Youth on the Move' initiative) and more attention could be dedicated to post-initial training and adult education.

#### Alternative policy instruments and implementation mechanisms

The analysis showed that, given the context, other policy instruments analysed in this evaluation would not provide better cost-effectiveness. The open method of coordination alone would not produce better outputs and results at a lower cost compared with the centralised actions of the Programme. Although in theory some actions of Jean Monnet and KA1 Transversal could be implemented under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, the evaluation has shown that the integration in the RTD framework would not lead to a greater effectiveness or efficiency. Therefore it is better to promote synergies between the RTD programmes and relevant parts of the Lifelong Learning Programme. The Programme should be considered as complementary to the open method of coordination, adding new dimensions to mutual learning.

The evaluation did not find evidence that calls for proposals for projects and operating grants would provide better cost-effectiveness compared to direct support provided by the European Commission under the KA1 of the Transversal programme and KA2 of the Jean Monnet programme. However, expert assessment, supported by various sources, suggests that it is possible to restructure the Transversal programme along thematic lines and adopt a more targeted approach to its implementation (based on thematic calls for proposals, calls for tenders and other implementation mechanisms supported by thematic monitoring). In addition, the evaluation showed that, as mentioned above, a more targeted approach is needed to address horizontal priorities. Special calls for proposals could meet this need without fragmenting the Programme.

## Recommendations

The Final Report offers recommendations for the European Commission concerning the continued implementation of the current Programme in the 2011-2013 period as well as the preparation of the future Programme for the post-2013 period. Taking into consideration these two time-frames, the post-2013 recommendations are more general and strategic, and the recommendations for the remaining duration of the current Programme are more specific and operational. All recommendations are structured according to the evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency).

### Relevance

*Recommendations concerning the continued implementation of the current Programme up to the end of 2013:*

1. Streamlining of the intervention logic:
  - Within the legal framework of the LLP Decision, the priorities of the Programme should be aligned with the objectives of ET 2020;
  - Work on defining a set of expected impacts and impact monitoring indicators should be continued.
2. Involving those, who are outside the formal initial education and training sector (see also recommendations No. 6 and 12):
  - Systematic and thematic monitoring of best practices in fostering access and participation in lifelong learning by those, who are “out” of the formal learning systems, should be introduced;
  - More emphasis, efforts and resources within the existing actions should be provided to the involvement of enterprises (SMEs in particular) as education and training venues.

*Recommendations concerning the preparation of the future Programme in the post-2013 period:*

3. Streamlining of the intervention logic:
  - The intermediate objectives of the future generation of the LLP should be aligned with the EU 2020 strategy and priorities of ET 2020 framework;
  - The number of specific objectives should be reduced. The specific objectives could focus on stimulation of interchange, cooperation and mobility. The operational objectives of the sub-programmes should be integrated and streamlined with the view to outlining concrete outputs and areas, where the instruments of interchange, cooperation and mobility should be used;
  - Quantified targets should be reconsidered with the view to ensuring closer links with the objectives of the Programme and the needs of the target groups.
4. Involving those, who are outside the formal initial education and training sector (see also recommendations No. 6 and 12):
  - Reconsider the balance (in terms of types of actions, target groups and financial resources) between initial and post-initial education with the view to contributing to the overarching policy goal of making lifelong learning a reality;
  - More resources should be provided to the involvement of enterprises (small and medium enterprises in particular) as education and training venues.
5. Strengthening of links between the sub-programmes:
  - Launch thematic cross-sectoral calls for proposals and thematic monitoring of best practices (see recommendation No. 2);
  - Introduce changes in the selection process: proposals that tackle problems and create value in more than one educational sector should be given additional points;
  - Mainstream the successful sectoral actions to other sectors, e.g. the success of eTwinning or Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovations could be replicated elsewhere.

## Effectiveness

*Recommendations concerning the continued implementation of the current Programme up to the end of 2013:*

6. In order to better reach the target groups:
  - Share good practice among the Member States and various stakeholders (e.g. German initiative to provide free online language courses for incoming students);
  - Better use KA1 of the Transversal programme to analyse the needs of the target groups;
  - Strengthen mechanisms for the recognition and validation of competences;
  - Undertake outreach initiatives to associations of enterprises, non-formal and informal education providers.
7. To improve the mainstreaming of equal opportunities:
  - Undertake analysis of which groups are relevant in which sector and what their actual needs are (see recommendation No. 6);
  - Direct good-quality applications which address equal opportunities to the relevant actions;
  - Develop and support the mainstreaming of equal opportunities into all actions;
  - Improve monitoring arrangements, including the collection of gender-disaggregated data.
8. In order to improve the Programme contribution to EU education and training policy:
  - Strengthen the involvement of national and sub-national policy makers and other stakeholders in the cooperation process at the EU level (peer learning activities and other fora of learning) as well as in the implementation of the LLP's actions (e.g. by better involving sub-national stakeholders in regional partnerships supported under the decentralised actions or national stakeholders in the actions of policy cooperation under the Transversal programme);
  - Improve the use of studies, comparative research and other evidence supported under the Programme in the process of peer learning and policy formulation at the EU level.
9. Continue the Programme integration during its implementation up to the end of 2013:
  - Streamline the Transversal programme and make it more thematic, while keeping its flexible implementation approach;
  - Continue further harmonisation in the Programme documents;
  - Improve cooperation between the Executive Agency and the National Agencies;
  - Introduce more flexibility in the re-allocation of financial resources inside the Programme.
10. In order to make the exploitation of the Programme results more effective:
  - Provide more in-depth training for beneficiaries on possible dissemination and especially exploitation strategies and stronger guidance on ways to reach key decision-makers;
  - Include mainstreaming partners (horizontal, vertical and transnational) in projects as much as possible in order to streamline the exploitation process.
11. In the area of language learning:
  - Maintain the good results of the horizontal policy of linguistic diversity by retaining a horizontal priority for linguistic diversity within a newly structured Transversal Programme through special cross-sectoral calls for activities related to language learning.

*Recommendations concerning the preparation of the future Programme in the post-2013 period:*

12. To better meet the needs of the target groups:

- Focus on the quality of mobility, reducing quantitative pressure. Access and the acquisition of competences should be two dimensions to be taken into account in all actions;
- Introduce a dual structure of mobility (with potential modifications): short-term (up to 1 month) and long-term (around 6 months);
- To address the multiple barriers to mobility, language learning (and acquisition of other key competences) should be prioritised in the successor Programme, focusing on current and future language teachers and mobility multipliers. Policies to facilitate the visa and residency processes for participants from the candidate countries should be formulated.

13. To better address horizontal policies:

- Undertake 'soft' measures, including better guidance, awareness and thematic monitoring;
- Undertake 'hard' measures, including special calls for proposals and special budget to address not only horizontal priorities, but also disadvantaged education sectors of strategic importance (e.g. pre-primary, primary and special schools);
- Keep and strengthen the mainstreaming approach;
- The successor Programme should be better aligned with ET 2020, 'Youth on the Move', 'An Agenda for New Skills for New Jobs' and other initiatives to prioritise access and equity in education.

14. In order to improve the Programme contribution to EU education and training policy:

- Better align the intervention logic of the future Programme with the vertical and horizontal priorities of ET 2020 in the area of education and training;
- Pursue and strengthen the support to the policy cooperation at the EU level under the streamlined Transversal programme and to (bilateral and multi-lateral) partnerships involving national and sub-national policy makers under the sectoral programmes.

15. Taking into consideration the importance of better connecting formal, non-formal and informal learning into the lifelong learning perspective recognised at the EU level, pursue further integration in the preparation of the future Programme:

- With regard to the Programme content some Programme-specific objectives could be integrated and common types of actions should be introduced across the sub-programmes, thus reducing the number of objectives and actions in the successor Programme;
- The future Programme could contain two main types of action: mobility (student/trainee mobility and mobility of staff, future staff and other specialists) and partnerships (bilateral partnership, multi-lateral partnerships, networks, projects);
- The future Programme should also continue to provide a framework for the Jean Monnet programme which constitutes a distinct label with high visibility bringing together specific education actions that stimulate excellence in European integration studies world-wide.

16. In order to make the exploitation of the Programme results more effective:

- Reduce the gap between projects and policy makers by considering the creation of an 'observatory' for the Lifelong Learning Programme.

17. In the area of language learning:

- Pay more explicit attention to linguistic diversity within the sectoral programmes, for example by setting up and broadening the scope of specific targeted language actions.

## Efficiency

*Recommendations concerning the continued implementation of the current Programme up to the end of 2013:*

18. In relation to the management system of the current Programme:

- Any further changes to the regulatory framework of both the centralised and decentralised actions should be limited;
- The period of stability would allow capitalising on many improvements that are still to show their positive effects.

19. Improving the cooperation between the Executive Agency and the National Agencies:

- The cooperation between the Executive Agency and the National Agencies should be acknowledged formally;
- Structured, clearly defined channels of exchange of primary information should be established to support the dissemination of information on the centralised actions to potential beneficiaries and valorisation of the results of projects implemented under the centralised actions.

20. Simplifying administrative arrangements:

- Introduction of any new Programme actions should be avoided;
- Administrative arrangements could be further simplified by expanding the share of project financing based on fixed costs (lump sums and flat rate grants). Necessary flexibility may be ensured by providing a wider choice of lump sums and flat rate grant options in a given action.

21. Improving the monitoring system of the current Programme:

- While the existing tools (LLPLink) and the level of harmonisation in principle allow for the collection, aggregation and reporting on the agreed 10 output indicators, it is recommended that a further review of the system be carried out once the system is populated with data (i.e. from late 2011 and on) so as to check the correctness of its functioning.

22. In order to reach the quantified targets of the current Programme:

- Three options should be considered: 1) allocating additional funding to sectoral programmes; 2) increasing the cost-effectiveness of separate sectoral programmes and actions; 3) making the duration of mobility more flexible and shorter;
- During the implementation of the Programme additional funding could be allocated to the sectoral programmes, depending on their progress towards the quantified targets. The situation at the end of 2009 indicates that Comenius could require additional funding in order to achieve its target;
- In line with other recommendations, Comenius partnerships/assistantships for primary, pre-primary or special schools, Leonardo da Vinci mobility actions targeting disadvantaged groups could be additionally supported under the current Programme.

*Recommendations concerning the preparation of the future Programme in the post-2013 period:*

23. A management system of the future Programme:

- The current management system should be maintained for the management of the future Programme in the area of lifelong learning (with the exception of the system of secondary controls). Maintaining the current management system would ensure continuity of administrative arrangements between the two Programme generations, which in turn will lead to an easier transition to the new Programme (both for the administrators and beneficiaries). The application of the already tested system would also help ensure stability of administrative arrangements in the new programming period;
- Documents related to the functioning of the management system and management support IT tools should be developed on the basis of the present Programme arrangements and should be agreed and set well before the start of the new Programme. Multi-annual

guidance documents should be prepared in order to ensure continuity and user friendliness of management arrangements that are important to any multi-annual programmes.

24. The system of secondary controls and declaration of assurance for the future Programme could be further simplified by either:

- Waiving the requirements for secondary controls and setting of a direct NA–Commission reporting system. Accordingly, the scope of the Commission’s controls should be adjusted (if needed);
- Or ex-ante definition (and reaching the agreement with the Participating Countries) of clear requirements for secondary controls and ex-ante and yearly declaration of assurance (which would provide for an adequate scope and effectiveness of secondary controls, comparability of the results of secondary controls across different participating states and the implementation of a single audit concept).

25. Simplifying administrative arrangements:

- They should be further simplified by unifying the requirements for similar types of actions (mobility or different types of partnerships) across the different sub-programmes. This would decrease the overall number of Programme actions and administrative burden both at the project applicant/beneficiary and NAs level and would increase the clarity and consistency of the administrative arrangements.

26. Developing the monitoring system:

- Develop a monitoring system of the impact of the Programme that would allow for better measurement of the Programme performance and its external communication. A logic model of the Programme intervention and a system of monitoring indicators (comprising indicators related to outputs, results and impact of the Programme) should be developed and agreed at the stage of the Programme design. Reporting forms and IT support tools should be further developed in order to collect information necessary for the purpose of impact monitoring from the project beneficiaries.

27. The following financial decisions could be considered in the preparation of the future Programme:

- The actions of mobility as well as the Grundtvig programme could gain a larger financial share in the future Programme. Additionally, the provision of post-initial or adult learning could be promoted in other sectoral programmes without increasing the financial weight of Grundtvig;
- Within and across the sectoral programmes possible expansion can concern the following: expanding the Comenius actions of Regio partnerships and eTwinning to other sectoral programmes, adopting projects for the transfer of innovations (based on the experience of Leonardo da Vinci) under other sectoral programmes and targeting early school leavers or other specific groups or themes under Grundtvig. On the other hand, it is recommended to re-focus the implementation of the centralised actions by strategically targeting the future funding on fewer larger cooperation projects (based on more stringent calls for proposals or and other implementation instruments).