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The Institute for Social Work and Social Education – ISS (DE)

Nicolaus Copernicus University – NCU (PL)

Centre for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences – HAS (HU)

Norton Radstock College – NRC (UK)



Learn to coexist Learn to thrive

**The Impact of Lifelong
Learning Policies
on the Inclusion
of Vulnerable Groups**



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The Impact of Lifelong Learning Policies on the Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups

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1. INTRODUCTION





1. INTRODUCTION

The project "Impact of Lifelong Learning Policies on the Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups" supported original research carried out from a transnational perspective on the impact of major policies or strategies implemented by member states in the context of their National Action Plans against poverty and social exclusion. The focus of the research has been on lifelong learning as a "mediator" of social inclusion policies, especially those aiming at the integration of vulnerable groups in the labour market. The rural-urban dichotomy and the question of immigration, both in the rural and urban contexts, have been also central issues in the research.

The project was implemented by a partnership combining actors from the public, private and civil society sectors, with expertise in education, research and social inclusion or rural issues. The partnership includes the following organisations:

- The European Academy for Sustainable Rural Development "Euracademy Association" (EU) - project leader.
- PRISMA-Centre for Development Studies (GR)
- The Danish National Institute of Social Research (DK)
- The Institute for Social Work and Social Education (DE).
- Nicolaus Copernicus University (PL)
- Centre for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HU)
- Norton Radstock College (UK)

The partners have chosen and defined their target groups taking into consideration the way the National Action Plans for Inclusion (NAPs/incl) classify the "vulnerable groups" and the reasons for such classification. Two main categories of target groups were defined:

- Economic and political immigrants
- Members of disadvantaged or marginalised rural communities

The research methodology followed three steps, as summarised below.

1. A review of the literature was conducted on the issues that determine European policy on social inclusion, with particular reference to lifelong learning and the urban-rural dichotomy.
2. An audit of policies that are included in the NAPs/incl and of those that may have further been adopted by national governments to implement NAP strategies, with special reference to lifelong learning and to rural disadvantage and marginalisation, was carried out. The Audit was conducted in the eight countries participating in the research and concentrated especially on those policies that address the target groups of the study.
3. Fieldwork was conducted through personal interviews, internet surveys and focus groups in the eight countries participating in the research. This included:
 - A survey of "key" persons in public agencies with a central role in the formulation and implementation of NAP/incl policies. The sample of this survey was complemented with



NGOs that support public policy through their own independent activities.

- A survey of service providers, mostly organisations that offer education and training, guidance and counselling services to vulnerable groups and experience day-to-day contact with them.
- Focus group discussions, involving the main stakeholders in the social inclusion policies, i.e. government departments with a direct involvement in forming NAP/incl policies, public organisations implementing NAP policy, members of the civil society and local service providers for the target groups.

The results of the project activities are reported in detail in the website of the project www.lll4inclusion.net.

The project was co-funded by the European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG, Social Protection and Social Inclusion: Policy Coordination, in the context of the Community Action Programme to combat Social Exclusion 2002-2006, Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the Open Method of Coordination.

We wish to thank all those who contributed to the successful completion of our research, most of all our respondents to the surveys from the public, private and civil society sectors and our participants and speakers in the international seminar held in Copenhagen on 20 November 2006, who offered valuable comments on our results and helped to shape our conclusions.

This book has become possible by the hard work of the members of the transnational research team, who participated in all phases of the work and wrote the national reports of the NAP Audit and the surveys in each participating country. The members of the research team are, in alphabetical order, per country:

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Athens, February 2007

Fouli Papageorgiou

President, Euracademy Association







2. LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION.

A review of the literature

Social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon, linked to a variety of disadvantaged situations created by poverty, unemployment, disability, immigration and ethnic diversity, referring also to such marginalised groups as drug addicts, the homeless, street children etc. Social exclusion affects the individual's opportunities to take part in the economic and social life of the wider community, resulting to very limited access to services necessary to ensure quality of life, and to employment. There is a high correlation between poverty and social exclusion, although the two concepts must be distinguished (Room, 1994). Social exclusion covers both the causes and effects of poverty, discrimination and disadvantage. According to the Lothian Anti Poverty Alliance (2001) groups, communities and individuals who are unable to realise their potential and participate and contribute to society because of deprivation, poverty or discrimination, are excluded.

Working definitions of the term exclusion have been given by international bodies like the ILO, and the EU. The International Labour Organisation defines social exclusion as being "a state of poverty in which individuals cannot access the living conditions which would enable them both to satisfy their essential needs (food, education, health, etc.) and participate in the development of the society in which they live" (Smelser et al., 2001). The European Union adopts a wider definition, stressing that social exclusion occurs when people cannot fully participate or contribute to society because of "the denial of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights". It is indicated in the definitions that exclusion results from "a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, bad health and family breakdown".

In the literature, the term "social exclusion" is interpreted in many distinct ways (Lee & Murie, 1997), but the most widely accepted definition emphasises the inability to participate effectively in economic, social, and cultural life, resulting in alienation and distance from mainstream society (Duffy, 1995). Thus the exclusion of socially vulnerable groups can be defined in terms of economy, society and culture, emphasising that economic marginalisation can threaten the social fabric, leading not only to exclusion of groups but also more generally to social unrest (Cohen, 1987, Wessels & Rometsch, 1996, Spencer, 2003).

In 2000, the Lisbon Summit laid down the strategic goal for the EU of becoming the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010, capable of sustainable economic growth by reducing social exclusion, and putting education and training at the centre of its policies (European Council, 2001). With the Lisbon strategy the EU had been clear about the crucial role of lifelong learning in achieving economic progress and social cohesion. Also, the Resolution on Lifelong Learning adopted by the Council of the EU (Education and Youth) stressed that lifelong learning must cover learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-



formal/informal education (Commission of the European Communities, 2001a). The Report of the High Level Group relates lifelong learning to issues of social inclusion in terms of accessible quality education systems, increased competitiveness and reduced unemployment (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). The dynamic interaction between these policy areas is at the heart of the EU policy agenda, which was adopted by the Nice Summit in December 2000, just nine months after the Lisbon Summit (DG Employment & Social Affairs, 2004).

Socio-economic integration is a dynamic process which requires not only the socially disadvantaged groups to adapt but also EU member states to create the necessary opportunities for the full economic, social, cultural and political integration of these groups. The PISA study (2000) has shown that human capital investment in post-compulsory education increased the employment and earning capacity of the individual. However, high participation rates in lifelong learning seemed to be a privilege of mostly those who already were well educated. Further, a recent OECD report (2006a) refers to the growing evidence that learning and investment in human capital is associated not just with increased GDP, but also with greater civic participation and higher reported well-being. Yet, a comprehensive framework supporting the transfer of qualifications and competences, either between levels of formal education and training or across institutional and national borders has not been developed yet (OECD, 2006a).

Subsequently, the knowledge economy may seem threatening to those with low skills and low educational aspirations and this is evident in the division between those having access to lifelong learning for employment and adaptability, personal development and active citizenship and those who remain excluded (Philip & Shucksmith, 2003). In line with the previous statement, the main findings of CEDEFOP's (2003) report on the views of EU citizens on lifelong learning showed that (a) the majority of people in most countries register a gap for "new" skills; (b) those with lower levels of education are most likely to say that they neither possess nor do they see these skills as useful in their lives; (c) learning context preferences distinguish clearly between active learners and detached learners; (d) respondents with high levels of education and holding high-status jobs are the most proactive learning citizens; (e) more than half of EU citizens had taken up recent learning because they had been advised or requested to do so; and (f) de-motivated learners are those who consistently report that they simply do not want to take up learning of any kind. The findings of the report showed that there are wide differences among member states in access to education and training, while Europe faces not simply a digital skills gap, but more broadly a "new skills" gap (CEDEFOP, 2003).

In response to these emerging trends, recent measures concerning Vocational Education and Training (VET) have been implemented in all EU member states. In 2001, EU member states produced their first National Action Plans (NAPs) on Social Inclusion, which



were the concrete outcome of the new stage in the development of the European social agenda agreed at Lisbon (Commission of the European Communities, 2003). The majority of the NAPs showed that participation rates in lifelong learning vary widely between EU countries. Whereas Sweden and Denmark have participation rates at around 30%, most European countries struggle to reach the 5% mark with the European average being 9.9% and the Lisbon objective being 12.5% (Jenkins et al. 2002). In some countries (e.g. Hungary and Germany) weaknesses in the national education systems were highlighted while the most startling conclusion was the realisation that social background is the most decisive factor for access to and success in education. In some other EU member states (e.g. Greece and Poland) the inability of certain vulnerable groups to benefit educationally becomes significantly augmented by such factors as poverty and residence in rural territories, especially remote ones (CEDEFOP, 2001). In general, socially vulnerable groups, especially ethnic minorities and rural residents, remain significantly under-represented in education across Europe, tend to enrol in schools with lower academic standards have higher dropout rates and are mostly affected by the digital divide.

Education and training have drawn ample attention in recent years, in terms of equity; and accessibility to vulnerable social groups has increased through national legislation and European policy. Lifelong learning clearly focuses on learning as an active process that is learner-driven and encompass the idea of lifelong human development through a continuously supportive process. In this context, access to education should be considered as the ability to participate, with "participation" implying that people have the opportunity to take forward their personal interests, acquire new skills and improve their living standards (Grint, 1994). Yet, discrimination and limited access to education become inevitable due to constraints that may hinder physical access to learning places and resources; cultural access (e.g. due to prejudice or ignorance); financial access (e.g. due to poverty); and spatial access that may become decisive when coupled with the above noted constraints (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000).

Social inclusion is a process ensuring that opportunities to fully participate in social life and enjoy an acceptable standard of living are available; in contrast, social exclusion covers both the causes and effects of poverty, discrimination and disadvantage (Commission of the European Communities, 2006a). Given that social exclusion is a multidimensional and multifaceted phenomenon, any attempt to combat it in the context of lifelong learning, should be based on dynamic processes (Reimer, 2004) which can identify different pathways and integrate society's distinct civic, economic, social, cultural and other characteristics, without any kind of discrimination (Namerwirth & Weber, 1987, Lash & Friedman, 1992, Lash & Urry, 1994). The EU highlighted the link between economic strength and its social model as well as the crucial role of lifelong learning in establishing this link. A key challenge is to move from an agenda of tackling social exclusion to one that fosters social inclusion, i.e. inclusive labour market, guaranteeing adequate resources, tackling educational disadvantage, preserving



family solidarity, promoting gender equality, etc. (Commission of the European Communities, 2005a). The value of lifelong learning was given high priority at the EU Council meetings of Lisbon and Stockholm. However, socio-economic development and social inclusion policies both share a high degree of uncertainty regarding their capacity to produce the desired effects (OECD, 2006a).

European lifelong learning policies aim to promote an "active society" rather than a "dual society" (Kirk & Shucksmith, 1990). The shift now is to make lifelong learning accessible to all those who need it, like socially vulnerable groups, and help everybody realise the contribution of lifelong learning to active citizenship (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2002). Yet, whereas rural areas cover most of the EU territory, most research on social exclusion focuses on urban areas and little is known about the socio-economic characteristics of people living in European rural areas. As part of its task to promote regional development, the EU aims to create sustainable jobs in rural areas, invest in infrastructure, promote regeneration and structural adjustment, support local development initiative, and invest in education and other social services (Commission of the European Communities, 2007). However, both rural and urban areas are subject to processes of development which interact with various strategies, structures and stakeholders and give rise to a diverse range of impacts and adjustments (Shucksmith, 1994). Curtin et al. (1996) argue that rural areas are distinguished by the dominance of agriculture and are associated with a distinctive organisation of space, and as such the problem of social exclusion is more distinctive. Shucksmith et al. (1997) stated that rural areas are considered either in terms of recreation and limited development or are perceived as resources to be exploited. So, the development (or deprivation) of rural areas derives from essentially contradictory discourses (Shucksmith, 2004).

Access to education for all is a necessary prerequisite for economic development, whereas promoting educational equity is a key for social inclusion (OECD, 2001). Nevertheless, learning opportunities remain unevenly distributed. In spite of endeavours to improve the educational attainment of socially disadvantaged groups, their educational achievements lag behind that of the majority groups (Modood, 2003). Given that the fundamental role of education and training to break the inter-generational transmission of social exclusion has been highlighted, the EU devotes a lot of attention to access to education as a crucial right that prevents social exclusion and supports re-integration into civil society (Kassimati, 2001). However, there is a tendency to see education primarily through the prism of the access to the labour market and not to sufficiently acknowledge its importance for inclusion in civil society. The interconnections between lifelong learning and other social dimensions need to be further investigated, so that EU policies will be better informed regarding their added value and real effectiveness (Commission of the European Communities, 2003).



Moreover, a recent report published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism & Xenophobia (2004) noted that indirect and institutional forms of discrimination often contribute to the reproduction of inequalities in the field of education and a number of actions are proposed which include (a) the collection of diverse data to monitor discrimination and foster equality in the area of education; (b) more EU-sponsored research studies using qualitative comparative methods; (c) improved lifelong learning programmes that meet the needs of the learners at all educational levels and types; (d) development of clear guidelines for authorities in charge of lifelong learning programme development at national, regional and local levels; and (e) a more fair-minded allocation of funds to counteract the trend of ethnic segregation in communities, workplaces, etc.

EU Member States agreed at the Feira European Council to develop and implement coherent strategies for lifelong learning with a view to make quality learning opportunities accessible for all, on an ongoing basis (European Council, 2002). To this end, traditional educational systems must become more open and flexible, so that learners can identify individual learning pathways, suitable to their needs (European Commission, 2004). In order to create a learning culture and combat social exclusion, all relevant actors, inside and outside the formal systems, must collaborate in order that strategies work "on the ground", focus on the transparent allocation of resources, increase learning opportunities, raise participation levels and stimulate demand for learning (Dennis & Guio, 2004).

Nevertheless, there is still a considerable number of people with little prospect of finding a job and thus at high risk of remaining at the margins of society. Although certain policy measures have been implemented, they in themselves are ineffective because social inclusion involves a wide range of interrelated issues. In the context of lifelong learning, the "one size fits all" approach would not address the problem of social exclusion adequately. A balanced distribution of opportunities for education and training is crucial for the sustainable development of urban and rural areas (Shucksmith et al. 1997). Cooperation between urban and rural areas should create comprehensive social and economic benefits, since these areas can provide a valuable complement to each other.

According to the Commission of the European Communities (2001b) joint action is required for the effective coordination of lifelong learning strategies. Such strategies should, inter alia, aim to (i) promote partnerships and active involvement at national, regional and local levels; (ii) understand the needs for learning amongst citizens and the wider society; (iii) address the impact of lifelong learning on learning facilitators and support their roles; (iv) understand the learners' interests and motivate those who encounter problems in attending or finding relevant training programmes; (v) take into account the implications of the knowledge-based society for the needs of learners and labour markets; (vi) develop new incentives to investment and re-channel adequate resources across the spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning; (vii) make learning more flexible, integrated and effective in



order to address issues of equality of opportunity (especially for those at risk of exclusion); and (viii) promote more positive perceptions of learning and raising awareness of any entitlements to and benefits of learning from the earliest age.

In spite of the existence of support programmes and integration initiatives to introduce new curricula to suit the needs of a multicultural body of learners, inequalities continue to persist to a great extent. It is important to gain a good understanding of the particularities of each national educational system in order to understand more fully the relevance of the unequal distribution of opportunities between different regions and social groups. This calls for a more efficient use of existing resources in order to raise the interest and empower EU citizens to move freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries, and make the most of their knowledge and competences (Commission of the European Communities, 2006a; 2006d).

The European social model is based on the active participation of all EU citizens in economic and social life. Greater social cohesion is a basic prerequisite for the success of the Lisbon Strategy and as such all European and national policies aim to combat the marginalisation of socially vulnerable groups. Unemployment, illiteracy and poverty, among other social issues, are clearly associated with social distress and as such giving people access to education and work is probably the best socio-political way of fighting social exclusion (Commission of the European Communities, 2006d). Over the last few years, EU member states have tried out many different forms of enhancing active citizenship, e.g. mediation and training for immigrants, colleges and guidance centres to improve completion rates in VET and additional financial support for mentoring and improving achievement in VET (CEDEFOP, 2007).

Nevertheless, rural social exclusion is a concept that has not been researched systematically and is difficult to measure. Its different aspects and manifestations include poverty, unemployment, and lack of facilities and services, especially those relating to education. The academic literature on social exclusion tends to concentrate its interest on urban poverty and deprivation and on the generic causes of exclusion, usually remoteness and lack of accessibility from the main economic and political centres at national and European level. However, policies addressed to rural areas suffering from exclusion must deal with the absence of rigorous indicators, something that makes it difficult to assess the impact of development initiatives targeted at disadvantaged rural communities (Shucksmith, 2000; Vandenbrande, 2006).

On the other hand, the integration of immigrants has a strong local dimension since they usually settle in local communities and require support from local stakeholders. NAPs have defined priorities and outlined measures to enhance social inclusion. National policies designed to manage immigration are rarely accompanied by strong policies to support integration, particularly where this relates to the adaptation of labour market and education policies to the needs of immigrants (OECD, 2006b). It is evident, therefore, that the gap



between immigrants and native learners as well as between rural and urban communities persists, augmented by existing barriers to education and training and limited, access to the labour market, thus accentuating the problem of social exclusion (CEDEFOP, 2007, forthcoming).

Lifelong learning policies for the inclusion of socially vulnerable groups need to be carefully designed and take into account the various aspects and characteristics of the target groups in different EU member states. Thinking globally and acting locally may be an appropriate formula to tackle the problem of social exclusion since a single European policy framework cannot be applied to all EU member states. According to the Commission of the European Communities (2006d) a comprehensive policy mix should combine (i) a link to the labour market through job opportunities and/or vocational training; (ii) income support at a level that is sufficient for people to have a dignified life; and (iii) better access to services that may help remove some of the hurdles encountered by some individuals in entering mainstream society, supporting their re-insertion, for example, through education and training.

Moreover, on the premise that flexible and adaptive national policies when combined with strong local actions will make the difference, OECD (2006a) suggests that at national level it is important to (i) ensure that the national immigration system meets local labour market needs; (ii) develop a consistent overarching policy framework which includes robust anti-discrimination legislation; (iii) develop open and flexible mainstream programmes; (iv) support the recognition of prior competences; and (v) ensure a strong culture of evaluation. Following this, the same report proclaims that at a local level, crucial actions must focus on how to (i) ensure strong coordination between institutions; (ii) build local partnerships; (iii) support innovation through flexible local budgets; (iv) support adaptation to the needs of the socially disadvantaged groups; and (v) consider the timing of interventions (OECD, 2006a).

With reference to a recent report by CEDEFOP (2007, p.76) it can be argued that (i) VET is a major pillar of lifelong learning, promoting employability as well as citizenship; (ii) VET constitutes an interface between different policy areas but in order to promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups, comprehensive policy packages are needed; (iii) competence-based approaches combined with individualised guidance, recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as tailored training plans are vital ingredients of the required policy mix; (iv) collaboration and networking at regional, municipal, sectoral and local level are key to reach out to the groups at risk of exclusion; (v) clear strategies and targets, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes are prerequisites for effective and efficient use of funds; and (vi) integration strategies, which include education and training as well as recognition of prior learning are vital to ensure social cohesion.

The knowledge-based society, along with wider socio-economic trends such as globalisation, demographic change and international mobility, presents the EU citizens with many



potential benefits as well as challenges. New skills and competences are a powerful engine for economic growth as well as for a more inclusive society. Given the current uncertain economic climate, investing in people becomes all the more important. However, the question remains as to whether there is an integrated policy for the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups that utilises the dimensions of lifelong learning as "pillars" for the creation of synergies with other measures, targeting the elimination of marginalisation and exclusion (European Council, 2002). The enlarged EU is now facing new integration challenges, mainly because its policies have not brought the desired results or they have not been updated and revised, in order to be adapted to a more heterogeneous society. Social inclusion policies and measures in the EU cut across a wide range of issues, covering to a greater or lesser extent the two main areas of concern of the present study: immigrants and rural disadvantage (Commission of the European Communities, 2005b).

3. AN AUDIT OF NAPS/INCLUSION IN EIGHT COUNTRIES.

**The contribution
of lifelong learning**





3. AN AUDIT OF NAPS/INCLUSION IN EIGHT COUNTRIES.

The contribution of lifelong learning

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings together the main findings of the "audit" of the National Action Plans for Inclusion (NAPs/incl) in the eight countries participating in this project, performed by the national project teams. The NAP/incl "audit" reports examined the policies included in each NAP that relate to lifelong learning as a means for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, in particular the target groups of this study, namely immigrants and disadvantaged rural communities. The national "audit" reports refer also, selectively, to other complementary policies that are adopted by the national authorities, that may not be directly mentioned in the NAPs, but help to provide a comprehensive picture of the lifelong learning policies and strategies adopted by national governments to combat or prevent social exclusion of the target groups.

The European Union Council held in Lisbon in March 2000 set a priority for the Commission and the Member States to take steps to eradicate poverty by the year 2010 and co-ordinate their policies aiming at combating social exclusion. In this context, Member States have prepared National Action Plans, the so-called NAPs/Inclusion. These "new look" plans could be seen as statements of political commitment by the Member States in a European-wide effort to maximise economic performance in a difficult global climate but without compromising social justice. The vision of Europe becoming by 2010 "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" is still in the process of becoming. However, as already discussed in the previous chapter, lifelong learning was seen as one of the most important pillars to sustain economic growth based on knowledge.

Lifelong learning can take many forms and may be adapted to suit the needs of all. Lifelong learning may become instrumental in helping the most vulnerable groups in society like immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and rural populations facing the risk of exclusion, if appropriate policies come into force. The definitions of lifelong learning adopted by the European Commission in "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" (2000) and the resolution on lifelong learning adopted by the Council of the European Union (Education and Youth, 27 June 2002) have been taken as a basis to identify the lifelong learning policies included in the NAPs/incl. The above definitions centre on two complementary approaches: they see lifelong learning as "all purposeful learning activity undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competencies" and as "learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement" including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

In relation to the target groups of this study, we note that most NAPs identify



immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion or as marginalised groups. The rural - urban divide does not play a major part in inclusion policies, but disadvantaged rural communities are targeted in some NAPs due to high unemployment of rural areas, poverty, low educational achievement and/or a dismantled social welfare fabric. In general, key strategies of inclusion concentrate on education and training as necessary steps to employment and social integration. Five national reports concentrate on immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers: those of Greece, Denmark, Germany, Spain and Sweden. Three other reports concentrate on disadvantaged rural communities, suffering from poverty and/or long term or endemic unemployment: those of Hungary, Poland and the UK.

The "audit" of NAPs has followed the same methodology in all countries, which consisted of seven steps:

1. Make a record of all mentions of policies or measures which refer directly or indirectly to lifelong learning and to the target groups of the study.
2. Identify the source of policies by the government department responsible, so that the full text of the policy can be accessed (i.e. Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, etc.).
3. Provide a short description of the policies/measures, their aims and the means/mechanism foreseen for their implementation, the actions funded, the stage of implementation they are undergoing, and their evaluation.
4. Identify the agencies responsible for the implementation of the policies and measures (at National, Regional, or Local level).
5. Describe how these policies/measures contribute to national priorities as stated in the NAPs; find out the priority of lifelong learning policies as inclusion vehicles for vulnerable groups.
6. Provide examples of Good Practice in the field of lifelong learning in relation to the inclusion of the target groups.

The rest of this chapter is organised in two sections, according to the two target groups of the study, i.e. immigrants-refugees etc., and disadvantaged rural communities.

2. LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES, IMMIGRATION AND INCLUSION

Lifelong learning plays a particular role in inclusion policies within the general framework of education policies. Although all examined NAPs emphasise the importance of education and training for integration purposes, they vary considerably on the way they handle this issue especially in its lifelong learning dimension.

Countries with a long tradition of hosting immigrants like Germany, Denmark, and Sweden have more developed policy frameworks compared to countries that have been



traditionally "net-exporters" of immigrants like Greece and Spain, and have only a recent history of inwards migration. What all have in common though, as a result of European Union efforts, are policies of inclusion through lifelong learning stretching from the "cradle to the grave". All five examined NAPs/incl devote a lot of attention to access to education as a potent tool for social inclusion in the social and work life. Lifelong learning, as a medium of education that goes beyond formal learning structures including non-formal and informal learning, receives less attention. Depending on the immigration history of the country and the extent to which inclusion policies are developed in a comprehensive framework, such policies refer to all stages of a person's education career, with emphasis on pre-school and school education, as is the case with Denmark, Sweden and Germany; or to vocational adult education of a "remedial" nature, as is the case in Greece and Spain. Early childhood education and support for parents is seen as an important factor in breaking intergenerational poverty and social exclusion. On the other hand, lifelong learning that is taken up after formal education is orientated mostly on integration to the labour market and on giving a second chance to those adults that either missed schooling or are in need of upgrading their skills and competencies.

All five NAPs examined under this heading pay considerable attention to language teaching and cultural familiarisation, which is by now a requirement for taking up and maintaining lawful residency in an EU country.

2.1 Schooling and integration of children and families

School education, starting even at kindergarten level, plays a significant role in the inclusion policies of Germany, Denmark and Sweden and to a lesser extent in the policies of Greece and Spain targeting immigrants, refugees or ethnic minority groups.

In **Denmark** emphasis is given to ways of combating negative intergenerational transmission, mainly looking at the education of immigrant children and youngsters. Statistics show that nine out of ten native Danish children and second generation immigrant children continue to upper secondary school while only two-thirds of immigrant children who arrived at the age of six to twelve do so. However, both first and second generation immigrant children have much higher drop-out rates than native Danes in upper secondary, further and higher education. Furthermore, the drop out rates for immigrants are especially high in the vocational education sector and especially so for male immigrants.

Second generation immigrants originating in non-western countries also experience lower employment rates than native Danes, but the employment gap between second generation immigrants and native Danes is smaller than the employment gap between first generation immigrants and native Danes. To alleviate the situation, the Danish Government introduced the action plans "A good beginning for all children" and "Better Integration" in



2003, both of which are included in the NAP/incl, aiming to combat negative intergenerational transmission and achieve a fuller integration of immigrants into the Danish society. The action plan "A good beginning for all children" contains education measures for pre-school children, primary school children and secondary school children. Some of the measures are directed towards the parents in order to make them more supportive to their children. The "Better Integration" plan consists of 114 initiatives in different policy areas, focusing on three integration issues, that is, civil society, labour market and a fair educational experience of immigrant children.

Initiatives that target pre-school and school children in Denmark include language instruction of three year olds with immigrant background; and the dispersal of children with weak Danish language competencies to schools in which the majority of pupils are native Danes. Finally, language tests for bilingual pupils, national tests in different subjects and the setting up of targets in primary and lower secondary schools as well as better co-operation between the competent authorities are used as tools of combating negative intergenerational transmission and achieve fuller integration.

In **Germany**, the NAP/incl also stresses the importance of school education. The expansion of all-day schools is one of the central policy targets in Germany aiming to provide better opportunities of formal and non-formal learning to vulnerable groups and immigrants. The model programme "Support for Children and Young Persons with a Migrant Background" (FÖRMIG) came into force in September 2004, sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the participating states with a total budget of 12,8m Euro. The programme aims to foster innovative approaches in the fields of language support and education, to evaluate the actions and facilitate transfer of good practice as well as to supply data for future educational planning. The programme includes:

- a) Language support based on individual language assessment.
- b) Continuous language support, language education and support in German, in the language of origin and in foreign languages.
- c) Vocational training and support in the transition to professional life.

Several language learning initiatives exist that target children: for example, a language programme tailored for children is the initiative of the Baden-Württemberg State Foundation, entitled "Speak up" (2002-2007); or the Bavarian Ministry of Culture's preliminary language course for immigrant children and the project "Frühstart" (Early Start) which introduces German language and culture learning at kindergarten level. Similar courses are offered by most Länder governments.

In the State of Hesse language classes are targeted to mothers aiming to help them in supporting their children's efforts in learning German by acting as role models. The programme "Social skills for parents and children: prevention of antisocial developments and promotion of integration" targets particularly Turkish primary school pupils and their



families, focusing on linguistic and communicative skills as well as problem solving. As part of the project, various training sessions for children and their parents are offered at kindergartens and schools. Another similar programme is the German-Turkish parent letters that addresses questions surrounding the upbringing of a child in the first eight years of life from the perspective of German but also immigrant parents. The objective is to strengthen parent action skills, information on the social system, suggestions for participation in daily school life and then the integration of immigrant children and their parents in the German school system, tackling prejudices.

In **Sweden**, since 1 July 1986 the municipalities are responsible for providing Swedish tuition for immigrants, that is language teaching for immigrants "Svenska för invandrare" (Sfi). Sfi aims to provide adult immigrants with basic knowledge and proficiency in the Swedish language as well as knowledge about Swedish society. The municipalities are obliged to provide basic Swedish language tuition for immigrants, for an average of 525 hours. Moreover, every municipal authority must as soon as possible, and at the latest within three months, ensure that tuition is offered to everyone aged over 16 who is resident in their territory and lacks a basic command of the Swedish language. Tuition is gratis for the students, as Sfi is part of the adult education system in Sweden.

A best practice example of promoting integration through language teaching is the Oresund upper secondary school in Malmö where the majority of pupils are immigrants. The school runs the normal Swedish curriculum but also runs a study workshop called "the greenhouse". There, four teachers speaking the mother tongue of pupils are stationed to help those who need assistance with their studies in any subject. The school has won a number of awards for excellence and for promoting integration in the city of Malmö. In the same city, a programme running since 2000 is providing basic literacy instruction in languages other than Swedish. The instruction takes place in a "folk high school", an adult education institution. The basic literacy education is provided in two steps. During the second step, part of the instruction is offered in Swedish, in groups that include speakers of other languages. The instruction for further steps is primarily in Swedish. Students learn about Swedish society and culture, citizen's rights and duties and can study basic maths, computer skills and participate in sports activities.

Also, the Ministry for Education, Research and Culture started in May 2003 the implementation of a four-year pilot project in segregated areas promoting subject teaching in the pupils' mother tongue for grades 7-9 of compulsory education.

In **Greece**, intercultural or multi-cultural education has been promoted by the Ministry of Education in the last few years. Cross-cultural education is offered through a special programme of the University of Athens and in 26 schools all over Greece. 13 of these schools offer primary education while another 13 offer secondary one. For a school to be designated as multi-cultural, the number of foreign and/or repatriate Greek students should



at least be close to 45% of the total number of school children. The curriculum is the same as in ordinary schools but the language of instruction may be other than Greek.

For the smooth integration of foreign and repatriate Greek students, special reception classes are offered at two levels that may last from 1 to 3 years. Those classes offer language and homework assistance outside school hours. At level 1 (primary education) the emphasis is on language instruction while at level 2 (secondary education) 18-22 hours per week are set aside for further (supplementary) instruction of the target group who also attend 7-13 hours of normal schooling. There is also provision for special crammer classes for those students that did not have the chance to attend the special reception ones.

The General Secretariat for Adult Education offers training and counselling support to Roma, Muslim, Repatriate and Immigrant families in order to minimise the school drop out rates among the children of these families. Emphasis is given on language skills, which are seen as a vehicle for inclusion. The programme is of 150 hours' duration, divided in three modules, including Greek Language and Civilisation (100 hours), Counselling (25 hours) and Health Education (25 hours).

All the above initiatives are funded by the Community Support Framework and form part of the NAP policies of Greece.

In **Spain**, the strategies and plans for the integration of immigrants differ from region to region as the Spanish system of government is devolved. At school, immigrant children are integrated socially by learning the language and culture of the host society. This is an important issue for the Autonomous Communities, who have their own language and identity. For example, the Generalitat of Catalonia (the Catalan Government) pursues an immigration policy aiming at the inclusion of immigrants on the one hand, whilst preserving the Catalan language and culture on the other hand. It is worth noting that the language of "integration" in Catalonia is Catalan, not Spanish. All autonomous municipalities run language courses.

2.2 Adult education

Language instruction is offered apart from children to adult immigrants in all the aforementioned countries. In all examined NAPs the learning of the native language and culture is stressed as essential not only for inclusion but also as a requirement for obtaining or maintaining a work permit.

In **Greece**, the educational project "Teaching of the Greek language as second language to employed immigrants" offered by the Secretariat of Adult Education, is designed for all working immigrants and their spouses who wish to learn Greek, aiming at their smooth integration into the economic, social and cultural life of their host country. The main aim of the project is to give the opportunity to the participants to get acquainted with the different



aspects of everyday life in Greece and the history of the country beyond merely offering them the tools of communication. The project is targeting four levels of competence (A, B, C and D) each of 100 hours duration, following the EC model, and prepares students for taking up a national exam of language competence.

Another project "Greek language for immigrants", is part of a wider policy to encourage the social and economic integration of the immigrant community. Phase 1 of the project took place in 2003 and involved almost 7,000 immigrants. A second phase began in 2004 targeting 7,600 immigrants. In both phases, approximately 60% of participants were women. Both the above programmes are run by certified Vocational Training Centres, while certification of competence in Greek is provided through examination, by the Centre for the Greek Language, the Ministry of Education's official agency for the teaching of Greek. The objective has been for 18,000 individuals to benefit by the end of 2006. Both projects are ESF-funded.

Also, the Ministry of Education runs a number of projects addressing adults facing a high risk of exclusion, the most notable of which is the Second Chance Schools, for adults who have not completed the compulsory schooling. These schools are open to immigrants, provided that they have a working knowledge of the Greek language.

In **Germany** since 2005 there are compulsory "Federal Language Courses" for newly-arrived immigrants consisting of 600 hours language training and an orientation course lasting 30 hours that provides basic knowledge of the legal system, history and culture of Germany. The action programme "Lebensbeleitendes Lernen für alle" (Lifelong Learning for All) started in 2001 by the Federal Labour Office with the cooperation of the states and social partners. The programme combines research and practical steps promoting lifelong learning.

Furthermore, several job-related language projects are implemented by the Federal Employment Agency aiming to increase the language competence for job seeking purposes, linked to specific requirements of job-related language skills.

2.3 Lifelong learning and gender

Special emphasis is given in the NAPs/incl to the gender dimension of exclusion. For immigrant women, gender stereotypes leading to forms of subordination multiply their effects with the added disadvantage of the status of immigrant.

In **Denmark**, the Ministry of Gender Equality has since 2004 focused specifically on young girls with immigrant background and their opportunities for selecting education options and jobs. An action plan for eliminating gender barriers for immigrants was published in January 2006.

The Danish Centre for Information of Women and Gender Research (Kvinfo) operates a mentor scheme for women financed by the Ministry for Refugees, Immigration and



Integration Affairs. Kvinfo matches immigrant women (mentees) with women who are firmly established members of the Danish workforce (mentors). The mentors provide access to their network, appropriate advice regarding job applications and job interviews, information on workplace culture, reassessment of job possibilities etc. The matching is based on the immigrants' education, profession and personal wishes. The "pair" meets once a month. Kvinfo conducts personal interviews with mentees as well as mentors to create a good match. Both parties have to draw up a contract and set specific goals to be accomplished within a fixed period of time (between 6 and 12 months). Sometimes, the immigrants could use the services of a mentor for a longer period than 12 months or they may change mentor if their needs have changed.

In **Germany** Gender Mainstreaming is a requirement for the implementation of all policies. The Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth and the non-partisan Women's Initiative Berlin, have established "Inter-Faith and InterCultural Education Centres" for women. The Ministry for Education and Research finances an e-learning platform for girls called "LizzyNet" that addresses particularly immigrant girls and provides online studies, new media training and mediates scientific and technical study content to girls.

In **Greece**, the General Secretariat for Equality, implements several programmes of integrated actions in favour of women's entry to the labour market, all of which include vocational training. An example is the programme Persefone which combines counselling, career advice, training and childcare (while the mothers are being trained). However, these programmes are not specifically targeted at immigrant women, but include a quota of 10% kept aside for the participation of vulnerable group members, among which immigrant and ethnic minority women are included. In practice, few immigrant women take part in these activities.

2.4 Lifelong learning, public libraries and culture cafés

Access to and participation in cultural activities with a learning component play a very important role in promoting inclusion and in preventing and reducing poverty and social exclusion and should be seen as part of the wider sphere of lifelong learning. Cultural projects can also contribute to the inclusion of immigrant communities, as the recognition of diversity in society's cultural policies is likely to play a significant integrationist role. Most EC Member States have shown little understanding of the role of culture as a social inclusion factor. It is worth noting some examples of best practice in this field, including the issuing of cultural cards to vulnerable groups in Greece; and Denmark's efforts to approach immigrants through the libraries' network.

In **Denmark**, the campaign "The library - a gate to the Danish society" has been launched in 2003. The purpose of the campaign is to involve the immigrants more in the processes of information and learning that takes place at the libraries. The public libraries



are seen as neutral public rooms where learning is informal and voluntary. The librarian is encouraged to take a proactive, teaching role and actively seek out the immigrants. Some libraries arrange special learning centres where activities directed towards immigrants can take place. These centres also set up homework cafés.

In **Greece**, the issuing of a culture card to vulnerable groups that give free entry to them in archaeological sites, museums and other public cultural venues is in operation since 2003, when the initiative recruited 9.017 beneficiaries, who increased to 62,771 in 2004 and 80.000 in 2005. This can be seen as a measure that promotes lifelong learning based on individual initiative. Culture homes and culture cafés have been also established in Greece, operating as meeting places for young repatriate ethnic Greeks. Other cultural programmes introduced by the state in the context of the NAP policies include seminars in museums and cultural workshops for ethnic Greek repatriate children.

In **Germany** cultural organisations of immigrants have a long tradition. They provide cultural activities and opportunities for conviviality to their members as well as counselling and support, and intercultural learning opportunities.

In **Spain**, particular emphasis is placed on integration through culture. In the opinion of experts¹, immigrants suffer more from cultural exclusion than from economic and social exclusion. Such cultural exclusion stems from the very tight family networks that exist in Spain for natives, while immigrants usually arrive without their families and so are dependent on other types of networks for social integration. The activities offered by organisations like CEPAIM (a network of non-profit NGOs assisting immigrants with training, advice, cultural activities and job finding, supported by public funds) provide an example of integration which is geared mostly through culture. The Biblioteca Sant Pau i Santa Creu - Public library of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Autonomous Government of Catalonia) operates also on the same basis, i.e. that a good integration policy is grounded on the promotion of culture, both native and that of the target group's, and the reinforcement of cultural diversity. The Servei de Cultura Yrab i Altres Cultures (Service of Arabic and Other Cultures) is a specific resource of this library that exists since 1999 and is addressed to both children and adults. It is basically made up of a documentary base in Arabic and Urdu languages (books, newspapers, magazines, music, videos, games) and material on the Arabic culture in Catalan, Spanish and French. It also offers books and multimedia materials to learn the Catalan and Spanish languages.

¹ *Extranjeros en el purgatorio: Integración social de los inmigrantes en el espacio local*, Miguel Laparra, Ed. Ediciones Bellaterra, this research served as the basis to feed into the measures in the social inclusion plan dealing with immigration (reference cited in the Second Monitoring Report, "Group on non-governmental experts in the fight against poverty and social exclusion", National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2003-2005, Spain, written by Almenara Estudios Economicos y Sociales, S.L, Spain, p. 18



2.5 Lifelong learning and guidance/counselling

According to the Commission's Staff Working Paper COM(2006) 62 final, p. 121, guidance is a powerful tool to ensure inclusion and participation. However, only few Member States pay particular attention to it, and the overall impression is that the role of guidance has been underestimated. Attempts have been made to include guidance and counselling for education and lifelong learning in the integration policies of the examined NAPs and in the wider policy field addressing immigrants in the countries included in the study.

In **Denmark** the role of guidance is secured through the Guidance Act which came into force in 2004, primarily targeting young people up to the age of twenty five and promoting services for adults wishing to study in higher education programmes. To that effect youth and regional guidance centres have been established. One aspect of the guidance reform is that guidance has been professionalised. Children with immigrant background receive the same offers in relation to guidance as other children in Denmark, but more resources seem to be earmarked for them. For example, the Youth Guidance Centre in Copenhagen offers an information brochure in languages other than Danish.

In **Germany**, the Department of Further Education in Hamburg offers personal guidance through the project "Arriving-Prospering. Qualification Guidance for Migrants". A careers qualification network of immigrants (BQN) under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Education is in operation, focusing on vocational qualification guidance and building links between projects and measures aiming at improving the training opportunities for immigrants. Other initiatives focus on health issues, like the project "Migrants with Migrants - Intercultural Health Piloting in the State of Hesse". Within the framework of this project, immigrants who have been successfully integrated in Germany are selected and trained to be so-called "health pilots" for other immigrants. Under the political objective of NAP/incl's "mobilising all relevant bodies" the dialogue is organised in different counselling instances that form one "constant advisory centre": it brings together NGOs and federal and central government institutions through workshops and consultations with the public, such as the series of events "FORTEIL- Audience participation and social integration" or the "Nap'sens" project.

In **Greece**, guidance is given to parents through the schools run by the General Secretariat for Adult Education. The Ministry of Labour has introduced in the Operational Programme "Employment and Vocational Training 2002-2006" the action "Accompanying Support Services" (SYY) for the most vulnerable groups. The objective is to empower unemployed people belonging to vulnerable groups (including immigrants) by promoting their vocational training and providing counselling and guidance. 81 Action Plans for SYY have been in place in 2003. The plans include actions for counselling, psycho-social support, development of vocational and social skills and job search techniques.



2.6 Lifelong learning and awareness raising

Sensitisation campaigns against racism and xenophobia could be seen as part of lifelong learning policies as they have an educational, preventive and corrective character for both adults and children.

In **Greece**, the Special Secretariat for the Education of Expatriates and Intercultural Education of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, promotes sensitisation against racism and xenophobia through such projects as the:

- "Kallipateira". The project started as part of the "Olympic education" programme focusing on issues of equality and interculturalism (the eternal values of the Olympic ideal) offering education to children, covering the following themes: gender equality, human rights, toleration (of difference and other civilisations), fight of xenophobia and racism, social solidarity, promotion of the olympic ideals and sports.
- "Friendship Days". This is a new initiative introduced in December 2006 aiming to bring together students, parents and teachers in order to promote intercultural understanding. To that effect "friendship days" are organised by the parents' association of each school once or twice during each school year. Activities include artistic events, discussion fora, school bazaar with items made by the children or their parents, ethnic food tasting, music events, etc.

In **Denmark** a role-model scheme was put in place in 2003, when the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs launched the campaign "We need all young people". A team of 35 role models was set up consisting of successful young men and women of immigrant background. In 2006 a further team of 15 young immigrants was set up aiming at young parents. The campaign also includes other initiatives like increasing the enrolment of young people with immigrant background in vocational education institutions, and recruitment in social and health services as well as the police, emergency and defence services. Finally, the Danish government presented their "Strategy against ghettos" in 2004, which includes initiatives with the purpose of promoting homework assistance in socially deprived ghettos. It should be noted that the term "ghetto" was used deliberately for its negative connotations.

In **Germany** the "XENOS - Living and Working in Diversity" programme is part of the action programme "Youth for Tolerance and Democracy - against Right-Wing Extremism, Xenophobia, and Anti-Semitism" established by the German Government. The central issue of the programme is the implementation of new concepts of preventive youth work, aiming to strengthen democratic citizenship in combination with labour market measures.

2.7 Lifelong learning and VET for employment

Vocational Education and Training (VET) play a significant role in the integration



strategies as they are linked to employment, the most powerful channel of inclusion in a society. Studies have shown that immigrants from the former USSR and its satellites have more qualifications, including higher education ones, compared to immigrants from Africa and Latin America. However, Member States are slow to take advantage of this "brain reserve", as their systems of recognition of qualifications inhibit the process. For example, in Greece DOATAP (formerly DIKATSA) - the state institution that recognises higher education degrees gained abroad - places considerable obstacles to recognising immigrants' qualifications. On the other hand, language difficulties play an equally important role in gaining employment. Coupled with the fact that only legal immigrants and refugees are entitled to attend vocational education in most countries. Moreover, Trade Union Associations and the Ombudsman frequently have to come to the rescue of immigrants, regarding their employment rights.

In **Denmark**, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, the Danish Employers' Confederation and Local Government Denmark² have joined forces to launch a "Company-targeted integration project" (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2005). The project involves 14 local authorities in three counties, which come together with a range of workplaces to ensure that more immigrants get a job. The project is a combination of practical training in a firm, identifying competencies, teaching Danish and other relevant issues - for instance teaching culture and working conditions at the Danish workplaces as well as civic and professional/technical skills. This may include teaching practical subjects, as for example use of public transport and childcare arrangements.

In **Germany**, the Careers Qualification Network for Migrants (BQN) is linked to the model program for vocational qualification of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The goal of the programme is to link projects and measures at regional and local level in order to further advance the co-operation and gain new partners in the area of apprenticeship and employment training for immigrants. Also, Improving the education and training circumstances for young immigrants in the public sector is the aim of the VBO project in the city of Duisburg, sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research. The Ministry of Schools, Youth and Children in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and Employment fund the "Business and School" (BUS) model project in the State of North Rhine-Westphalia offering training and internships to youngsters performing weakly at school.

In **Greece**, the Operational Programme for Employment and Vocational Training (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity) and the Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training (Ministry of Education) include special measures addressed to the vocational training of immigrants. The former addresses mostly continuing training, after the completion of formal education, while the latter focuses on compulsory education. The two

² Local Government Denmark is the national organisation of municipalities.



Operational Programmes were meant to be closely connected, but currently the connection between initial vocational training and continuing training is not fully operational. Training measures addressing immigrants are also provided in the Regional Operational Programmes includes training actions as well as actions to promote employment. However, these training measures do not benefit immigrants, because they are mostly addressed to unemployed people, bearing official unemployment cards, which is a rare case for an immigrant in Greece.

3. LIFELONG LEARNING, RURAL AREAS AND INCLUSION

Lifelong learning policies in Hungary, Poland and the United Kingdom (UK), were examined in the context of the respective NAPs/incl in relation to the inclusion of disadvantaged rural populations suffering poverty and unemployment. Lifelong learning plays an important role for the introduction of this target group to the labour market and for securing employment and an acceptable standard of living. Although Hungary and Poland are two new members of the EU which emerged from the socialist era, and the United Kingdom is a long standing member enjoying high standards of living and a developed civil society, similarities can be found amongst these countries regarding the rural periphery. Hungary and Poland have witnessed the transformation of their countryside due to de-collectivisation and emigration. In the UK, gradual dismantling of the welfare state brought a decline in the quality of services and employment opportunities, thus broadening the gap between urban and rural areas. Therefore all the above countries face a challenge in addressing the marginalisation consequences of their rural periphery. In this context, lifelong learning can help in alleviating some of the effects of marginalisation.

Lifelong learning policies and the beneficiary effects of continuing education have a long tradition in Hungary and Poland although not in the context given by the European Commission and the Lisbon strategy. The two aforementioned countries, in the measures included in their first NAPs/incl since their accession, attempt to conform to the new realities. In the UK lifelong learning is a familiar concept with a long history of success in the fields of adult and continuing education. All three countries in their NAPs/incl try to address the problems of poverty, lack of services and skills deficiencies or much needed skills updating.

3.1 Lifelong learning and rural regeneration

In **Hungary**, one of the objectives of the NAP/incl (2004) is to provide community-based services that support reintegration in the labour market. The most important factor in combatting social exclusion in Hungary is to tackle unemployment and low employability, especially in rural areas, focusing on the most disadvantaged groups, such as the Roma, unskilled people, the young (14-29 years of age) and the pre-retirement age group (55-62 years of age). Half a million agrarian workers "vanished" from the labour market while high



unemployment has been a stable feature of rural areas during the last 10-15 years.

The programme "Village and remote homestead community care" started in 2003 and established community care services for remote villages which count between 70 and 400 inhabitants. The programme aims to meet the basic needs of the inhabitants guaranteeing access to basic services by: transporting people to healthcare institutions, transporting pre-school and schoolchildren to school, providing transport for other child-related services and welfare services and operating as an information link between citizens and local government, providing also help with basic administrative tasks. At present, there are nearly 800 villages which receive remote homestead community care.

From the above mentioned services, transport of children to schools and citizen information services can be seen as supporting the infrastructure of lifelong learning. The "Rural Transport Initiative" has addressed, after an extensive consultation process, the particular needs of rural areas, being one of the programme's examples of good practice.

In the **U.K.** transport is also seen as a special issue in rural areas. The Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are responsible for the provision of free transport for pupils who do not live within a statutory distance from the school.

In **Poland** transport is also considered as a problem issue for rural communities. Efforts for the regeneration of local communities can be seen in such examples of good practice as the Centre for Local Activity (CLA) in Radom, which was established in 1997 by the BORIS Association (Service Bureau of Social Initiatives Movement) in the Mazovia Region. Among the CLA Programme's objectives are the encouragement of coherent local communities with a distinct identity, the promotion of solidarity and self-help, and the creation of self-governing communities. The philosophy of the programme is based on the motto "let us help people help themselves". All vulnerable groups and areas of activity and services fall within its coverage. Initiatives include a Citizen Information Point that provides more than 2,500 consultations per year, support groups aimed at the long-term unemployed and single mothers and families with disabled children, citizen groups that offer leisure activities for children and youth. Finally, educational activities targeting the unemployed, single-parent families and children from foster families and orphanages aim at providing skills in the fields of job search, household budget management, administrative contact with child care, and health and hygiene.

The Radom Integration Forum, which was set up in 2003, aims to remove social barriers by involving disabled people in social, cultural, sporting and educational activities and by enabling them to participate in cultural, educational, sporting and self-help groups. The Forum consists of representatives of city authorities, non-governmental organisations and other important institutions of the city of Radom, including theatres, cultural and educational centres, housing co-operatives and sport facilities.



Public Libraries can also play a significant role in lifelong learning schemes and in the regeneration of rural areas. Although it appears that libraries do not play an active role in Poland and Hungary, as they do for example in Denmark, it is worth offering an example from Poland. The Catholic Association Civitas Christiana operates a library in Zabrze since 2002, lending for a small deposit textbooks to children from large families in financial difficulties. The transport of books from the library to and from schools is provided free of charge by a local taxi company, thus involving the local enterprises.

Finally, the Folk High Schools - "Schools for Life" should get a special mention, since they are part of an old-established tradition of lifelong learning in Poland. Although their role has changed since the transition, they still can be seen as tools for local development. Their existence is also supported through the EU-funded programme SOCRATES, especially in relation to the most vulnerable and excluded groups.

In the **UK**, regeneration of rural areas is attempted through various programmes. The Rural Community Action Programme in Wales aims to fight exclusion in rural communities by physically creating a safe and pleasant environment for people to live, work and visit. It should be noted that in the UK most of the interventions of the state in favour of education and employment are applicable to the whole nation, including rural areas. Thus, support actions allowing parents to seek education and employment by providing childcare facilities have increased in the last 6 years; childcare funding is applied everywhere, but it has shown an important increase in Wales (a predominantly rural area) since 1999, by £14.3 million, to create 22.000 new childcare places. The New Opportunities Fund³ has also created 23.236 new childcare places in Wales. Another £2 million has been made available for supporting the sustainability and workforce development of out-of-school childcare provision. Most central government programmes are common for England and Wales while Scotland, due to the special provisions of the devolved system of governance, decides unilaterally on certain localised issues, like education and support actions.

Sure Start⁴ provides also a range of family services in disadvantaged communities. It is a government programme which aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by increasing availability of childcare for all children; improving health and emotional development for young children; and supporting parents in their parental role and in their aspirations towards employment.

There are 492 local Sure Start projects. Substantial new resources have been allocated to the growth of this service up to £1.5 billion in England to address in particular the needs of

³ Lottery funded. Since 2004 working with Community Fund as Big Lottery Fund. Now government Department of Culture, Media and Sport

⁴ Sure Start is part of the Children, Young People and Families directorate of the DfES. Sure Start works with local authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Jobcentres Plus, local communities, public agencies, voluntary and private sector organisations



the most disadvantaged, through a network of children's centres; while Sure Start Scotland is targeting families with children aged 0-3 in areas of the greatest need, with a total spending of £50 million by 2006.

A Sure Start programme is also in operation in **Hungary**. It started in 2004 as an adaptation of the UK programme, offering support to families with children under 6 who live in disadvantaged regions, both rural and urban. The goal of the programme is to break the "cycle of deprivation" by developing co-operation between different organisations of the public and voluntary sectors, based on local needs, such as those of child welfare services.

3.2 Lifelong learning and VET for employment

Lifelong learning in Poland, Hungary and in the UK is mostly related to access to employment.

In **Hungary**, a National Training Registry has been set up aiming to establish 16 regional integrated vocational centres by the end of 2006. Lifelong learning initiatives are also supported through the EQUAL programme, promoting the use of new technologies.

In the **UK**, a range of schemes are in operation. Indicatively, due to the plethora of them, a range of New Deal⁵ schemes are mentioned that support the participants to return to learning through an education or a training plan in order to become more employable. Such schemes are:

- New Deal for Young People (18-24) is an intensive programme to help the target group find work and boost employability through an education or training plan leading to a Level 2 qualification.
- New Deal 25 Plus is a programme promoting an Education and Training Opportunity Scheme with support for job search, careers guidance and an employer subsidy.
- New Deal for disabled people offers a personal advisory service to help disabled people back to work.
- New Deal for Lone Parents qualifies people for financial assistance for education and training and can include support for childcare.

Other relevant programmes are run by the Scottish Enterprise⁶ helping 4,000 young people with support to progress into employment, education, training or voluntary work.

The Local Government Association⁷, which is the representative body for all local authorities in England and Wales, supports local authorities in establishing innovative projects to help the hardest to reach employment. An aspect of this work has been the Extended Schools (previously

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions

⁶ Scottish Executive: Enterprise and Culture Committee

⁷ The Local Government Association was formed on 1 April 1997. It is a voluntary lobbying organisation which promotes the interests of 500 local authorities



Community Schools) which are funded to provide learning opportunities to the local community. Skills for Life⁸ is the strategy in England for improving adult literacy, language and numeracy skills to enable adults to find and keep work and participate fully in society.

Learndirect⁹ is the creation of the University for Industry, a concept materialised in 1999. Learndirect provides learning to reach those who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning. It aims to equip people with the skills they need for employability and its delivery is through e-learning. Courses are available for individuals and many can be purchased online. Learning centres are involved where the presence of a tutor is needed face to face. By its nature, the programme is particularly suited to rural inhabitants, because of no need to move from one's home to reach the training venue. However, it depends heavily on the availability of advanced information technology and access to DSL, which is not always widely available in rural areas, the latter suffering from the "digital divide". The UK has greatly advanced in this respect and the availability of broadband connection has significantly improved over the last years in rural areas too.

Learndirect offers a range of services targeting not only individuals but also businesses of all sizes. Employer Training Pilots¹⁰ and Employer Pledge Scheme¹¹ explore ways of helping low-skilled employees to access training. Participating employers receive financial aid to provide paid time off for employees to train. National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales includes measures aimed at improving literacy and numeracy skills overall. "LifeThrough Learning: Learning Through Life"¹² is the Scottish lifelong learning strategy which aims to stimulate the demand for learning and help people towards full and fulfilling employment. The Scottish Further Education sector is charged with providing the education and training that the most disadvantaged need. Fee waivers cover the costs of course fees for those on the lowest incomes enabling socially excluded groups to take up education and training opportunities. In 2001/2 fee waivers were provided for 40% of all students at Scottish Further Education colleges.

In **Poland** entrepreneurship amongst rural youth in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship (region) is promoted through the programme "Competition on Knowledge about Entrepreneurship 2004". The annual competition at the end of the training programmes addressing rural trainees, is organised by the Educational Centre of the Advisory Agency for Rural Development in Przysiek (RCDRRIOW) in co-operation with the high schools of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship. The aim is to promote active employment policies, self-employment and prevention of the exodus of young people from rural areas. The programme is addressed to final grade pupils in schools.

⁸ Department for Education and Skills (DEES)

⁹ University for Industry (Ufi) Government funded, with a remit to provide high-quality post- 16 learning. Learndirect reaches those with few or no skills or qualifications who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning.

¹⁰ Managed by the Learning and Skills Council for the DEES.

¹¹ An initiative of The National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales - DfES. The scheme is intended for all public and private sector employers to demonstrate a commitment to improving employees' basic skills.

¹² Scottish Executive: Ministry for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning.



4. CONCLUSIONS

Drawing a generalised conclusion on the policies included in the NAPs/incl and on the ways policies have been implemented in countries so diverse, is a rather daunting task. Nevertheless, what one could do is to point out the similarities and differences between the countries in the way they "think" and "use" lifelong policies as a tool of social inclusion.

The **rural population** in Hungary and Poland cannot be easily compared with that in the UK as the standard of living is very dissimilar but one thing they do have in common and that is rural isolation. Immigration is an issue in Greece, Spain, Denmark, Germany and Sweden but once again the different social and political systems set the pace of inclusion, coupled with the fact that some countries were traditional "exporters" of people (Greece, Spain) while others (Germany, Denmark, Sweden) were "importers".

Lifelong learning policies as inclusion strategies seem also to differ from country to country. Denmark, Sweden and Germany are at the forefront where lifelong learning has been incorporated not only in policies but in the social consciousness; while in Greece and Spain lifelong learning as a tool for social inclusion is in its infancy. The new EU members, Hungary and Poland seem to have implemented lifelong learning policies in the past but without lifelong learning being discussed in the EU debate context; lifelong learning in these two countries, although an old practice, calls for a rather new concept and a new policy.

Some of the countries have set targets for adult participation in learning. This is clearly the case of the UK which has developed a range of public initiatives in partnership with the private sector. Other countries are building a comprehensive strategy, like Sweden for example, who set up an Agency for Flexible Learning to act as coordinator between different actors and levels. Germany has already a Strategy for Lifelong Learning encompassing a plethora of projects, actions and measures. Greece attempted to bridge the gap between education and lifelong learning by setting up links between the two responsible Ministries, accreditation/validation mechanisms of prior learning and measures to include vulnerable groups through lifelong learning.

Studies of lifelong learning open up a broad spectrum of social, educational and cultural policy. Nevertheless many of the measures and policies that were mentioned have not been evaluated with respect to the effect on the target group's social inclusion, either because the results of implementation or statistics and official studies are not available as yet. Furthermore, the effect of the measures and policies are often expected to have an impact in the long run. For instance, it is not possible to measure the outcome of initiatives to combat negative intergenerational transmission (Denmark) before the school-age children have accomplished their education and entered the labour market. Basic education is thus seen as important in this regard, coupled with a more individualised focus on the pupil. It is the Danish government's intention that public institutions should develop clear expectations



and targets, based on measurable goals of attainment for all children, starting at kindergarten level with assessment of knowledge of the native language.

It is worth mentioning that almost all lifelong learning integration policies regarding immigrants focus primarily on the teaching of the language and culture of the host country and secondarily on other measures. In some NAPs, there is also a strong focus on schooling and formal education (e.g. Denmark). Regarding the "disadvantaged rural communities" target group, the focus is more on new skills acquisition and avoidance of school drop-out. Some of the projects also show that there is a need for teaching and guidance in relation to more practical subjects and everyday life problems, as the mentoring scheme for women in Denmark has shown. The use of mentors and contact families is a learning method whereby the immigrants can obtain the guidance and knowledge they need in a given situation, and is also used in several of the policies and measures mentioned in this report. Role models also fall in this category as instruments of motivation for immigrants.

Guidance, although rather important and respected in countries like Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the UK, does not feature prominently in the rest of the participating countries and in any case it is receiving minor attention in the NAPs of counties like the UK. Guidance though is a potent tool for social inclusion as could be seen in cases of job placements, prevention of school drop-outs, creating personal educational itineraries, etc.

The gender aspect is included in several of the Danish and German policies, reflected in the projects that implement these policies. The assumption is that the barriers for participation differ for immigrant men and immigrant women. To include a gender aspect is highly necessary, because women are for many reasons excluded from access to social services and do not profit at first hand. However, the gender focus is not without its critics in some countries, where it is claimed that the majority of beneficiaries of support actions are women rather than men (e.g. Greece).

The inclusion of immigrants and rural populations in the labour market can be a long-term process that demands many resources, because of lack of basic competencies and skills. The primary concern for inclusion is "employability", that is integration through employment, for which acquisition of new skills or upgrading of existing ones is a necessary condition.

Financial issues could create some problems in the implementation of lifelong learning policies. European Community funding is often inflexible, involving strict bureaucracy. Also, the valuable learning activity of the civil society (NGO initiatives) may suffer from a lack of resources. Another issue is how the scarce resources for a given learning activity could be used more effectively, while allocated between different institutions and organisations. Also issues of who should be responsible for what comes to the fore. For example, homework assistance in Denmark is offered by a host of public institutions and organisations but also from volunteers, resulting in strained relations with the professionals (teachers) who are



closer to the children and could identify problems much earlier than external actors (volunteers) without proper training.

The issues mentioned above could be transposed to rural areas. The difference though is that rural areas tend to be more inward looking and often with a less developed civil society and mutual help institutions. Problems tend to become magnified due to lack of basic services and geographical remoteness. Lifelong learning could be used as a tool of regeneration, as in the cases of Poland, Hungary and the UK in an effort to rebuild communities hit by unemployment and deskilling. The target groups in rural areas tend to be more homogeneous which, to a certain extent, facilitates inclusion efforts.

Finally, the evaluations of the NAPs/incl by external experts and the assessment found in EU official documents like the Joint Reports on Social Inclusion in the Member States, clearly indicate that often the NAPs/incl are mostly political documents, expressing a political will rather than practical guidelines of policy, as most of them do not provide details of the measures and actions proposed to implement policies or evaluate their effectiveness in the long run.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES. Results of surveys and focus group discussions





4. IMPLEMENTATION OF LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES.

Results of surveys and focus group discussions

1. INTRODUCTION

The research reported here complements the NAP Audit reports, providing information on the conception and formulation of social inclusion policies as well as on the management of these policies at their implementation stage. The focus has been on lifelong learning policies addressing by priority immigrants and related groups (refugees, asylum seekers, repatriates etc.) or disadvantaged rural communities. Surveys of policy implementing and budget managing agencies were conducted in seven countries: Greece, Denmark, Germany, UK, Poland, Hungary and Spain.

The experience of the implementing agents was sought, regarding the positive and negative aspects of policies and the perceived impact on the target groups. The information collected was of qualitative nature, based in most countries on face-to-face interviews. In addition, a Focus Group discussion was conducted in each country, drawing together the views of the main "stakeholders" in the process of formulating and implementing social inclusion policies for the target groups of the study.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Selection of the sample

The respondents of the survey of policy implementation agencies were selected firstly on the basis of contacts made and information obtained through the NAP audit phase of the research; and secondly by examining the available bibliography of policy and research documentation on the issues investigated by the project. The web sites of the main government and other public agencies with a staked interest in combating social exclusion and involvement with immigrants and disadvantaged rural communities were visited and studied.

In all countries, the agencies included in the sample are "key players" in the NAP/incl or have responsibility for implementing social inclusion policies that complement the NAP. The different methods of conducting the survey and the numbers of respondents who cooperated in each country are described below:

Denmark: 13 interviews were conducted face-to-face

Germany: 19 interviews were conducted by telephone and one face-to-face, totalling 20

Greece: 15 interviews were conducted face-to-face

Spain: 15 interviews were conducted face-to-face and by telephone.

Hungary: 13 interviews were conducted by telephone

UK: 7 agencies returned completed questionnaires through e-mail.

Poland: 13 interviews were conducted face-to-face, one more by telephone, totalling 14.



In total, 96 officials from government departments, local authorities and NGOs implementing public policy in the field of social inclusion took part in the survey.

For the Focus Group, members of either "key" central government agencies with a mandatory role in formulating and implementing policies against social exclusion, and/or local agencies implementing these policies "on the ground", including service delivering agencies, public authorities and NGOs, were brought together in each country. There was an effort made in each country to mix these two levels, i.e. the central and the local, the strategic, executive and service delivery levels, with a view to stimulate the discussion and shed light on different views regarding processes and means to achieve social inclusion. The groups across the seven countries had a membership of minimum 4 and maximum 18 participants, and were steered by a member of the project team, assisted in most cases by a second person who kept notes.

2.2 The interview guide

The interviews with policy implementation agencies were conducted on the basis of an interview guide consisting of open questions. These questions were agreed upon by all members of the research team and were used across the participating countries. Some variations were introduced by national teams, to make the guide more relevant to the policy context of the country or to structure some questions further, so that the guide could also operate as a questionnaire for electronic dissemination. The interview guide/questionnaire appears in Appendix III.

The questions can be grouped as follows:

- Role and responsibilities of implementing agency - input in NAP
- Working definition of the concept of Lifelong Learning
- How the links between the needs of target groups and policies are established
- Successes and failures of the implementation process
- Evaluation and monitoring of policies and actions against social exclusion

The Focus Groups were guided by a number of "core" questions and additional "country-specific" questions which amplified the main topics chosen by the national team to concentrate upon. The core questions called for an evaluation of the results of the current lifelong learning policies and the measures implementing them in combating exclusion of the target groups of the study, the identification of successes and failures, and recommendations for improving the implementation of policies. The main discussion topics chosen by the Focus Groups are summarised below.

- The Danish team chose as the main discussion topic in their Focus Group homework assistance for primary and secondary school children from immigrant families. This was judged to be an important component of lifelong learning and an area where many



different actors want to play a role.

- The German team chose to concentrate on the relationship between lifelong learning and social inclusion of young immigrants.
- The Greek team placed emphasis on the challenges that exist in Greek society regarding the social and economic integration of immigrants and the role lifelong learning can play in facilitating the process of integration.
- The Spanish team conducted a wide-ranging discussion, starting from the experience of the participants in combating social exclusion of the target group, the initiatives they implement, their successes and failures, problems and prospects, as well as relationship of initiatives "on the ground" with public policy at central and regional levels.
- In the UK, the aim of the Focus Group discussion was to further understand how lifelong learning provision could help tackle individual and community poverty and social exclusion in rural areas.
- In Hungary, the discussion was spread along a wide range of issues relating to poverty and social exclusion in rural areas, the implementation problems of policies and initiatives, their outcomes and how they could be improved.
- In Poland, the main topic for the debate was the effectiveness of lifelong learning in combating the exclusion of rural youth from the labour market, and methods used by the institutions to measure and evaluate such results.

3. THE RESULTS

3.1 Role and responsibilities of agencies

Implementation agencies' survey

The agencies that participated in the survey cover a large variety and of responsibilities, both at central government and local/regional level. In countries with decentralised administration, the regional and local agencies have a strong presence in the sample, as local policies form an important part of the country's education and welfare systems. Representatives of NGOs and social partner organisations have also been included in countries where the activities of such agencies have an active presence in the service sector that addresses vulnerable groups.

In the countries targeting immigrants:

- In Denmark the interviewed persons held senior positions in government departments with responsibilities related to policies for children of immigrant families, overall NAP/incl coordination, guidance reform, and major projects and programmes addressed to combating social exclusion of vulnerable groups, including immigrants. Local authority's services for children and libraries' lifelong learning initiatives were also represented.



- In Germany, Federal Ministries and experts at central government level as well as the managers of "model programmes" were included in the sample, given that services for the immigrants are provided by the Federal Government, the Länder and municipalities, but also that Federal Government funds model programmes for up to five years on language training, formal education, integration in the labour market, social counselling and guidance and other integration actions for immigrants.
- In Greece, the mix of agencies included ministries and departments with responsibility for immigrants and for lifelong learning, managers of large initiatives such as EQUAL, and adult education programmes for immigrants, social partners representing the employers and the workers and important NGOs. The latter promote independent policies and activities, ranging often beyond the borders of the country.
- In Spain a balanced mix of central, regional and local administration representatives were approached with policy responsibilities for reception, training and integration in the labour market of immigrants, including education, culture and social welfare policies. At regional level, agencies managing the recently established Regional Plans for the Employment and Social Integration of Immigrants were recruited for the survey, as well as agencies that manage programmes included in the above Plans (e.g. vocational training programme, employment integration programme).

In the countries targeting disadvantaged rural communities:

- In Hungary, the members of the Committee Against Social Exclusion were approached, which includes representatives of the main policy-making ministries in the fields of employment and regional development as well as external experts on social policy. Senior employees coordinating Public Employment, Health Care and Adult Education programmes or EU Initiative such as EQUAL and LEADER participated as well.
- In Poland, the selected agencies fell into two groups: those with direct responsibilities for implementing NAP policies; and institutions that have an influence in lifelong learning for rural communities, mostly NGOs, as for example the Folk Universities and the Centres of Education.
- In the UK, seven categories of agencies were included in the survey, representing the primary funding and policy implementation organisations that coordinate the delivery of lifelong learning policies. These comprised certain agencies/partnerships established to meet the lifelong learning needs of rural communities (University of Industry, Learning and Skills Councils, Rural Renaissance partnerships etc.).

Focus Groups

- In Denmark, the national team brought together seven experts working with libraries, schools and special homework assistance projects, from schools, libraries, NGOs and local authorities.



- In Germany, Focus Group participants included 5 experts, all members of a regional coordination group of welfare organisations, with a long experience in the Main-Kinzig district, working with immigrants' integration issues (e.g. Youth Migration Services and Integration Counselling Services).
- In Greece, the participants included representatives of the two Ministries holding key responsibilities for immigrants and lifelong learning, that is the Ministry of the Interior and Public Administration and the Ministry of Education respectively, representatives of social partners and academics who were involved in the evaluation of the Greek NAP/incl.
- In Spain, 10 persons participated in the discussion, representing organisations at regional (Valencia) and central level (Ministry of Employment and Welfare) as well as NGOs that are active in the provision of education and welfare services to immigrants.
- In Hungary, the Focus Group consisted of 4 persons from key organisations, such as top level committees for social inclusion and rural development, the EQUAL Managing Authority and academics with research experience on the subject of social exclusion in rural areas.
- In Poland, the Focus Group consisted of 7 representatives of local and regional education institutions, training centres targeting rural youth, and District Labour Agencies.
- In the UK, the Focus Group discussion took place during a regular meeting of the Bath and North East Somerset Learning Partnership, a sub-regional body which consists of representatives from public agencies, NGOs and local communities. 18 members with long experience of working with people with low basic skills, low-income families and/or rural communities across educational, social or welfare provision, were present.

The policies implemented by the respondents of both implementation agencies survey and Focus Groups fall into the following categories:

1. Funding education and training, both formal and non-formal
2. Funding personal social services
3. Funding empowerment services and activities
4. Funding sensitisation activities and campaigns
5. Contributing to the NAP/incl policy formation
6. Facilitating the cooperation of different implementing agencies to improve effectiveness of policies.

3.2 The concept of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning was a familiar concept for all respondents, but the emphasis on what are the important ingredients of it differed among them. Formal learning was given special weight in some countries e.g. Germany and the UK, but most participants expressed the



view that formal learning should be complemented by informal and non-formal learning, especially when vulnerable groups are being considered. In some countries, lifelong learning was taken mostly to mean learning after and beyond formal education (Hungary) while the definition stated in the Resolution on Lifelong Learning by the Council of the European Union as "learning from pre-school to retirement" was generally accepted by educators (Greece, Poland), although it was not fully accepted by other policy makers or implementing agents.

A weak lifelong learning culture has been identified in some countries (Spain, Hungary, Greece) but the importance of lifelong learning for all citizens was not disputed by any participant, and even more so for vulnerable groups. However, the priority given to lifelong learning policies in relation to the needs of vulnerable groups was not high in most countries. For example, it was stressed that for immigrants, lifelong learning cannot be top priority when housing, employment and legalisation issues have not been resolved (Germany, Spain). The German group expressed the view that lifelong learning is the second step in the course of integration for immigrants, the first being to help them manage their daily lives. Regarding disadvantaged rural communities, participation in lifelong learning cannot be seen in isolation either—there are many social, income and health factors, which also result in social exclusion.

The most obvious link between lifelong learning and the social inclusion process for both target groups was related to gaining skills and qualifications for entering and/or competing in the labour market. The question of gaining a minimum level of skills that would allow individuals to develop further their education and employment opportunities is a vital one. In the UK, the poor level of basic skills was thought to prevent participation in a wide range of activities, which enrich and bring a fuller dimension to a person's life (such as educational, sports, social, and arts) as well as increasing one's ability to generate both a better individual and national income. Employment is becoming increasingly more technical and sophisticated, requiring a workforce which is educationally equipped to meet this challenge. The issue of qualifications has thus gained increased importance in many countries (Germany, UK). In the UK, for example, the employment opportunities available to those people without at least a Level 2 qualification are diminishing. Closely correlated to the qualification level is the income level in all countries, resulting in an obvious link between lack of basic qualifications and poverty, especially in rural areas (UK, Poland).

Basic skills and "key" competencies were also identified in Hungary as the foundation of lifelong learning which the system of formal public education should endow the individual with, taking also account of the needs of the labour market. This does not always happen, especially in countries with an inflexible public education system (e.g. Hungary, Greece, Spain). The opportunities provided by the continuing vocational training and the non-formal adult education systems, which could complement the gaps of initial formal education,



have proved not to be readily accessible to vulnerable groups, such as the immigrants and the marginalised rural residents. Especially in countries that have experienced a radical change of their political and government systems in the beginning of the 1990s, the collapse of the free education and training provision for all and the subsequent reduction of the volume and quality of vocational training and adult education opportunities, brought a severe blow to the value and standing of lifelong learning for those suffering from poverty and disadvantage, mostly living in rural areas.

The meaning of lifelong learning seems to differ according to the point of view taken, i.e. lifelong learning for the insertion and promotion of the disadvantaged individual in the labour market, thus combating poverty and contributing to the career development of this individual; and lifelong learning for enhancing the quality of life, opening opportunities for the individual in all spheres -economic social and cultural. The definition of lifelong learning is also strongly political: it can be used as a remedial practice, to cure social exclusion and its serious consequences for social cohesion and national welfare, or it can be viewed as a human and civil right, with emphasis on the prevention of exclusion and the halt of its intergenerational transmission. Also, in discussing the effect lifelong learning may have on the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, the multi-dimensional definition of the concept of social exclusion itself was raised, beyond the concept of poverty. Social inequality, limitations of access to goods and services and the breakdown of relationships between the individuals and society were all put forward as important elements of the re-definition of the parameters of social exclusion. When discussing the impact of lifelong learning, one should keep in mind these parameters and assess the positive effect of the former on the latter.

3.3 Policy goals and needs of target groups

The needs catered for by the policies implemented by the agencies that took part in the research were discussed during both the interviews and the Focus Groups. As expected, the needs these policies are assumed to serve cover a range that reflects the services funded or managed by the agencies.

For the target group of immigrants, the list includes:

- Learning the language of the host country.
- Integrating children and youth in formal education, to ensure that at least the formal minimum qualifications are achieved from school, combating drop out tendencies.
- Socialisation of children and youth into the wider community of their age, through organised leisure-time activities, such as sports.
- Literacy training for older individuals.



- Improving skills and obtaining vocational qualifications to increase one's integration in the labour market.
- Counselling for personal and family problems, including education.
- Guidance for job finding or improving one's position in employment.
- Information about different services.
- Legal advice mostly on residence and work permit procedures, but also on workers' and employee's rights vis-a-vis their employers.
- Sensitisation of employers and the society at large to overcome prejudice and discrimination.
- Advocacy with state authorities.
- Promoting cultural events as a means for "building bridges" between immigrants' and native cultures.

Among these needs, lifelong learning is emphasised at two levels: a) at the compulsory education level, addressing the children and young people who need to enter and complete successfully the compulsory formal education of the host country, as a prerequisite for their further personal development and to avoid the risk of marginalisation, and b) at the continuing education level, where a large part of the provision of learning is non-formal or informal. The latter category is also distinguished in two types: learning that leads to qualifications and learning that has a personal value for the individual, without being necessarily recognised by the formal systems of education or the labour market. Important needs in the latter category are related to ICT competences, which are not only necessary for employment but also for having access to information and for personal development and inclusion in the social and public life (Greece, Spain). Also the knowledge of the culture of the host society has come out as an important need (Denmark, Germany and Spain).

Some of the needs reflected in the national policies take precedence over others, especially those that are linked to language competences, literacy and the smooth integration of children in school. The insertion in the labour market is the next important priority. The approach taken in serving both these priorities differs substantially between the participating countries.

The main difference of approach is between countries that adopt a comprehensive strategy for the integration of immigrants in society and in the labour market, and those that use a range of separate policies fragmented between agencies at central (ministries) and/or regional or local levels. Comprehensive strategies are identified in Germany and Denmark, where different policies for education, training, counselling etc. are planned to be complementary to one another and a strong inter-agency collaboration exists at service



delivery level. In Greece and Spain the policies that serve the needs of the immigrants include a wide range of services, and among them some examples of best practice, but the coordination and inter-linkage of the policies "on the ground" is missing, thus shedding some doubt on their effectiveness in meeting the needs of their target groups. The necessity of viewing the needs of a target group from the individual's point of view, considering and adding together all personal needs for inclusion in the labour market and in society more generally has been admitted in all countries, together with the acknowledgement that the impact of policies depends to a large extent upon their cross-fertilisation and inter-dependence rather than solely on the content and goals of each of them separately.

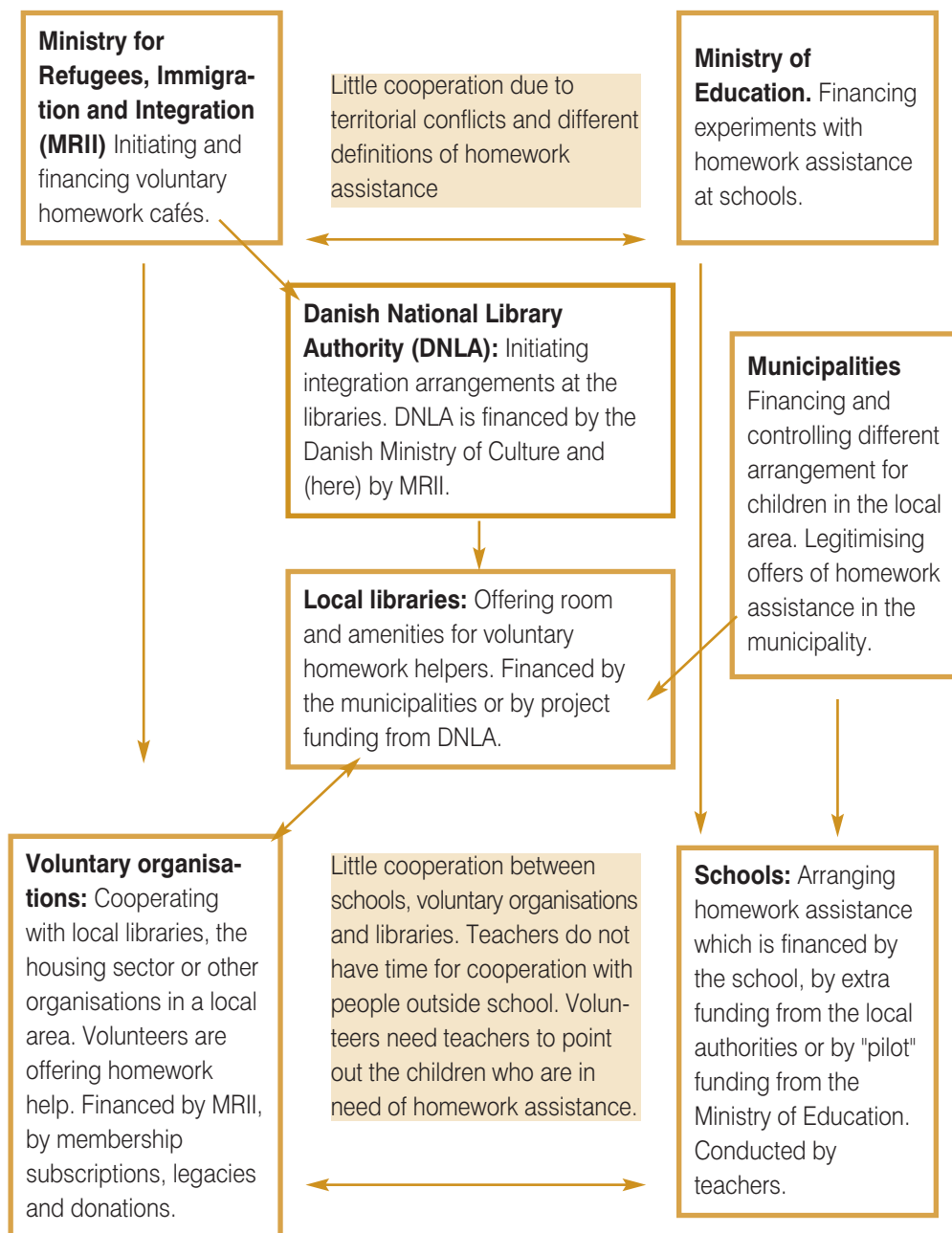
It is worth noting two best practice examples contributed by participants to Focus Groups, which illustrate the implementation of policies through the inter-agency cooperation principle and through the personalised approach to a client's needs.

In Spain, some of the agencies assisting immigrants to enter the labour market construct personal learning and employment pathways for their clients, with their collaboration, forming a step by step plan of learning and guidance actions that will hopefully lead to employment and social inclusion. They try to refer then their clients to other services, such as training courses, taking however the risk that no suitable options are available locally or no places are free for the applicants.

In Denmark, homework assistance needs of children from immigrant families receive a high priority in the social inclusion strategy of the country. This priority has been expressed "on the ground" by introducing innovative solutions, such as the "homework cafés" in libraries or other places managed by local authorities, involving both professional teachers and volunteers, and by networking and coordinating agencies at different levels, mostly successfully, although not without some problems as well, as can be seen in the figure that follows.



Figure 1: Roles of the different agencies working with homework assistance, cooperation between them, authority relations and funding relations





It is also worth noting that none of the national teams that researched lifelong learning policies for the social inclusion of immigrants identified a clearly articulated strategy for rural areas. The initial assumption of the research that vulnerable groups in rural areas have special needs that differ at least partly to those of their counterparts in urban areas, is not shared by national governments. The research in the three countries that focused on disadvantaged rural communities shows, however, that there is enough grounding in that assumption.

For the target group of disadvantaged rural communities, the priority is clearly set on lifelong learning that leads to employment or security of employment, as this is the major problem faced by this target group. Multiple disadvantage is also noted in these communities, as for example is reported by the Hungarian participants: the unemployed in rural areas include specially vulnerable sub-groups, such as the Roma, the disabled, the long-term unemployed over 50, and those living in small villages of less than 500 inhabitants with no access to social and educational services and inadequate infrastructure. Such groups have multiple needs, which cannot be faced only by training and education, but call for an integrated and coordinated approach. This was the concept behind the over 900 "caretaker services" that have been recently established in small Hungarian villages, providing some answer to the need for an integrated service system in small rural communities.

The match between demand and supply of labour in rural areas is certainly a central point that dominates the diagnosis of lifelong learning needs. However, the labour market is not analysed systematically in many countries, and Polish respondents and focus group members stressed that the education and training offered to unemployed youth in rural areas cannot guarantee a job, as there is no systematic recording of job openings or a forecast of the labour market situation, even in a short-to-medium term horizon.

In the UK, government policy has been mostly oriented towards rural regeneration, activating a wide range of local stakeholders, adopting an approach that pools in local resources, human and financial. Policies that are aimed at regeneration fund schemes that bring together education providers, business representatives, the police, religious leaders, representatives of community groups, local councillors and individuals to research and plan together the regeneration and subsequent sustainability of a community. Learning Centres or outreach learning opportunities are provided by a range of official Implementation Agencies and community/charity groups. These learning opportunities are mainly based around basic skills or vocational skills, which have been diagnosed as the primary needs of these communities, in order to increase the chances of their members in the labour market. At the other side of lifelong learning, it was noted that the funding of "leisure and pleasure" courses has been greatly reduced by the government in order to fund the core provision mentioned above. Vocational or basic skills courses, to be funded, must have a qualification aim - which is not something all learners want or need.



3.4 Successes and failures of policy implementation

A number of success and failure factors have been identified by policy implementing agencies, which do not seem to differ between the countries that have targeted immigrants for the purposes of the project and those that have targeted rural communities. These factors include a number of "structural" aspects of policies and their implementation framework, some of which are shared among respondents across the researched countries. For example, comprehensive policy, funding problems, bureaucracy and inter-agency cooperation and coordination emerged in all countries as determinants of the success of the implementation practices. Also, the structure of the labour market has been identified by most agencies as an external factor that impacts significantly the success of lifelong learning policies. These "universal" structural factors are discussed below.

Structural factors

- **Labour market structure.** The most significant factor for the successful inclusion of the target groups, which goes beyond the policies adopted for lifelong learning, is for most countries the operation of the labour market. Saturation of the labour market cannot guarantee the employment of our target groups even after their skills and education level has been improved. This becomes a problem of the utmost significance in rural areas, where the labour market is very restricted and there are very few opportunities for new jobs, while in some countries not even the employers are interested in the training of their employees (Hungary, Poland). However, it has been universally accepted by our respondents that unless there is a clear and direct link to employment and level of pay, the uptake of educational and training opportunities by people who are disadvantaged cannot be increased.
- **Comprehensive policy.** The existence of a holistic and coordinated integration policy, which in turn facilitates the cooperation and complementarity between different programmes and projects and the interaction of all actors at local level has been also recognised as a significant prerequisite of success. Some examples of good practice have been provided: in Germany, the Federal Government introduced a single, comprehensive Integrated Programme for Migrants; and in Spain, Regional Authorities introduced Regional Social Inclusion Plans and Regional Employment Plans that give special attention to vulnerable groups. However, it has been noted across the board of participating countries that in practice a comprehensive policy either does not exist or is not implemented at the service provision level; and moreover, there is conflict between different government departments and between different tiers of administration, making the comprehensive policy model even more difficult to apply. For example, responsibilities are not clearly defined between the Departments of Employment and Education, as mentioned in Greece, Spain and Hungary. In the UK, although rural social exclusion is now being recognised by Government and being acted upon, and moreover lifelong learning



opportunities and support services to rural communities are seen as high priorities, many initiatives are disjointed and independent of each other to the extent that a holistic approach is often missed.

- **Funding.** Lack of sufficient funding has been mentioned in all countries as a factor influencing the success of policies negatively. There is also an imbalance noted between the available resources and the growing demand. Moreover, most of the lifelong learning provision for vulnerable groups is based on short term programmes and projects, which depend on European or central government funding. These programmes are too short to produce sustainable effects. Lack of continuity of funding affects in turn the continuity of provision, resulting to jeopardising the positive outcomes of programmes. In the UK, many Educational Initiatives have been experienced by respondents throughout the last 15 years, with little overall improvement in educational attainment. A considered approach by central government policy-makers to lifelong learning, based on a full understanding of the needs of disadvantaged individuals for improving their skills and knowledge, is deemed necessary. In Poland, it was noted that new schemes funded by the EC or central government do not act in cooperation with existing services and this diminishes the effectiveness of both.

The allocation of funds to different implementing agencies and service providers is also an issue. When there is a shortage of funds, a reduction in the provision of social services in rural areas occurs, followed by concentration of services in bigger towns (Hungary, Poland). Moreover, the distribution of funding to service providers is in many countries based on competitive tenders for particular projects, and the providers in rural areas are less experienced and less skilled in writing good applications compared to larger providers in urban centres, thus competing for funds with a handicap.

- **Bureaucracy.** The implementation of lifelong learning policies can be severely hindered by bureaucracy, especially if service provision is related to projects. Projects are viewed by most respondents, across countries as too complicated, regarding their administrative and management structure. Especially for small agencies and welfare organisations, this is a serious restraint. In the UK it was stressed that the rules are complex and change on an annual basis, so that providers are very confused as to what courses count towards free provision. All agencies agreed unanimously that funding from the European Commission carries a cumbersome and inflexible administrative burden, which disorients the service providers from their service-related tasks, although it was accepted by many that such administrative tasks are paid for.
- **Cooperation of different service providers and other local and national stakeholders.** The cooperation between agencies features among the success stories in some countries (Germany, Spain) although it has been generally accepted that such cooperation may be limited, because of the different profiles of training and welfare organisations and the



competition between them regarding funding of their activities. In Spain, different "platforms" have been created as a result of the guidelines for the formulation and implementation of the NAP/incl, whose remit is to actively promote networking. For example, the National Platform of Social Service NGOs is the main meeting point of the NGOs and the government. Cooperation and coordination of policies at regional level has been also undertaken by regional governments in Spain through their Regional Plans for Inclusion, but the results are not yet visible, and the coordination of the different actors involved in the fight against social exclusion is still a major challenge that needs to be addressed.

The cooperation between different levels of administration (e.g. central and local government) and between service providers is also an issue. In the UK, the Government has encouraged a culture of working in partnership to provide services at local level. For example, there has been an amalgamation of social, welfare and educational services for children under one umbrella organisation known as Children's Services. The concept behind this is to streamline the numbers of professionals and agencies working with a child in order to improve services given and to ensure the safety of the child. For rural communities to have the same service level as urban communities regarding location, costs of outreach etc. is highly important; to achieve this, policy implementation agencies are the "key" to bringing together service providers to offer an integrated service for clients. Although there are close relationships being developed between implementation and delivery agencies, as yet they do not always result in joined-up thinking and provision. The work of the Danish agencies on homework assistance provides a good practice example on this as well as on the cooperation of local agencies, including a strong presence of the voluntary sector, as has already been presented in the previous section of this chapter. The main conclusion of the Danish focus group is given in the box of the next page.

Other important factors that reflect the interaction between provision of services and the needs of clients have been also pointed out by implementing agencies in both the survey and the focus groups, including ways to reach the target groups and sustain their involvement, relating provision to the learning profile of the target groups, flexibility to implement policies at local level, assurance of the quality of service provision and observing the gender aspect.

Client-centred and service delivery-related factors

- **Client engagement made and maintained.** An important success factor at the policy implementation process has been unanimously accepted to be the access to services by the target groups. In Germany, the link between the different programmes that target the inclusion of immigrants and the target group itself is provided successfully by the agencies that offer information, advice and outreach services to immigrants. Stories of success come also from third sector NGOs who manage to mobilise volunteers to provide information, guidance, legal advice and help with employment search, or language tuition



Homework assistance for children with immigrant background

The main "players" in providing homework assistance to children that do not do well at school are voluntary organisations, the Ministry of Integration, the local Libraries, the Municipality and the schools via teachers. The first three of these "players" focus mainly on children with immigrant background while the last two focus on all children with a need for homework assistance. In practice the target groups overlap to a high extent.

Homework assistance in schools and in voluntary organisations should supplement each other and there is a big need for improved cooperation between the partners - e.g. the voluntary organisations need the teachers to identify the pupils who have a need for homework assistance and they need to have a contact person inside the schools who can inform the pupils about the offer of help by the voluntary organisations. Homework assistance offered by volunteers is of course much cheaper than the homework assistance offered by teachers. Therefore the volunteers can fill in the gaps in the public service.

Voluntary organisations, however, also have a purpose in their own right. Sometimes the volunteers working in housing estates with immigrant families are the only unpaid native Danes that immigrant children have a relation to. The voluntary organisations are also free of the hierarchy which exists in the schools. They may favour more leisure time learning and informal learning. On the other hand, some problems have been associated with using only volunteers for homework assistance: it is difficult for volunteers to reach the pupils with the biggest need for assistance, as the latter are not always motivated to seek help; and it is difficult to keep a record of the pupils who attend homework assistance sessions. Schools are better qualified to decide which children are in need of homework assistance and to control the children's attendance in these sessions.

A problem of both the school-based and the voluntary homework assistance can be inflexibility in assistance provision hours. One of the participants in the focus group also saw a problem in the lack of educational background of the volunteers and a high rate of replacement among the volunteers. This was not considered as a problem by the voluntary organisations. Finally, problems arise if the participants, their parents or school authorities have too high expectations.

(Spain, Greece). However, in most countries access constraints have been reported. For example, lack of legalisation documents has been noted in Spain and Greece as a serious constraint for immigrants to access learning activities offered by local or central government. Lack of language competence and cultural constraints (for immigrants) and low level of literacy and basic skills (for disadvantaged rural communities) have been also mentioned as constraints, reducing the clients' willingness to approach the provided services (Denmark, UK, Hungary). Creating personal motivation to improve one's education or vocational skills has been considered a prerequisite for successful and



sustained engagement by many respondents: where service users can see a positive link to improving their living/economic conditions, the uptake is high.

Relating provision to the level of client's skills has been a central issue in the German debate. The focus group participants in Germany argued that the gap between the integration (reception) and language courses offered to immigrants should be diminished and the level of skills obtained in these courses raised. In many of the lifelong learning courses offered to immigrants, the level of education required for entry is too high; Besides, language courses which are often too short and are not at all related to the skills of learners.

Accessibility to lifelong learning opportunities is a major issue for those living in rural communities. Good practice examples in the UK, which benefit rural communities, include:

- Outreach delivery – taking learning to the client – delivering learning in Community centres, village halls et al.
- Providing learning, especially ICT / ILT study programmes, in high street drop in centres to encourage people to attend at time that suits them.
- Subsidised Community learning programmes, tackling basic skills with progression to higher level qualifications.
- Learndirect, a totally on-line learning programme offering study on-line to recognised national qualifications.

● **Flexibility to implement programmes at local level.** This is an important factor that may dictate the success of policies at service provision level. We can divide in this respect the implementing agencies in two groups. Those that are faced with limited flexibility to adapt their programmes to local needs and conditions; and those that have considerable flexibility of implementation at service provision level. The former group includes Spain, Greece, UK, Hungary and Poland. The latter group includes Denmark and Germany.

Programme funding often defines both the nature of the activity and the target numbers of participants. In Spain, there are some possibilities to adapt the regional programmes in order to coordinate training needs with the economic sectors that present significant potential in the labour market; adapting training courses to the regional language is also favoured. In Greece, the lack of flexibility in tailoring programmes to the needs of beneficiaries is stemming from the difficulty to revise centrally approved programmes, especially those funded by the European Commission through the Community Support Framework (CSF), and relate closely to the management procedures imposed by the CSF. In most countries, when service provision is partly funded by the EC, there is no guarantee of additional funding to service providers if target numbers are exceeded; however, monies have to be repaid if target numbers are not reached. In the UK, implementation agencies are unable to make changes to programmes, because central government set very specific criteria as to who is able to access provision, especially free provision. In Poland, the agencies



reported some margin of flexibility, especially when external funding is not involved.

In Denmark, where the funding of education and training projects for immigrants is administered through the local authorities, the flexibility to adapt the content and size of projects to local conditions is unquestionable, and the implementing agencies and service providers have authority to propose changes to improve the projects. In Germany, the process of implementing Federal Programmes at local level allows anyhow the adaptation to local conditions and needs. The projects are chosen by a local committee consisting of regional representatives from administration, citizens, representatives of disadvantaged groups and others. First, local action plans are developed, and then the outline and volume of the project is elaborated. Changes are also possible and welcome when planning the next funding period of a project, if the evaluation of the previous period suggested that they are necessary.

- **Assurance of the quality of services delivered to the target groups.** This factor relates to human resources, infrastructure and methodologies of the providers, referring to such issues as the application and effectiveness of needs identification procedures, teaching/counselling methods and staff training, recruitment of volunteers, IT equipment, outreach capacity of the agency etc. The quality of services has been directly linked in some countries (e.g. Denmark) with the positive impact of services on the target group of immigrants, so that it is possible to predict from the evaluation results the effects of services on the target groups. Drawing education plans for learners has been established as a methodology to monitor and assess the impact of the provided services on the client's development and integration in the education, social or employment systems.
- **Observing the Gender aspect.** The gender aspect has been considered as an important factor in assessing the success of policies, as this is also a prerequisite for all programmes co-funded by the European Commission. In Germany the gender dimension is observed, although further effort is considered necessary to achieve equality of opportunity in learning, especially for immigrant women. In Denmark, preferential education offers are given to girls and women, and this has been partly viewed as a problem, because the boys and men also seem to face some gender related barriers, in connection with their participation in the education system. Addressing the needs of women immigrants however, has not been entirely satisfactory, as teaching and guidance in relation to more practical subjects and everyday life problems would be necessary to further the learning and employment opportunities of those women. The Danish respondents who were involved in the "mentor project for women" that tries to ease immigrant women's insertion in the labour market, reported that daily activities may become a problem for these women, e.g. how to use public transport, workplace culture about eating breakfast together on Friday morning, calling the doctor when the answering machine is in Danish etc.



3.5 Evaluation and monitoring of policies

There was a shared view among respondents in all countries that success of social inclusion policies can be only assessed in the long term. However, the majority believed that their work is providing real help to the target groups in relation to their short term needs, as well as promoting social justice and social cohesion. The success of programmes that implement policy was thought to relate firstly to their direct impact on the beneficiaries; and secondly on the contribution made by the experience gained are the lessons learnt on policy formation. The majority of respondents believed that the programmes they implemented had a positive impact on the inclusion of their target groups.

In **Germany**, all participants to the research stressed that in the short term, only limited effects of policies can be seen, corresponding to a series of small steps towards integration. All programmes funded through the Federal Ministries are required to be monitored and evaluated, and have an earmarked budget for the evaluation. Institutions in charge of the evaluation are always external partners, sometimes Universities or Institutes with evaluation experience in the subject area of the programme. Quantitative data is mandatory, but the annual reports of the implementing agencies include also qualitative data and information about the results of their work. Some respondents voiced criticism regarding the data-centred benchmarking procedure included in the NAP/incl requirements. The statistical data is not meaningful enough to provide an understanding of the situation and the needs of vulnerable groups. Furthermore, benchmarking indicators are not a suitable medium to make the outcome of the work of social services visible.

In **Denmark** it has been noted that many of the measures and policies addressing the inclusion of immigrants have not yet been evaluated, mainly because they have just started being implemented or are going to be implemented in the following months. Moreover, the effects of the measures aiming to combat intergenerational transmission of exclusion are targeting children and therefore are expected to be long term; obviously it is not possible to measure the outcome of such initiatives before the children who are growing up now have reached the age to complete (or not) their education and gain (or not) a place in the labour market.

In **Spain**, all the respondents stressed that evaluation of programmes is one of the weakest points of the social inclusion policy design, and presents added difficulties because evaluation should be transcendental, considering the long term effects of actions and using the appropriate indicators for this. NGOs are more keen to evaluate their actions, because they feel the need for higher transparency and quality in their resource management as well as for social evaluation of their work. For the latter they favour qualitative indicators.

In **Greece**, the majority of the agencies that took part in the survey and the focus



group performed an internal or external evaluation of their programmes, mostly because the majority of these programmes are EC-funded and the evaluation is part of the statutory requirements of implementing agencies and service providers. The evaluation is based on statistical data (e.g. how many enrol in a project and how many complete the project) and information on the performance and satisfaction of beneficiaries during implementation. Further information is gathered by some agencies on the progression of beneficiaries to employment, after the completion of a training course. However many respondents called for a more qualitative and systematic evaluation of the benefits enjoyed by clients, involving a follow up interview and information on their situation several months or a year after the completion of a course of training or counselling. It was also noted that all CSF-funded operational programmes are subject to an external evaluation at mid-term and towards the end of the programming period, as prescribed by the regulations of the Structural Funds, but this type of evaluation takes place at too broad a level and does not assess individual projects.

In the **UK**, all programmes funded from central government have to be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and value for money. The results are published so that there can also be public scrutiny. Besides the collection of formal, statistical data, implementation agencies engage in client satisfaction surveys, which are also published and therefore open to scrutiny from the public as well as the higher authority. The methods used to evaluate the results of the programmes depend on the services managed by the agency. Some agencies use specialised programmes but the majority use routine monitoring, supported by progress reports and statistical data. Increasingly the government judges success in terms of academic acquisition of service users, with the gaining of a Level 2 qualification seen as the benchmark for being able to contribute to the economic well being of the country. Targets are now in place to increase the numbers gaining a Level 3 qualification.

In **Poland**, lack of evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to measure the net effect of education and training policies on rural youth, as reflected by their insertion in the labour market, has been noted. However, it was reported that evaluation and monitoring is seen by many service providers in Poland as undesirable because negative results, regarding in particular the success of their clients to get a job, could signal reduced funds for the agency (although the monitoring of the labour market is completely out of their responsibilities).

In **Hungary** the evaluation and monitoring of social inclusion projects is performed on an ad hoc basis, as service providers have no obligation to provide monitoring data. Implementing agencies have called for a universal evaluation system to be put in place, despite its perceived shortcomings, because there is no way at present to ground their problems and ask for remedies. An attitude similar to some Polish agencies was also reported in Hungary, regarding an apprehension towards evaluation if this were linked to funding.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the implementation agencies' surveys and the focus group discussions showed that the impact of policies aiming to combat social exclusion is mediated by a number of factors that reflect the implementation framework of the policies, their wider environment, the engagement of the target groups and the quality of service provision. These factors, which affect the successes and failures of the implementation frames adopted in different countries, operate at three levels:

- At the policy formulation level and policy management/implementation level.
- At the service provision level
- At the client (vulnerable group) level

Across these levels, we can identify "policy-related" constraints that run through the process of policy implementation and inhibit the target groups to take advantage and benefit from the policies; "client-related" constraints that stem from the educational, cultural and skills profiles of the target groups; and "service-related" constraints, which reflect various aspects of the accessibility of services and their relevance to the needs of clients. Such constraints, namely policy-related, client-related and service-related, affect the success of policies and determine their impact on the target groups.

The **"policy-related"** constraints reflect a number of universally recognised aspects of policies concerning the management of policy implementation, that have been identified across all national samples as important factors affecting the success of policies. These are:

- Lack of integrated lifelong learning policy for the target groups in relation to their inclusion in the labour market and their overall welfare.
- Lack of continuity of funding, which in most countries is project-based and does not guarantee the long term sustainability of services, although all respondents agreed that the effects of lifelong learning policies can only be seen in the long term.
- Too much bureaucracy which hinders the delivery of services and creates inequalities between urban and rural providers, especially where funds are allocated to service providers on the basis of competitive tenders.
- Inadequate inter-agency cooperation across the different administrative levels (national, regional, local) and at the service delivery level (local agencies).

The **"client-related"** constraints reflect the profile of the individual members of the target group, in relation to their education, training, skills and cultural or social characteristics. These characteristics have been shown to play an important role in the definition of the needs of target groups, which must be reflected in the goals of inclusion policies to ensure their success.

The **"service-related"** constraints have been linked to a number of issues across countries, that would determine the results of policies. Such issues include:



- Provisions made by policies and also practices/methods adopted by service providers to engage the target groups and maintain their engagement.
- Allowing flexibility to adapt policies at the local level according to the needs of the target groups and the local conditions.
- Assuring the quality of services delivered to the target groups.
- Observing the gender aspect and ensuring equality of access to services for both men and women.

As already discussed, the real impact of policies on the inclusion of vulnerable groups is a long-term question, which may be answered only if systematic, longitudinal monitoring of the target groups and their progression in the labour market and in the social and public life of the wider community is set in place. If this is not possible, we have to adopt an alternative approach, which will give a short to medium term estimate of the impact in as good an approximation as possible. The best alternative to the long term impact assessment may come from establishing "measures of success" of policies that relate to a number of measurable parameters identifiable during the process of policy implementation. Thus, a measure of success may, arguably, be obtained by the extent to which constraints operating on the target groups from the policy implementation and service delivery frameworks - as experienced by the client "on the ground" - are eased. By adopting this argument, we may put forward the hypothesis that **maximum impact is attained when as many of the constraints operating on the client and on his/her interaction with the service provision system are removed.**

One of the main conclusions of the implementation agencies' surveys and the focus groups is that the success of policies depends to a large extent on the capacity of service providers to deliver high quality services and on the opportunities given to the target groups to access and use these services. Therefore, a crucial question to be answered would be: "is the provision working?" The surveyed agencies and individuals argued that many programmes under the banner of lifelong learning have not been operating long enough to have sufficient historical statistical data in order to inform an objective opinion as to whether the provision is working. Mainstream criteria include meeting or exceeding targets; and providing "value for money" which however may result in tension and compromise quality, especially when the clients come from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Qualitative criteria of assessing the quality of services and the successful engagement of clients have been acknowledged across the surveyed countries as necessary parameters of the evaluation of the effectiveness of service provision.

Thus, an evaluation system based mostly on qualitative indicators and taking account of both the needs / situation of the client and the profile and quality of the provision seems to be more appropriate to assess the impact of policies on the inclusion of the target groups, compared to statistical data and assumptions formed by employment statistics on an



aggregate level. The views of implementing agents in all countries converged in that evaluation of policies, especially at the service delivery level, is imperative. However, most agreed that to conduct a meaningful evaluation, one has to focus on the client, on the constraints experienced and the benefits achieved, mainly through a qualitative approach.

One of the main tasks of the next step of this study has been to identify such constraints and benefits in more detail across a wide range of national contexts. Thus, the research team sought to explore the experience of the service providers and NGOs that have a close contact with the target groups of the study. The next step of the research is therefore centred at the service delivery level, and tries to give some further answers to the questions raised above.



Results of surveys





5. DELIVERY OF LIFELONG LEARNING POLICIES. Results of surveys

1. INTRODUCTION

The second part of the surveys carried out by the project partnership sought the opinions and experience of organisations that have frequent contact with the target groups, by delivering lifelong learning and/or support and care services to them. The aim of these surveys was to explore, through the experience of service delivering agencies, the operation of the inclusion policies "on the ground" concerning such aspects as the extent to which they address the needs of the target groups; and the main factors that mediate, positively or negatively, the impact of policies on the target groups at service delivery level.

Surveys of service delivering agencies were conducted in 7 countries: Greece, Denmark, Germany, UK, Poland, Hungary and Spain. In the eighth country, Sweden, two case studies of immigrant women who benefited from lifelong learning were carried out, to provide an additional input from the target group's point of view. These case studies, merged to a single "story" that includes the most interesting points of both, are presented in Appendix I.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Selection of the sample

In all countries, a search was carried out mostly based on the internet and through the contacts made at the previous stage of the research, during the interviews with policy makers and policy implementation actors at a higher level, to identify agencies that delivered services to the target groups in the context of the inclusion policies of the NAPs. A data base was constructed in each country of between 60 and 350 agencies, who were contacted firstly by e-mail or fax and then by telephone, if the results of the e-mail communication did not produce a satisfactory response rate. If even the telephone calls were not successful, then a face-to-face interview was sought. The picture of the different means used to complete the questionnaires of this phase of the research is as follows:

Denmark: 31 questionnaires were completed and returned by e-mail.

Germany: 15 questionnaires were received by e-mail and 35 interviews were conducted by telephone, totalling 50.

Greece: 12 questionnaires were received by e-mail and 30 interviews were conducted face-to-face, totalling 42.

Spain: 12 telephone interviews and 7 face-to-face interviews were carried out, and one questionnaire was received by e-mail, totalling 20.

Hungary: 52 telephone interviews were conducted, 47 questionnaires were usable.

UK: 52 agencies were contacted by e-mail, letter or telephone; some of them were personally interviewed.

Poland: 63 questionnaires were completed and returned by e-mail.



In total, 305 agencies took part in the survey, 143 of which are service providers targeting immigrants, refugees etc. and 162 disadvantaged groups in rural areas.

2.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire used for these surveys was common to all countries, although some variations were introduced by national teams, in the form of additional questions, to tap the particularities of the national context. The questionnaire was discussed and agreed by the project team at an early stage of the research. It has taken a semi-structured format, although each national team had the option to further structure the questions or leave them "open". The basic "trunk" of the questionnaire appears in Appendix III.

2.3 Hypotheses of the research

The construction of the questionnaire was guided by the hypotheses of the study. Based on the results of the implementation agencies surveys and the review of policies included in the NAPs/incl, and by consulting the literature in the participating countries and the EU more generally, three main hypotheses were proposed to guide the research design:

Hypothesis 1. The relevance of lifelong learning services to the social and economic needs of the target groups determines to a large extent the impact of lifelong learning on the inclusion of these groups.

Hypothesis 2. There is a number of "push" and "pull" factors mediating the impact of lifelong learning on the inclusion of the target groups. The incentives and constraints of users of services provide an indication of these mediating factors.

Hypothesis 3. The quality of services delivered by the agencies to the target groups play an important role on the inclusion impact of lifelong learning policies.

3. THE RESULTS

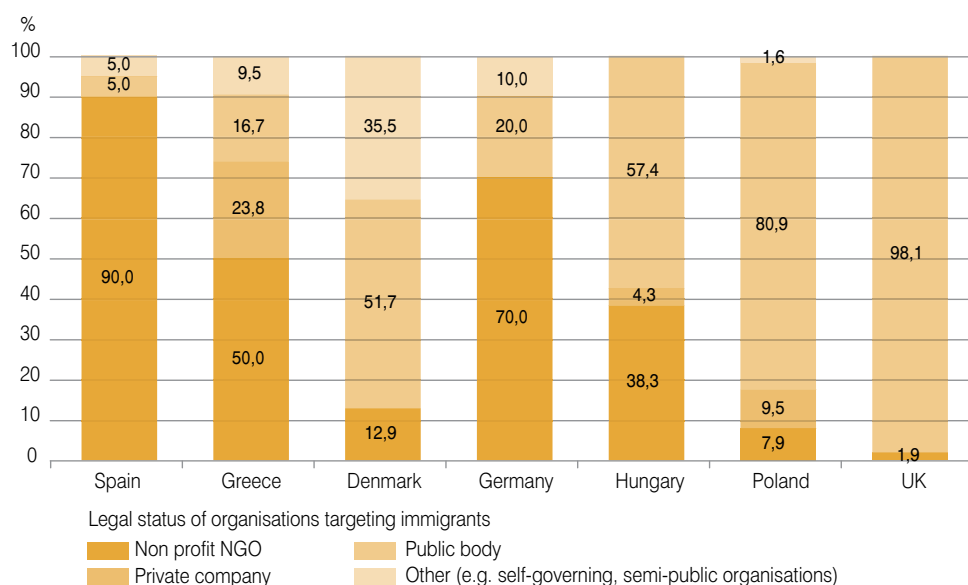
3.1 Profile of agencies

The majority of agencies that took part in the survey were non-profit NGOs and public organisations. The highest number of private agencies appear in Greece, where the bulk of vocational non-formal learning funded by the ESF is delivered by private Centres of Vocational Training. In the countries where the research targeted immigrants, a large proportion of the agencies were of the non-profit NGO type. In the countries targeting rural communities, the majority of the agencies that took part in the survey were public organisations. This structure reflects well the nature of service providers that address the target



groups of the study more generally. In the case of immigrants, the majority of care and learning services are delivered by NGOs (an exception to this is the sample of agencies recruited in Denmark, which includes mostly schools). In contrast, rural communities, benefit mostly by services that address the general population which are expected to be delivered by public organisations mostly. The table that follows presents the distribution of agencies in the different categories according to their legal status. It should be noted also that only a small minority of the agencies surveyed in each country offered their services exclusively to the target groups of the study. Most agencies included the target group of immigrants or rural disadvantaged individuals in their clientele, at proportions that varied between 10 and 90%.

Figure 2. Type of surveyed agencies



The surveyed agencies offer a variety of services to their clients. The majority offer training (VET and/or language or literacy/basic skills training) and some kind of counselling and guidance, including employment guidance, education counselling, psychological and social counselling. Most agencies combine these two major types of service.

The agencies targeting immigrants as part of their clientele, build many of their activities on government - and EU - funded projects that aim to facilitate the integration of immigrants in the labour market and the host society. In Denmark, a significant part of the sample includes kindergartens and schools with a high proportion of immigrant children, because of the emphasis on policies that aim to combat the "intergenerational transmission" of exclusion by starting the inclusion process from an early age. The major part of the activities is language teaching/practising and assistance with learning, personalised guidance (role modelling and mentoring),



social activities, networking and learning about the native society and culture.

In Germany, Greece and Spain, the majority of agencies offer language tuition, literacy courses or vocational training, formal or non-formal, and employment support to their clients, helping them to become integrated in the labour market. In Germany, it has been specifically noted that education and training services are most effective when the agencies are also counselling clients, so that they can receive the information and comprehensive support to reach the appropriate provision.

The agencies targeting disadvantaged rural communities offer a similar mix of education and training activities, coupled with career guidance and help to secure employment, giving particular attention to young people who have not finished their formal education or who have not the necessary skills to enter the labour market. Some of these agencies initiate activities to reinforce the local culture and local identity of rural communities, to provide support for their development and also provide special care or support to other vulnerable groups, such as the disabled or ethnic minorities in rural areas. Local authorities offering the above services are included in the national samples of Hungary and the UK, while in Poland the sample of agencies includes County Employment Offices, vocational education or training centres and local welfare centres. A combination of learning and advice/guidance or information activities is favoured by most agencies. The table below presents an outline of the services offered by the surveyed agencies in each country.

Table 1. The service provision outlook of the surveyed agencies

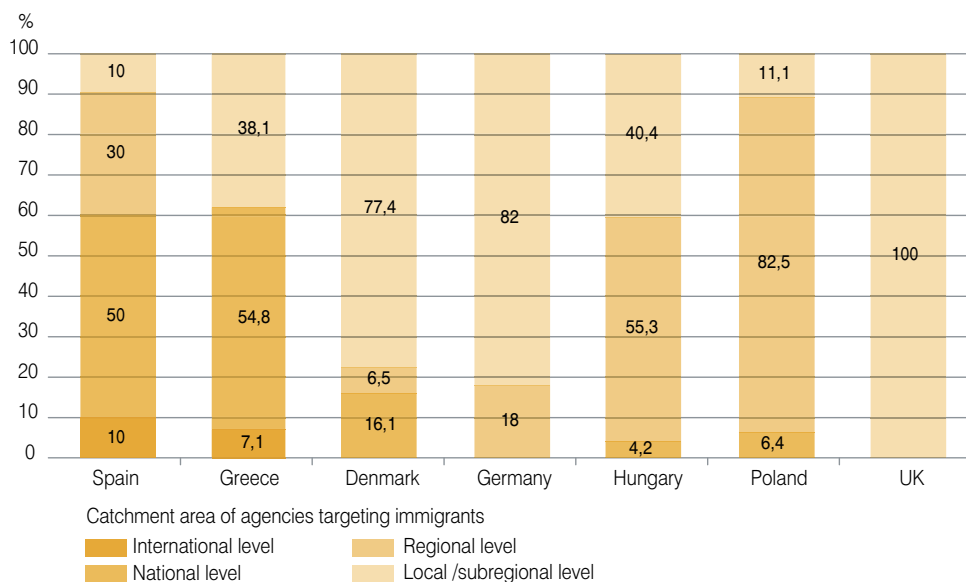
Type of services targeting immigrants	Spain		Greece		Denmark		Germany	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Counselling for employment/entrepreneurship	15	75,0	27	64,3	0	0,0	17	34,0
Counselling for education/training	16	80,0	23	54,8	11	35,5	0	0,0
Psychological/social support/social integration activities	1	5,0	22	52,4	15	48,4	11	22,0
Legal Advice	2	10,0	16	38,1	0	0,0	1	2,0
Education/vocational training	15	75,0	25	59,5	18	58,1	30	60,0
Language training	16	80,0	28	66,7	27	87,1		
Information, awareness campaigns, conferences	0	0,0	40	9,5	2		11	22,0
Other: Co-development programmes, train the trainers courses, understanding the local society courses, gender issues	2	10,0	7	16,6	18	64,6	6	12,0
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		31		50	



Type of services targeting rural communities	Hungary		Poland		UK	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Employment services and career guidance/ Counselling for education/ training	31	65,9	56	88,9	5	9,6
Psychological/social support/legal advice	21	44,7	57	90,5	4	7,7
Education/training	33	70,2	54	85,7	20	38,5
Other: Youth service, social reintegration, information service	25	53,2	2	3,2	5	9,6
Support for development of rural communities	0	0,0	0	0,0	18	34,6
Total (questionnaires)	47		63		52	

The majority of the surveyed agencies operate at the regional, sub-regional and local level. Those that operate at national level, have usually a mixed profile of local and national presence, including many branches nationwide. In some countries, namely Germany, UK and Denmark, the accessibility of the services emerged as an important factor for the attraction of clients and therefore agencies operating at the local level had a significant advantage. The geographical catchment area of the surveyed agencies appears in the table below.

Figure 3. Geographical level of operation of surveyed agencies



The majority of the activities of the agencies are funded by public money, from central state or local government (over 90% of agencies declared their dependence on public money) which



includes a large proportion of EU funds (e.g. in Greece, Spain, Hungary, Poland). Clients access these agencies either by self-referral or through referral from another agency or through the outreach activities of the staff of the agency. Self-referral is the rule in "competitive" services, which are advertised by the agency in the mass media so that interested and eligible individuals may come forward and apply for a place. For example, all training and counselling services funded by the CSF for vulnerable groups in Greece are competitive, and the clients are selected usually from long lists of applicants. Referral from another agency is very important in some other countries (e.g. Germany, UK, Denmark) where cooperation between agencies to cover different needs of the client is considered an essential part of the inclusion effort.

Table 2. Methods of accessing the target groups

How agencies reach immigrants	Spain		Greece		Germany	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Announcements in the media and the internet	15	75,0	41	97,6	21	42,0
Self referral	10	50,0	35	83,3		
Referral from public organisations or NGOs	5	25,0	29	59,5	26	52,0
Service provider finds target group	5	25,0	4	9,5	20	40,0
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		50	

How agencies reach rural communities	Hungary		Poland		UK	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Announcements in the media and the internet	19	40,4	55	87,3	10	19,2
Self referral	30	55,3	55	87,3	30	57,6
Referral from public organisations or NGOs	17	36,2	34	54,0	45	86,5
Service provider finds target group	30	63,8	0	0,0	50	96,1
Total (questionnaires)	47		63		52	

3.2 Hypothesis 1. The relevance of lifelong learning provision to clients' needs determines the inclusion impact

The hypothesis here is that the more relevant the services are to the clients' needs the better the chances are that the benefits to the clients will be substantial, leading to their integration in the economic and social life of the wider community. This leads to two questions: the first is how the service delivering agencies find out about the clients needs, so that they know to a satisfactory degree what these needs are; and the second is whether and how the agencies cover these needs through their operating and funding system.

The table below presents some of the most characteristic ways used by the agencies to



assess their clients' needs, as quantified in three countries.

Table 3. Ways of assessing the clients' needs

Assessment practices	Spain (immigrants)		Greece (immigrants)		Poland (rural communities)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Directly by the clients	15	75,0	36	85,7	51	80,9
Outreach by agency staff who go out to talk to target groups	7	35,0	28	66,7	16	25,4
From research and studies	5	25,0	32	76,1	23	36,5
Guidelines of funding organisations or employers	17	85,0	19	45,2	3	4,8
From the experience of other agencies or specialists	0	0,0	2	4,8	8	12,7
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		63	

Three more countries collected information on methods used by the agencies to find out what the needs of their clients are, without quantifying them: UK and Germany.

In the UK, the main assessment practices include:

- Consultation with client
- Consultation with parents/carers/other agency and client
- Means Testing
- Referral Form with rating scales
- Interview – formal/informal
- Initial assessment of basic/key skills in literacy & numeracy
- Individual assessment & Action Plan or Individual Learning Plan
- Needs assessed against local and national policy objectives

In Germany, the surveyed agencies use:

- Assessments according to official standards (e.g. of skills or literacy)
- Assistance schedules
- Special assessments for immigrants
- First-time conversation with client
- Project monitoring
- Target management with participants
- Case management

In Hungary, service delivering agencies do not have the technical background and the human resources that are necessary to conduct systematic needs assessment. When they



implement labour market integration programmes, needs are identified in cooperation with the regional labour centres, according to the regulations of the latter. Rural local authorities and Roma organisations provide valuable help in assessing the needs of their members.

Many agencies considered the needs assessment methods a technical issue, which took on a real meaning only if combined with a long-term learning guidance system to ensure an appropriate development of the skills of clients. The needs for self-confidence, recognition and attention were judged to be equally important as the skill needs, requiring constant monitoring and support.

Another issue brought forward by the surveys is that lifelong learning needs cannot be isolated from other vital needs of the person, such as employment and housing needs. An integrated approach to needs assessment was deemed necessary in order to place lifelong learning needs in context and in perspective. In two countries, Greece and Spain, respondents were asked to rank the needs of their clients in relation to the prospects of their inclusion, taking account of 6 vital aspects of a person's life: housing, initial education and training, lifelong learning, employment, cultural identity and health. The relative weight (score) and the rank of each aspect was calculated as follows for the full sample of every country:

Greece	Spain
1. Employment (4,4)	1. Employment (5,6)
2. Housing (3,9)	2. Housing (4,2)
3. Health (3,8)	3. Health (4,1)
4. Initial education (3,0)	4. Initial education (2,5)
5. Lifelong learning (2,1)	5. Cultural Identity (2,4)
6. Cultural identity (1,9)	6. Lifelong learning (2,1)

The above rank order in the two countries appears remarkably similar, and reflects the relative weight of lifelong learning in the total spectrum of needs of the target groups (immigrants), reinforcing the argument for an integrated approach to serving the lifelong learning needs of vulnerable groups as a means to achieve their inclusion. These results must be evaluated alongside the answer to the question "do you consider lifelong learning a vital factor in the inclusion process of vulnerable groups?" which received, both in Greece and Spain, 95% support from respondents.

The Danish survey shed light to another angle of this issue, concerning children and young people. The agencies (many of which were schools, as already mentioned) favoured a "whole family approach" to serving the needs of the kids, involving parents in the support and remedial activities planned for their children. They also stressed that the needs of immigrant kids differ from those of other kids, because of the "clash" of role models experienced by immigrant kids at home and at school. This approach led the agencies to organise special courses for parents on



the upbringing of their children, and language teaching, to remove the barriers that impede the involvement of immigrant parents in the education of their children, e.g. by supporting their kids with their homework or taking part in the school's cultural and social activities. The Danish study also points out that the young immigrants' need to secure employment, which is generally considered as a primary one, should not be seen as the sole objective of the inclusion process. Other important personal needs, such as self confidence and the development of creativity, as well as social interaction and networking are equally prominent in achieving social inclusion and, eventually, stable employment.

Learning needs are officially assessed in some European countries. For example, UK has developed a multi-level, elaborate system for assessing the skills level of a potential learner using standardised tests; and this may often be a requirement of funding. Such tests have to be handled sensitively if someone has poor skills and low self-confidence. Informal assessment is also carried out by the agencies through a supported interview process where potential clients are encouraged to openly discuss their needs as they perceive them. Setting of individual personalised targets was also viewed as being important: for some learners this might be of equal or greater importance than formal achievement. Similar techniques for needs assessment were reported in Germany.

In Poland, the surveyed agencies reported a commitment to identifying the needs of their clients, referring in particular to rural youth, so that they can help them to avoid entering the vicious circle of exclusion. The most popular methods used by the agencies for needs assessment was based on a conversation with their clients at "reception" stage which was often followed up with counselling, information about alternative available opportunities and career guidance. Questionnaire surveys were used by some agencies as well as group discussions with young people at school or in information meetings. The opinion of careers' experts and schoolteachers were also taken into account, as well as the job openings announced by local employers who were looking for particular skills.

The Polish model seems to provide ample opportunity to guide the clients to learning activities that suit best their needs, and to link their training to future opportunities for employment and personal development. However, for such a system to work well, there should be a considerable flexibility in the management of training and in the recruitment process, so that the client can choose from different options according to needs and can be then referred to the most suitable training. That is, the service providers should be able to cover the needs of their clients with a flexible itinerary of learning options, offering them guidance to pick up the best option.

We note here the case of Greece, where the continuing non-formal vocational training system, co-funded heavily by the European Union, is run on an inflexible system of applications for the available (subsidised) places of training, which excludes counselling and "reception" meetings with the applicants before application or registration with a course. The Greek service



providers devote very little effort in identifying their clients' needs, because the strict regulations do not offer them the possibility to guide applicants to the course most suited to them. A major social partner organisation interviewed in Greece (GSEE) faced with scepticism and doubt the usefulness of such training offered to vulnerable groups "in limbo", without any assessment of existing skills, qualifications and needs of applicants. The German experience shows that it is important to set individual goals for each client, related to his or her stage in the life cycle. A better outcome is expected if the learning opportunities are embedded in the personal situation of individuals. Thus, learning guidance systems need to follow the life cycle of the individual to ensure an appropriate development of his or her skills, and this seems to be particularly important for immigrants.

If we accept, however, that securing employment may not be the only but the most vital need of our target groups, as some of the research findings presented above indicated, the assessment of learning needs should be accompanied by a government policy that generates jobs for these target groups. In Spain, 12 economic sectors have been defined that have priority for immigrants' employment, and training on related skills is provided by priority to this target group. The Trade Unions have also taken an active role on this in Spain, by conducting studies to identify the high-priority training needs of immigrants, in order to design a Training Action Plan. The case of another agency, CERAI, is also of special interest, given their focus in helping immigrants in rural areas to adjust in the local labour market. An example of a recently offered training programme for immigrants includes wine making and agrotourism. Another aspect of the approach of this NGO is their involvement in international cooperation, developing training activities in the countries of origin of immigrants, thereby allowing better planning and coordination of migratory flows.

In rural areas, however, where the labour market is generally weak and limited, and the earnings lower than in urban areas, the UK agencies considered the development of small businesses as a feasible alternative to getting a job; they stressed that many Rural Development Agencies are seeking to stimulate business opportunities, especially in relation to the tourism industry.

3.3 Hypothesis 2. Client-related pull and push factors mediate the impact of lifelong learning

The pull and push factors that affect the target groups' opportunities to take up lifelong learning and facilitate their inclusion into the social and economic life of the wider community are reflected in the incentives and constraints experienced by clients of the surveyed agencies, as assessed by the staff of the agencies. As this information was elicited in most surveys by open questions, the answers present a remarkable diversity, which is summarised, as best as possible, below.

**Table 4. Incentives of clients to use the services of the agency**

Incentives (immigrants)	Spain		Greece		Denmark		Germany	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Financial benefits	5	25,0	22	52,4	8	25,8	4	8,0
Education and training opportunities	11	55,0	29	69,1	22	71,0	25	50,0
Improvement of language skills	14	70,0	33	78,6				
Acquiring new job skills/ job finding support	12	60,0	27	64,3	11	35,5	4	8,0
Develop social skills, improve social networks	12	60,0	27	64,3	15	48,4		
Psychological and social support	9	45,0	24	57,1	7	22,6		
Promotion at work					3	9,7	16	32,0
Childcare, help their children					5	16,1	2	4,00
Good access, meet familiar people					9	29,0		
Personal interest							10	20,0
Other: keep own culture, keep residence permit, attractive services, participation opportunities			6	16,7	1	3,2	9	18,0
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		31		50	

Incentives (rural communities)	Hungary		Poland	
	No	%	No	%
Financial			38	60,3
Education and training opportunities	30	63,8	52	82,5
Opportunity to increase their chances in the labour market	29	61,7	59	93,6
Promotion at work	10	21,3	6	9,5
Opportunity to help their children	12	25,5	7	11,1
Total (questionnaires)	47		63	

Learning the language of the host country emerged as a strong incentive for immigrants, because a certificate of language ability is a necessary qualification to renew work and residence permits in the EU. The agencies in Germany believe that after the initial compulsory language courses there must also be attractive voluntary learning opportunities, based on the



principle that every step in a person's education should lead to a next step, opening further opportunities for learning and integration in the labour market. If a "chain" of learning opportunities is not planned, leading to skills and personal improvement with a final target of securing a job or being promoted to a better one, it is difficult to make people understand why extended education is important and useful. Moreover, it was stressed that beyond the introductory programmes for newcomers there must be a comprehensive integration policy. This policy should also support the use and development of the mother tongue of immigrants and give a strong value to multilingualism.

In all four countries that had immigrants as their target group, the language competence and vocational skills development incentives were imperative. Further to these, in Greece, financial incentives played also an important role, because participants in ESF courses receive a subsidy that equals unemployment benefit. To those groups that are not eligible for unemployment benefit or have already exhausted their 12-month statutory unemployment period for which benefit is paid by the state, the registration to ESF courses is a solution to keep them temporarily out of poverty. In Greece, Spain and Denmark, the social networking component was brought out as an important incentive for clients, who valued the opportunity to get in contact with the native population and with organised networks of self-help addressed to immigrants, through lifelong learning activities. Good access to services and a friendly environment were mentioned as added incentives for participation, while advice services and short training courses on legal issues relating to immigrant workers' rights and employers' obligations proved to work out as further incentives to join learning activities in Greece.

The disadvantaged rural residents were mostly directed to the opportunities for further education and training, by the final target of securing employment or getting a promotion or a better job. It is also interesting to note that a small proportion of agencies in Poland and a fair proportion in Hungary considered the incentives of their clients to be family-centred, addressing the needs of their children for a better life.

The UK agencies identified personal and community development as incentives to take part in lifelong learning. They also considered it very important for the client to see links from the training they were undertaking to future opportunities, however difficult this might be in rural areas, where the opportunity for employment is limited. Many people in this target group are also trapped in the Benefit System and it is almost impossible for them to access employment with a salary that exceeds benefits and has a favorable effect on their household income. There is therefore little financial gain for many to enter employment. This is a real challenge for the agencies who try to engage the client group. Therefore, no matter how many lifelong learning opportunities there may be, if those undertaking courses are still unable to access the labour market on a wage level which takes them out of the Benefit System, few will see the incentive to engage in those opportunities.

The constraints of clients to use the services of the surveyed agencies are related to difficult access, lack of time because of long working hours, cost and lack of motivation,



almost across the board of the international sample. Further constraints that pertain to some national contexts, with special reference to immigrants, include poor information about available services, bureaucracy, lack of legalisation documents that would make the clients eligible for service, breaking down of the referral system due to poor cooperation between agencies, poor use of the local language that inhibits communication with the service providers and cultural or family constraints.

Table 5. Constraints of clients to use the services of the agency

Clients' constraints (immigrants)	Spain		Greece		Denmark		Germany	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Access/travel difficulties	8	40,0	7	16,7	8	25,8	8	16,0
Time	9	45,0	12	28,6	11	35,5		
Financial			7	16,7	9	29,0	3	6,0
Lack of motivation, interest	6	30,0	4	9,5	9	29,0		
Lack of information (of the providers, of the possibilities open to them)			4	9,5	10	32,2		
Bad guidance or lack of guidance, bureaucratic rules			2	4,8	7	22,6		
Poor use of host country's language			2	4,8				
Lack of legalisation documents	16	80,0	2	4,8				
Problems of cooperation with other agencies							5	10,0
Age, physical capacity							8	16,0
Too many participants with immigrant background					3	9,7		
Religious, cultural or family constraints					6	19,4		
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		31		50	

Clients' constraints (rural communities)	Hungary		Poland	
	No	%	No	%
Access/travel difficulties	20	42,6	45	71,4
Financial	21	44,7	33	52,4
Time	7	14,9	2	3,2
Lack of motivation, interest	29	61,7	51	80,9
Legal	12	25,5		
Total (questionnaires)	47		63	



In Spain, many north African immigrants have not obtained the legal consent necessary to work and live in the country, and this constitutes the most important constraint for the use of services. The same problem was mentioned by the Greek agencies, although at a smaller scale. Lack of motivation is also cited as a disincentive. This may be due to the "standardised" structure of training courses, which cannot be attended without a minimum level of language competence and a minimum level of literacy. Also, the skills, knowledge and qualifications already possessed by immigrants are not taken into account when planning these courses, which usually require a complete change of orientation of the immigrant workers towards a job that does not offer long term prospects and stability. Similar constraints were perceived as important by a fair number of the Greek respondents, especially NGOs representing trade unions.

Cultural constraints were stressed by the Danish agencies, noting religion and the gender dimension as added constraints for Muslim families, who were apprehensive of allowing their girls to take part in school activities outside normal school hours, although these activities would be beneficial for the pupils. A lack of tradition for education in the family was also viewed as a constraint. Gender constraints were also mentioned by the Spanish agencies, who viewed immigrant women as bound to "typically" feminine jobs, most of them linked to domestic service. Further to these constraints, racism and xenophobia were mentioned by Greek agencies as perceived constraints of clients, especially when information about services and the terms and conditions of their use was insufficient.

Among the group targeting rural disadvantage, the question of client de-motivation received particular attention as a constraint, although assessments differed between countries. Thus, in Poland, almost half the surveyed agencies admitted a low degree of motivation of their clients as a serious obstacle for taking up the services offered. Some of the agencies blamed the family environment and a high occurrence of trans-generational unemployment in rural areas for this. Low education level in rural communities counted also for lack of interest in further education and training. Poor access to services affected even more negatively the motivation of rural inhabitants.

In the UK, it was surprising that lack of person motivation was not seen as an obstacle to participation. A major obstacle for all service delivering agencies was lack of availability and high cost of travel to lifelong learning opportunities. Many rural areas have no access to public transport and those that do, have an infrequent and sometimes unreliable service. For those without access to their own transport, this can result in isolation and exclusion. It is therefore imperative that if provision is to be successful, the access barriers must be identified and overcome. Dial-a-ride schemes are being developed which may help this, but they are reliant on project funding and therefore may not be sustainable in the long run. Transport providers need to review their services in light of where people want to go and at what time, rather than pure accessibility to reach work and shopping. To achieve this, interagency cooperation and planning is crucial.



3.4 Hypothesis 3. The quality of lifelong learning services delivered to vulnerable groups impacts the inclusion process

The quality of services that are targeted at vulnerable groups is a major issue in the inclusion debate (see literature review chapter, e.g. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2001). The present research collected information on this crucial issue by asking agencies to report the main problems or constraints that inhibit the delivery of their services to the best advantage of their clients, followed by a question on the improvements they consider necessary in order to improve these services.

The answers of the surveyed agencies showed that the constraints experienced by agencies have three different sources:

- firstly, the wider environment of the agency, including other agencies offering complementary or competing services, the authorities that finance the agency's actions and/or set the rules and regulations for the delivery of services and the national policy framework related to the target groups and lifelong learning;
- secondly, the clients themselves and their unwillingness, unpreparedness or inability to take advantage of the services; and
- thirdly, the resources of the agency, both financial and human.

The table below groups the answers of the agencies under the three categories described above.

Table 6. Providers' constraints in delivering services

Providers' constraints (target group: immigrants)	Spain		Greece		Denmark	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>Agency's environment</i>						
Inadequate financing, esp. after projects end	15	75,0	20	47,6	8	25,8
Bureaucracy, political decisions	1	5,0	28	66,7		
Limited inter-agency cooperation			2	4,8		
Lack of targeted policies for education/training of vulnerable groups	9	45,0	20	47,6		
Lack of flexibility to adjust programmes to the needs of clients due to EC-funding rules	1	5,0	18	42,9		
racism/xenophobia	3	15,0	12	28,6		



Providers' constraints (target group: immigrants)	Spain		Greece		Denmark	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Target group						
The target groups are not well informed or cannot communicate with the agency due to language difficulties	2	10,0	15	35,7	15	48,4
Lack of lifelong learning culture	12	60,0	19	45,2		
Resistance from client's family (for children clients)					12	38,7
Lack of motivation by clients or families					10	32,3
Cultural gap between target group and local society					13	41,9
Agency's resources						
Lack of skilled personnel	15	75,0	5	11,9		
Internal agency problems, eg. lack of space, poor organisation and coordination			4	9,5	5	16,1
Low levels of voluntary work	2	10,0	6	14,3		
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		31	

Providers' constraints (target group: rural communities)	Hungary		Poland	
	No	%	No	%
Agency's environment				
Inadequate financing	21	44,7	24	38,1
Lack of occupational counselling in schools			5	7,9
Lack of effective labour market policies-shortage of jobs			5	7,9
Bureaucracy, lack of flexibility to adjust programmes to the needs of clients due to EC-funding rules	6	12,8	16	25,4
Lack of cooperation with employers	5	10,6	5	7,9



Providers' constraints (target group: rural communities)	Hungary		Poland	
	No	%	No	%
Target group				
Low level of education of clients			4	6,3
Trans-generational "inherited" unemployment			7	11,1
Poverty			7	11,1
Low motivation by clients and their families, low demand	7	14,9	16	25,4
Difficult access - poor public transport			7	11,1
Agency 's resources				
Lack of skilled personnel			8	12,7
Operational: lack of coordination, lack of experience with planning ahead and with complex services	6	12,8		
Total (questionnaires)	47		63	

Environment - related constraints

The variety of answers reflects the different target groups and the national contexts which define the environment of the agencies' operation. Thus, in the group of countries targeting immigrants, Greece and Spain show a prevalence of the constraints imposed by the agency's environment, starting from the lack of targeted policies for the inclusion of immigrants and extending to the poor or fragmented funding which does not guarantee a long-term delivery of services to clients. This is coupled with the inflexible rules of ESF-funded programmes that do not allow adjustment to individual and local particularities. Also, society's attitudes towards immigrants, prejudiced by racism and xenophobia, seem to play a significant enough role in defining the lifelong learning services' environment in these two countries.

Political and authority frames are also important constraints in Denmark. An example is provided by the legal acts and rules defined by political decisions at municipal or central government level. Lack of efficiency by the local authorities who refer the clients to projects run by agencies, lack of interest or lack of cooperation between authorities and the delivering agency or between agencies that offer complementary services also pose obstacles in the smooth delivery of lifelong learning services. In Germany, the constraints facing service providers were not quantified, but the qualitative information provided points out to similar environmental constraints as those identified in other countries, e.g. bureaucratic procedures that are out of proportion to the services offered, project funding that does not guarantee continuity of services beyond specific project deadlines, weak political support for



immigrant-targeted services, lack of inter-agency cooperation and lack of inter-cultural openness of the institutional environment. Further to these, the German agencies complained about a weak labour market which does not offer opportunities to the trained immigrants, thus undervaluing the benefit from the learning effort; and an unsatisfactory structure of orientation courses, which do not meet the level of education of clients. Indeed, it was stated that lifelong learning projects targeting immigrants activate those individuals that are already possessing at least the basic skills, excluding others who are more disadvantaged from an educational or language point of view.

In the group of countries that target disadvantaged rural communities, the agency's environment appears also to pose constraints on the work of the agencies, similar to a large extent to those already reported above. In Poland, the training and guidance providers in rural areas have assumed the role of "mediator" between unemployed youth and the labour market, but they often find themselves trapped between the expectations of their clients and a government policy that does not stimulate the rural labour market, matched by the non-cooperation of local employers. This is accentuated by lack of career guidance in many rural schools, limited funding for the continuing training and guidance of young people and the inflexible rules of the ESF, which funds many of the agencies' projects.

The UK agencies consider the geographical location of services as a serious constraint, because they are not community-based but institution-based, the latter meaning that they are thinly spread on the ground in rural areas, limiting their access to clients who are unwilling to travel and lack personal transport. Also the orientation of courses towards a qualification, which is now the rule for all government-funded training courses, makes them inflexible and often not suitable or attractive to disadvantaged rural residents.

Client - related constraints

In all countries, agencies identified constraints that stemmed from their clients' situation or profile. In the group of countries targeting immigrants, the use of services was seen to be constrained by the difficulty in communication due to language barriers or by access to information. Cultural constraints, lack of familiarity with lifelong learning practices and lack of motivation of clients feature in the answers of the majority of agencies. Further to these, in Denmark, the non-cooperation of immigrant families with the school and their negative attitude towards certain school practices, due to cultural differences, came out prominently, resulting from the focus of the Danish study on kindergartens and schools.

In the group of countries targeting disadvantaged rural communities, low motivation of clients features prominently in the responses of Polish agencies, corroborated by trans-generational unemployment, poverty and poor access to the services offered by the agencies. This picture is not confirmed in the UK, as already mentioned in the previous chapter: when the incentives and constraints of clients to use services were discussed, motivation of rural residents was not identified as a constraint. Training agencies in the UK reported that they often



had to work with a heterogeneous group of students whose level of educational attainment varied substantially, posing serious constraints on the work of the teacher.

Agency - related constraints

Some of the aspects that influence negatively the work of the service delivering agencies and the quality of the services they offer, are related to their internal operation and resources. Shortage of staff and in particular shortage of suitably qualified and skilled staff to deal effectively with the target groups of the agency featured as a serious problem across all countries. Lack of inter-agency cooperation was also mentioned as a constraint in many countries, restricting the delivery of comprehensive service to the target groups and failing to assure an integrated approach to the needs of clients. Further to these, internal organisation problems and poor marketing of their services were mentioned by some agencies. Most of these problems however, were referred back to the funding of the agencies, which for the majority of them was project-bound, with a limited time-horizon, resulting to lack of continuity for the provision of services as well as lack of long term prospects for the staff, especially the expert staff that have the necessary competences to serve the target groups.

This lead us to the next item of the questionnaire which concerns the agencies' view on how to improve their services. The table below summarises findings.

Table 7. Recommendations for improving the agencies' services

How services can be improved (target group: immigrants)	Spain		Greece		Denmark	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
More resources (more and more stable funding of the services, more staff-time)	15	75,0	25	59,5	6	19,4
Improve internal organisation of agency	3	15,0	15	35,7		
Recruitment of suitably qualified/skilled staff, training existing staff	3	15,0	15	35,7	8	25,9
Better cooperation with international organisations	5	25,0	13	31,0		
Better inter-agency cooperation at national level (authorities, NGOs)	5	25,0	26	61,9	5	16,1
Broader social acceptance of the target group	10	50,0	14	33,3		
Better cooperation with the client's family					6	19,4
Other: Better planning of projects in advance to ensure their later "anchoring", promote learning culture, work with mixed groups					6	12,9
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		31	



How services can be improved (target group: rural communities)	Hungary		Poland	
	No	%	No	%
More funds	9	19,1	24	38,0
Recruitment of suitably qualified/skilled staff, training existing staff	6	12,8	8	12,7
Improve public policy/law	4	8,5	16	25,4
Better inter-agency cooperation at national level (authorities, NGOs)	1	2,1	5	7,9
Evaluation and monitoring	2	4,2		
Improve infrastructure of agency/ communications	6	12,8		
Harmonisation with the labour market	3	6,3		
Total (questionnaires)	47		63	

The answers received here reflect to a large extent the constraints stated by the agencies, as discussed previously. Funding is mentioned in all countries as a prerequisite to the improvement of services, although the agencies are not necessarily asking for more funds. Rather, the majority are asking for more stable, on-going funding that would allow them to build their activities on a long term basis and recruit or train their staff so that the necessary skills become available. Among all countries, the one that suffers most from the short-term nature of projects addressed to vulnerable groups is Greece, and this is reflected in the answers of the agencies, many of which cannot recruit suitably qualified staff because of the short term horizon and fragmentary nature of contracts. Improving the skills of existing staff has been clearly a priority in all countries. Moreover inter-agency cooperation, rather than competition or conflict, seems to be recognised by many agencies across the board of the surveyed countries, as a necessary condition for improving their services.

Further to the above "universally accepted" conditions for improving the services of the agencies, there are some other aspects that have been taken up by respondents. For example, planning their projects according to clients' needs and with an "exit strategy" for the clients has been mentioned by the Danish, German and UK agencies; improving the internal organisation of the agency and introducing quality assurance systems has been proposed by the Greek and UK samples; and special measures that relate to the more effective integration of immigrant children into the national education system and the culture of the host country have been proposed by the Danish respondents. In Hungary, the surveyed agencies asked for better monitoring and evaluation of their services, better infrastructure and harmonisation of their services with the labour market. Also, agencies in Hungary and



Poland put forward recommendations that advocate change (and improvement) of national policies concerning the target groups and reduction of the bureaucracy imposed on them by the funding authorities, although these are conditions that fall outside the influence of the agencies and within the responsibilities of the government of the country.

4. EVALUATION

Evaluation of the activities of the agencies is carried out in most countries as a matter of course. If their activities are co-funded by the EU, external evaluation is an obligation of the funding organization. However, many agencies conduct their own evaluation through questionnaires, personal interviews with the beneficiaries, group discussions, staff meetings and personal learning itineraries or action plans constructed for clients. The criteria used for evaluation are adjusted to the particular activities of the agency and to the target group of clients. The table below presents a summary of the criteria declared by the surveyed agencies. Quantified results were produced in the countries shown below, while in Germany and the UK only qualitative results were obtained.

Table 8. Evaluation criteria used by the service providers

Evaluation criteria (target group: immigrants)	Spain		Greece		Denmark	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Number of people interested in taking up training (number of applications for training or use of the services)	8	40,0	21	50,0		
Number of users of services	11	55,0	19	45,2	9	29,0
Percentage of people that have completed a programme/cycle of training or counselling	12	60,0	21	50,0		
Number of people who got a job	5	25,0	17	40,5	2	6,5
Percentage of problems that have been resolved by counselling	3	15,0	14	33,3		
Improvement of vocational skills	7	35,0	18	42,9	4	12,9
Improvement of social skills	5	25,0	17	40,5		
Improvement of language skills	6	30,0	20	47,6		
Increase of self-confidence	3	15,0	14	33,3		
Participation in social life	3	15,0	11	26,2		
Participation in public life	1	5,0	8	19,0		
Total (questionnaires)	20		42		31	



Evaluation criteria (target group: rural communities)	Hungary		Poland	
	No	%	No	%
Number of people interested in taking up services offered by the agency	5	10,6	9	14,3
Number of users of services			24	38,1
Number of people who got a job	12	25,5	7	11,1
Drop in unemployment rates			2	3,2
Analysis of learning/employment paths of clients			2	3,2
Number of people who completed the training	4	8,5		
Number of students who wished to continue learning	3	6,4		
Improved skills	2	4,2		
Total (questionnaires)	47		63	

In most of the surveyed countries the agencies apply criteria that refer to the number of applicants and actual users of their services; the percentage of users that were helped to get a job; and the personal development results of the client, including skills acquisition, improvement of self esteem and self confidence, improvement of social skills and participation in the public life of the host country. Some agencies also collect data on the numbers that complete successfully a course or a counselling programme. Further to the above, in Germany and Poland the "history" of the clients or the personal action plans produced by the agency are used as evaluation tools, especially to assess whether the targets set there have been achieved. In Poland, official statistics have also been mentioned as an input to evaluation, while in Germany the satisfaction of clients and their successful referral to other services were also recorded.

In the UK, all government-funded agencies are expected to use set criteria by which success will be judged although, according to the respondents, this does not always reflect what a client or provider will identify as success. One of those criteria is the acquisition of a formal qualification. This was also mentioned by the German agencies, although it has been admitted in both these countries that personal development factors and follow up with further education and training (vocational or other) and accessing employment by the client are more meaningful criteria of evaluation than formal qualifications.

Agencies in the UK provided also some examples of the results of the evaluations they had conducted through interviews, questionnaires and group discussions with their clients. A sample of the criteria used by clients to evaluate the services they received are noted below:



- Access to high quality, independent Information, Advice & Guidance
- Well qualified and approachable staff
- Good support to achieve academic aims
- Study is supported with subsidised childcare, travel etc.
- Study leading to qualifications
- Opportunity to fulfil their ambitions through clear, defined route
- Better employment prospects

The above provide a fair list, although not an exhaustive one, of the aspects that define the "quality of services" for the user, and should be read alongside the findings presented in Chapter 3.4. Certainly, the evaluation of the impact of inclusion policies should take into account both the views of the clients and the service providers, within an evaluation framework that brings together the needs of the target groups, the process of service delivery and the results/benefits to the client. However, it is also necessary to take into account the wider context of policy implementation, which includes not only the policy targets, but also the social, administrative and cultural background of the implementing country.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey of lifelong learning service providers contributed a valuable insight on the implementation of inclusion policies "on the ground" and served well this particular objective of the project.

All three hypotheses set in the beginning of this report have been validated.

Hypothesis 1. The relevance of lifelong learning provision to clients' needs determines the inclusion impact

Needs assessment is a practice followed by service providers in most countries, either as a statutory requirement or on their own initiative. Formal assessment includes standardised testing of skills, while informal assessment undertaken by the agencies include more qualitative methods, such as interviews and personal learning itineraries that set personalised targets for the individual. However, the research showed that lifelong learning needs do not make sense in a vacuum, but they must be seen in the context of the total spectrum of the individual's needs, including all the vital aspects of his or her life, such as employment, housing, health, culture and formal education.

Indeed, the experience of the surveyed service providers showed that the effect of learning is more sustained if it is embedded in the person's life history and current situation, interacting with other needs and leading to the best life-solution for the person. Although the interaction between lifelong learning and employment is emphasised by all agencies, being



part of the national target to improve the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market, the impact of the former to the latter is by no means assured. This is especially true in countries that experience at present a weak or inflexible labour market, that does not provide substantial employment opportunities to vulnerable groups. Thus, the provision of training courses that may not lead to employment has been shown to undermine the value of lifelong learning among the target groups of this study, i.e. immigrants and disadvantaged rural residents; alternatively, further opportunities of learning were considered necessary, that would build new targets for the individual and would improve his or her chances to enter successfully the labour market.

Thus, it is important to provide guidance to the vulnerable groups to build their own learning itinerary, set targets in relation to employment and personal development, and develop their own perspective of continuous education through life as a vehicle towards social and economic inclusion. It should be also recognised that the vulnerable groups have multiple needs, which may be more complex and pressing than those of other groups, but demand coordination, an integrated response from public services and an approach that balances material needs with psychological and social ones.

Hypothesis 2. Client-related "push" and "pull" factors mediate the impact of lifelong learning

The "pull" factors define the incentives and motives of the target groups to take up lifelong learning and guidance services and relate primarily to the overall needs of the members of these groups, as mentioned above. Further incentives are created by the quality of the services and the profile of the service providers, including easy access, friendliness and good communication that builds trust. "Push" factors or constraints are more complex and varied, reflecting both the individual's own situation and the provided services' outlook. The most prominent of these refer to access, which in rural areas becomes a defining factor of the communities' uptake of lifelong learning. Poor information, long working hours, lack of motivation for reasons relating to personal needs and cultural idiosyncrasies operate against the uptake of lifelong learning services. The inter-agency referral system may provide valuable solutions to overcoming these constraints, calling for close cooperation and coordination across the whole spectrum of agencies serving the needs of the target groups, both public and NGOs. The content of services and the extent to which they match clients' skill needs and personal histories can be a particularly potent factor that acts as an incentive or disincentive in taking up lifelong learning by the target groups.

Immigrants is an especially vulnerable group in this respect, in that most of the provision of vocational training addressing the labour market does not have the flexibility to differentiate learning according to the skills and qualifications already possessed by the individual members of this group. This finding is corroborated by the OECD study,



discussed in Part I of this Report (OECD, 2006). The gender dimension is also very important, especially for women migrants, who are directed to traditionally feminine jobs, without much prospect for self-development and self-actualisation. The Danish and German policies that have a part-focus on the early age of the second generation immigrants or the young children of newcomers, supported by a family-centred approach to inclusion, offer an example of best practice in lifelong learning provision that runs through the life-cycle, involving parents as trainers in the lifelong learning careers of their children.

Hypothesis 3. The quality of services delivered to vulnerable groups impacts the inclusion process

The surveys of service delivering agencies have revealed three types of factors that determine their *modus operandi* and the quality of the services provided. These include, firstly the wider policy, funding and labour market environment within which the agencies operate at the national and EU levels; secondly the response of their clients to the services, regarding their willingness and ability to take them up; and thirdly the resources of the agency itself and its internal organisation and efficiency. These types of factors reflect three distinct but complementary strands of evaluation regarding the agency's services and their impact on the inclusion of clients.

Lack of targeted policies, fragmented funding with a limited time scale, inflexible rules of project management introduced by local/national authorities or the EC, bureaucracy, lack of efficiency by the authorities are some of the negative characteristics of the policy and funding environment that affect the quality of the agencies' output. Moreover, unsatisfactory inter-agency cooperation, either because agencies perceive themselves in competition or because service providers and government institutions have no common codes of work or similar work paces, result in reduced and less effective services for the clients, who depend substantially on the referral system and coordination between different agencies offering complementary services. A major issue raised in all countries is the project-based nature of service provision to both target groups, instigated in most countries by the EC funding which is strictly structured in terms of time and programmes and measures/actions. Although EC funding has opened the door in many of the participating countries to large scale lifelong learning activities that would have been otherwise impossible to take place, it has at the same time introduced the model of "projects", with beginning and end, which do not guarantee the continuity of services in the long term. This affects in particular the agencies that serve vulnerable groups who have a slow response to lifelong learning and need a long time-horizon to capitulate the benefits of learning, such as the immigrants and disadvantaged rural communities.

Social inclusion policies for immigrants or rural communities suffering disadvantage cannot be separated from labour market policies and the necessary education and training for integration in the labour market. However, it seems that in most countries the relationship



between labour market policies and lifelong learning policies for the target groups were not in harmony, leaving the lifelong learning and guidance providers to act as "mediators" between their clients' needs and a non-responsive, weak labour market. This is bound to create serious doubts among clients regarding the effectiveness of services, leading to their de-motivation and indifference. The Benefit System may also act as a de-motivator, because the earnings from benefits, in countries with a strong welfare state, compare favourably with the low wages a weak labour market can offer, especially in rural areas. Development of small businesses has proved vitally important in rural regions and many Rural Development Agencies are seeking through lifelong learning to stimulate and rejuvenate business opportunities in rural areas.

Regarding clients' motivation, low motivation has been reported in most countries, stemming from factors such as those mentioned above. Moreover, difficult access to services proved to be a decisive factor for rural residents' uptake of lifelong learning, given that the geographical spread of services is usually institution-based and not community-based, thus favouring urban areas and limiting the opportunities for rural areas. Other constraints that were mentioned in relation to the personal "push" factors, restricting the opportunities of the target groups to benefit from lifelong learning, such as cultural, financial, family-related, literacy, communication abilities etc., affect the service delivery because they inhibit the response of the clients to the services and limit the expected benefits.

The resources of the agency, both financial and human, represent the most important factors for sustaining the quality of services. More than money, the skills and qualifications of staff have been assessed by agencies across all countries as their most important resource, that needs to be developed, sustained and expanded. Operation on the basis of projects does not help to build staff resources on a long-term basis. Besides, to achieve a "comprehensive service", which most agree that is the only effective way for a valid inclusion result, internal coordination as well as external cooperation with other agencies –government institutions or NGOs offering services to the same target groups– should be assured, and a closer contact between the agency and the target groups should be established.

In conclusion, lifelong learning represents a vital input for combating the risk of exclusion of both immigrants and disadvantaged rural communities and for strengthening social cohesion, provided that they form part of an integrated approach by policy makers.



Recommendations

The recommendations below reflect and summarise the main points of the conclusions, as put forward by the agencies themselves:

1. The need for an integrated policy approach to social inclusion:

- Lifelong learning services for vulnerable groups should be part of an integrated policy that places lifelong learning at the centre of their overall needs for economic and social inclusion, comprising employment, health and social care, housing, social security, culture and education.
- Social inclusion policies, in the context of an integrated approach, should be harmonised with labour market policies, so that education and lifelong learning addressed to vulnerable groups can lead to employment.
- The above implies that skills training should be adjusted to the capacities, prior learning and employment history of the individual, as well as reflecting real employment possibilities.

2. Meeting the lifelong learning needs of the target groups:

- Needs assessment practices should be introduced at service provision level, extending beyond vocational and communication/language skills, to include a wide spectrum of vital aspects in the client's life, such as employment, housing, health, culture, education etc. Such an assessment would facilitate the implementation of the integrated policy, provided that a "comprehensive" provision would also be available to cater for the needs of the vulnerable person.
- The needs of individuals/groups need to be fully understood and provision should reflect these as well as meeting the policy targets regarding learning achievement, skills acquisition and social inclusion.

3. Overcoming the constraints that do not allow vulnerable groups to benefit from lifelong learning:

- More funding is necessary to improve accessibility of services, either through the improvement of transport for clients to access provision or for delivering agencies to take the provision to the clients. This is particularly important for disadvantaged rural communities.
- Limited accessibility of services due to social and cultural constraints should also be accounted for. This is particularly relevant to immigrants and related groups.
- Good information should be available, accessible to the target groups who may not have a high language competency or access to Information and Communications Technology.



- A lifelong learning culture should be introduced among the target groups, starting early in childhood in the family context, involving parents as partners for the education of their children. This is particularly important for immigrant families.
4. Ensuring the delivery of quality services by lifelong learning providers:
- To have a real impact on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, lifelong learning services should operate with a long term horizon; moreover, the necessary resources should be secured, so that service providers can build up their human resources and operating practices to the best advantage of their clients. Sustainability must be built in for good quality provision.
 - Service providers should complement each other rather than be in competition, and cross-referral of clients between service providers should be smooth and coordinated.
 - A reduction in bureaucracy increases the efficiency of the providers and saves time to be devoted to clients.
 - Services should be delivered in a way that do not discriminate, are gender-sensitive and adjusted to the stage in the life cycle of clients.
 - Guidance plays a vital part for promoting lifelong learning to vulnerable groups; it should start at the "reception" or "orientation" phase and continue through the life cycle of the client. Lifelong learning itineraries and action plans setting long-term individualised targets are useful tools making the client aware of the prospects and goals of lifelong learning for his or her personal development and integration in the wider community and the labour market. Existing skills and qualifications should be taken into account when defining the next step of an individual lifelong learning itinerary. Language training for immigrants should form an initial part of their lifelong learning itineraries.

6. THE EVALUATION MODEL





6. THE EVALUATION MODEL

1. THE BACKGROUND

One of the objectives of the project has been to work out a methodology for the evaluation of the impact of lifelong learning on the social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups, including a proposal for a number of indicators that can measure the parameters of the impact.

The findings of the surveys have informed us about the evaluation approaches and practices adopted by policy implementing agencies and service providers, pointing to a number of issues that are worth noting:

- A shared view among respondents in all surveyed countries underlined the need for a long-term evaluation of the impact of lifelong learning policies, because the target of social inclusion can be only achieved in the long term. This is particularly true for policies that aim at "structural" changes of the social exclusion model, such as halting the inter-generational transmission of exclusion.
- Short term results of policies are, nevertheless, important too and should be evaluated. Although they may not reflect the achievement -or not- of full social and economic inclusion of the target groups, they contribute vitally to the improvement of their quality of life and their prospects of integration as well as to social justice and social cohesion. Many respondents to the surveys, however, stressed that the evaluation of short term results has a limited value, as they only represent the first of a series of small steps towards social inclusion.
- The impact of lifelong learning policies on the inclusion of vulnerable groups is more likely to be realised and sustained if a comprehensive approach to social inclusion policy is assumed by policy makers, taking account of the full spectrum of the needs of the excluded individuals and communities.
- The success of policies and measures or programmes that implement policy should be seen in two ways: in relation to their direct impact on the vulnerable groups; and in relation to the "learning" they generate for policy formation.
- The methods of evaluation used in most countries include a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. EC-funded programmes impose statutory requirements of evaluation, mostly quantitative, which do not however reach the service delivery level, but concern the performance of policies and measures at the policy management level. Some respondents voiced criticism regarding the data-centred benchmarking procedure included in the NAP/incl. In some countries, all programmes funded from Government have to be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and value for money. For this, quantitative data is mandatory, but the annual reports of the agencies include also qualitative data and information about the results of their work. This usually involves some data gathering at service provision level, exploring client satisfaction and learning achievement.



- In some member states, including the new ones, evaluation of the results of policies at the level of service provision is seen as undesirable, because negative results, regarding in particular the progression of clients to employment, could signal reduced funds at both policy management and service provision levels.

The approach favoured by respondents at both policy management and service provision levels, regarding the evaluation of social inclusion policies, placed a strong emphasis on qualitative methods, although some quantitative information was not excluded, especially for reasons of monitoring implementation at policy management level. A multi-criteria approach, which seeks to define the factors affecting the success or failure of policies, was deemed necessary. The results of the surveys pointed to three types of factors:

- Policy-related, stemming from policy coordination and policy management at implementation level.
- Client-related, reflecting the profile of individual members of vulnerable groups, in relation to their education, training, skills and cultural or social characteristics.
- Service-related, defining the accessibility of services to the target groups, the flexibility of meeting local needs and quality assurance of the delivery.

The above criteria reflect a number of constraints that, if defined and measured, are expected to provide a reasonable indication of ways to achieve the success of policies and maximise their impact on the vulnerable groups¹. This approach points, in fact, to the main "players" who are involved in the system of social protection and social inclusion, at three different levels: a) the policy makers and policy implementation managers who are in charge of social protection measures (policy formulation and management level); b) the individuals who are –or run the risk of being– socially excluded (the target group level); and c) the service providers who implement the social protection measures (service delivery level).

2. THE EVALUATION MODEL

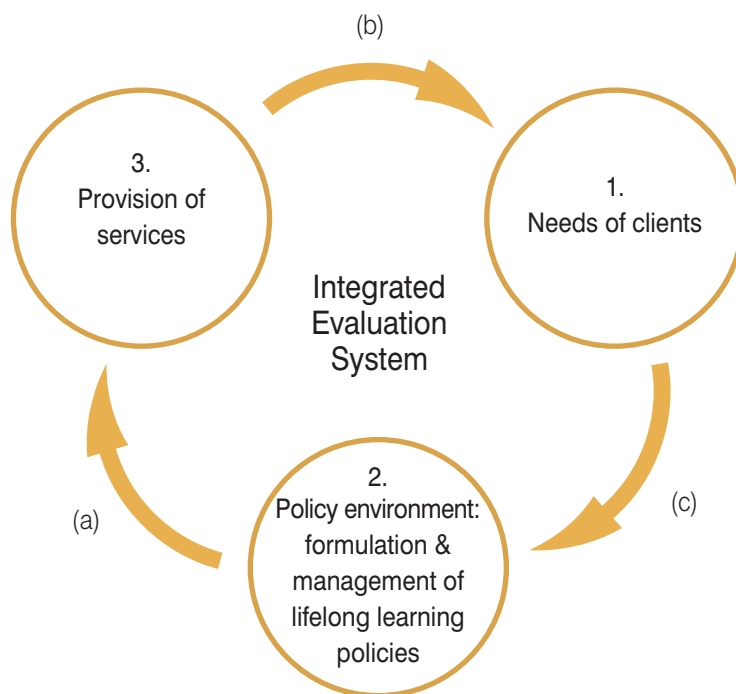
In the previous two chapters, it has been argued that because the real impact of lifelong learning policies can be only assessed in the long term, it is more feasible to adopt an alternative approach, which will provide an estimate of the impact of policies on the basis of the current experience of the beneficiaries (receivers of services) and the managers/providers of policy measures (policy implementing / service delivering agents). In particular, a qualitative approach based on the specification of "constraints" operating at policy, client and service provider levels would reveal the weaknesses of the present policies and their implementation processes and would help policy makers to improve the results of policies,

¹ COM(2006)44 "Concerning a consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market"



regarding their long-term impact on the target groups. The hypothesis is that if these constraints are removed, the vulnerable individuals and groups will benefit from the policies and the impact of the latter on the former will be positive.

To ensure an "integrated approach" to the evaluation of impact, we need to take note of the three different "players" indicated above. A schematic representation of the model is presented below containing three components: the policy component, which defines the policy framework of social protection and social inclusion measures, including lifelong learning; the vulnerable groups component, referring to their profile and needs; and the service provision component, reflecting the implementation of the policy measures "on the ground" for the benefit of the target groups.



To work on this model, we need firstly to define each "circle" or level of evaluation separately and secondly to explore the interaction between the circles. The policies and their implementation mechanisms, down to service providers, can be objectively defined, documented and measured. The needs of the target groups call for a separate study of needs analysis within the vulnerable communities addressed by the policies, in relation to available service provision. The interaction between the circles is represented by the "links"



between the three levels of evaluation, which can be defined by a number of parameters reflecting the actual or potential "constraints" for the implementation of policies. The operation of such parameters at ground level, according to our main hypothesis, mediates the success or failures of policies and provides indications of their impact on the target groups.

The findings of the transnational research reported in this volume offer a good indication of the operation of the model, by providing information on the parameters defining the three types of "circles" and "links" suggested by the model. Further analysis of the "circles" and "links" is provided below, including examples of those aspects that have proved useful for the evaluation.

Circles:

1. **Clients' needs** according to target group: skill needs, literacy needs, validation of prior learning, communication, social needs, IT needs etc.
2. **Policy.** Policy range and clarity; policy coordination between different government departments and levels (central, regional, local); position of lifelong learning in the context of a "comprehensive" policy for social inclusion; quality assurance and regulation of service provision; administrative procedures (bureaucracy etc.).
3. **Service provision.** Outreach capacity; accessibility; assuring quality of service; flexibility of service delivery; human and financial resources; referral systems; "ground level" coordination.

Links:

- (a) **"Structural"** factors, affecting the interaction between policy formulation / management and service delivery levels. Examples include: the content of policies in relation to the capacity of service provision; inter-agency cooperation and coordination; funding; flexibility of policies to adjust to local situations; prejudice; labour market structure
- (b) **"Client-service interaction"** factors, affecting the relationship between clients and provided services. Examples include: relevance of provision to the needs of target groups; engaging clients and sustaining their engagement; access to services by clients.
- (c) **"Policy responsiveness"** factors, indicating the responsiveness of policy to the needs of the target groups. Examples include: relevance of policy to the needs of target groups; use of engagement "facilitators" (financial, educational, skills-related, social, cultural, employment); long-term vision of goals, such as combating poverty and trans-generational transmission of exclusion.



3. EVALUATION CRITERIA / INDICATORS

A number of indicators, most of them of qualitative nature, have emerged from the research, which define, although at a demonstrative level, the types of factors that may affect the impact of policies on the target groups, reflecting the criteria by which policies may be evaluated, regarding their success or failure to benefit the target groups.

The list presented below summarises the results of the research, referring to both target groups of the study (immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers etc and disadvantaged rural communities) in the context of lifelong learning policies included in the NAPs of the participating countries.

The list of indicators is organised according to the evaluation model in two sections. Firstly, the "circles" are defined by a number of parameters reflecting the requirements that have to be met by the players, pointing to the necessary "conditions for effectiveness". Secondly, the "links" are analysed, by referring to a number of factors shown by the transnational research to be vital for the success of policies.

Indicators for "circles"

1. Clients' Needs

- 1.1 Priority of lifelong learning within the spectrum of the individual's needs
- 1.2 Validation of prior learning and skills possessed
- 1.3 Needs for further learning, e.g.:
 - basic skills
 - language and/or literacy
 - employment-related skills
 - social skills
 - formal education
- 1.4 Needs for guidance

2. Policy environment

- 2.1 Clearly articulated lifelong learning policies in relation to target groups
- 2.2 Existence of comprehensive strategy for social inclusion, incorporating lifelong learning
- 2.3 Structure of policy implementation (Operational Programmes, Special Programmes, Development Programmes etc.)
- 2.4 Labour market structure and employment policies
- 2.5 Stability of funding for policy implementation (e.g. short-term projects, medium-term programmes, mainstreamed long-term funding)



- 2.6 Flexibility of implementation allowed (e.g. through decisions taken at regional or local level)
- 2.7 Institutional and inter-departmental cooperation, horizontal and vertical
- 2.8 Quality assurance and regulation of service provision
- 2.9 Observing the gender aspect

3. Service provision

- 3.1 Types of services provided to target groups
 - 3.1.1 Employment services and career guidance
 - 3.1.2 Counselling for education/training
 - 3.1.3 Psychological/social support/social integration advice
 - 3.1.4 Legal advice
 - 3.1.5 Formal education, including completion of compulsory schooling
 - 3.1.6 Vocational training
 - 3.1.7 Language training
 - 3.1.8 Literacy tuition
 - 3.1.9 Information
 - 3.1.10 Awareness raising, sensitisation of wider society
 - 3.1.11 Community development
- 3.2 Capacity and resources of providers
 - 3.2.1 Capacity to reach out to those in need
 - 3.2.2 Flexibility to tailor provision to the needs of clients (e.g. in relation to timing of services, flexible requirements for acceptance of learners, friendliness, gender sensitive and culture sensitive approach)
 - 3.2.3 Individualised approach to needs assessment and learning
 - 3.2.4 Quality assurance procedures for internal operation
 - 3.2.5 Availability of resources - skilled staff, infrastructure, volunteers
 - 3.2.6 Ensuring accessibility of provision - geographical dispersion,
 - 3.2.7 Establishing effective referral system

Indicators for "links"

(a) Constraints posed on service providers by the policy environment

- a.1 Inadequate funding
- a.2 Lack of continuity of funding (project based)
- a.3 Red tape



- a.4 Limited inter-agency cooperation, horizontal or vertical
- a.5 Lack of targeted policies for education/training
- a.6 Lack of flexibility to adjust programmes to the needs of clients
- a.7 Lack of occupational counselling in schools
- a.8 Operation of the labour market - shortage of jobs
- a.9 Prejudice by the wider community

(b) Client-service interaction indicators

b.1 Accessibility constraints

- b.1.1 Physical access barriers (transport to services, geographical dispersion, poor IT use etc.)
- b.1.2 Time constraints
- b.1.3 Financial constraints
- b.1.4 Lack of motivation to seek a job
- b.1.5 Lack of information
- b.1.6 Paperwork required by applicants
- b.1.7 Poor use of host country's language
- b.1.8 Low level of education of clients / illiteracy
- b.1.9 Legal constraints
- b.1.10 Religious, cultural or family constraints

b.2 Engagement constraints

- b.2.1 Family or job pressure
- b.2.2 Lack of lifelong learning culture
- b.2.3 Client finds lifelong learning services not relevant to his-her needs
- b.2.4 The tuition level in the course is either too high or too low in relation to client's education and training
- b.2.5 Client does not fit in the learning group – too heterogeneous
- b.2.6 Lack of an individual "learning plan" with concrete targets
- b.2.7 Lack of guidance and support with learning problems or other personal

b.3 Exit strategy constraints

- b.3.1 Lack of prospect for a job or a suitable job or an income from a job higher than the benefits received
- b.3.2 Lack of prospect for continuing to a next stage of learning, with concrete targets
- b.3.3 Qualifications are not awarded
- b.3.4 Lack of follow up support and monitoring by service provider



(c) Policy responsiveness constraints

- c.1 Absence of financial benefits
- c.2 Scarce education and training opportunities for the target groups
- c.3 Absence of job finding support
- c.4 Weak civil society acting in favour of target groups
- c.5 Lack of comprehensive provision of services to cover the needs of the target groups beyond and in parallel to lifelong learning
- c.6 Hostility or indifference to target groups' culture
- c.7 Equality of access to services for both men and women is not assured

4. CONCLUSIONS

The present study has put forward a framework for the evaluation of the impact of lifelong learning policies on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, with special reference to immigrants and disadvantaged rural communities. This framework is based mostly on qualitative indicators, which should not however be confused with the monitoring indicators that most service providers are using for funding and audit purposes. The list of indicators proposed here is based on the transnational surveys conducted in seven countries and they cannot be considered as exhaustive. However, the degree of overlapping between the results of the seven countries allows us enough confidence to argue that we have tapped a "core group" of criteria, which can assess with reasonable reliability the success of lifelong learning policies and lifelong learning provision as a "route" to social inclusion. The multi-criteria model is a methodology that may be further developed by service providers and policy makers for specific purposes and specific target groups. This project has revealed some of the focal issues and challenges that social policy has to face at the formulation and implementation stages, to achieve value in its results.

APPENDIX I
OPTIONS FOR LIFELONG
LEARNING IN SWEDEN:
A case study





OPTIONS FOR LIFE LONG LEARNING IN SWEDEN: A case study

By Lennart Sundberg

1. INTRODUCTION

In general, lifelong learning facilities for adult education are available in all the municipalities in Sweden. Their common purpose is to raise the educational level and to improve the possibilities to get a better job. There are two levels of adult education: first, basic level education aiming to increase the knowledge level of the adult so that he or she can be admitted to vocational education; second, vocational education aiming at leading to a certain profession or occupational status. Hence, the result of adult education is better opportunities in the labour market.

Lifelong learning study options available for adults are as follows:



Tuition is free of charge but some books and materials have to be purchased. Basic level tuition is funded by the municipalities, while vocational education is funded by the state. Of course, everyone needs to cover his or her daily subsistence costs.

In order to understand what learning options immigrants find relevant, their views about related policies, their expectations and the results of their studies, more than a dozen personal interviews with immigrants were conducted. The interviews mostly give a positive image of studying and of the policy system. As the accounts of immigrants about their experience were very similar, the case of an invented person is presented in Section 2 in the form of a life story that brings together the findings of the interviews conducted.

Learning Swedish is of vital importance for immigrants. Two relevant "good practice" cases are presented in sections 3 and 4. Section 3 presents the case of a school in Stockholm that combines language knowledge level testing, language tuition and vocational education. This combination has proven to produce outstanding results for the social inclusion of immigrants in the Swedish society. Learning Swedish is also crucial for acquiring social awareness that is a prerequisite for social inclusion. Section 3 presents the case of an adult education centre where the element of social awareness represents a key element in the process of vocational and language competence assessment and education guidance. In both cases interviews were conducted with teachers, managers and students.



2. IMPROVING JOB OPTIONS THROUGH EDUCATION: THE CASE OF "THERESA"

This is the life story of "Theresa", who in 1995 left her home country together with her little son, leaving her husband in the army. She arrived first to Germany but then moved to Sweden and applied for asylum. After a lengthy bureaucratic decision-making process she was assigned political asylum and is now a Swedish citizen.

Theresa and her child were placed in an asylum camp, ran by the immigration authority, in a small village in the south of Sweden. She now had somewhere to stay and get food and she immediately started learning the Swedish language basics in a course of "Swedish for immigrants" given at the asylum camp. After almost two years she was considered by the immigration authority ready to meet the outside society. She left the camp, moved to a flat in the village, and was able, with the assistance of a Swedish friend, to find a practical vocational training position, under a labour market programme, in a retirement home for the elderly. She did not get a formal appointment but was accepted as doing practical vocational training from time to time. Theresa called it unpaid work, as she was financed by the authorities. However, coming into a work place and being with workmates helped Theresa greatly to improve her command of Swedish.

Theresa found it difficult to become socially accepted in the small village society, and after one year she started looking for jobs in the metropolitan area of Stockholm. Eventually she was offered two jobs and became a nursing assistant in a retirement home for the elderly, run by the local municipality. She also found a flat. Theresa was keen to work with Swedish speaking people and her new job gave her this opportunity. Her command of Swedish improved but she did not feel independent enough, economically and socially. She saw that there were opportunities for advancement around her and found education to be the key.

At around year 2000 she made a conscious and important choice. She wanted to be fluent in Swedish and to be educated as a medical nurse. She visited the Adult Education Centre in Stockholm where it was proposed to her to enrol in an upper secondary school where she would get supporting tuition in the Swedish language during the first term and pursue her nursing studies. Quitting her job and start studying was a difficult decision for Theresa. She was aware that most immigrants, but many Swedes as well, stick to what they have and are trapped in low-paid jobs; however, she was determined to take the risk.

As she was unemployed and prepared to start studying, she was entitled to receive a public economic support called "recruitment allowance". This allowance sustains the student financially and there is no cost for tuition or school fees, but one has to buy (or borrow) some books and other study materials. The alternative to the "recruitment allowance" was the "financial student aid programme" where the money is partly borrowed, but Theresa, like most immigrants, expressed a strong aversion against borrowing money for studying. It should be noted that Theresa found it impossible to both study and work part-time, although



not a few people in her position do so.

Theresa spent two years studying and earned the qualification of assistant nurse. During her studies she did practical training in a home for elderly, where after the end of her studies she was able to be appointed as assistant nurse. She has now moved to a new job and in addition works part-time to earn money for her family in Sweden and her family in her home country. Now she considers that university studies to become a nurse is the next step, but for the time being she is reluctant to undertake the tough economic responsibilities that are necessary.

Theresa is an example of an immigrant, who wants to be socially accepted and included in the Swedish society, and is prepared to do what it takes to reach this status. She is eager to learn Swedish, to work and be economically independent, to have Swedish friends and live in a residential area dominated by Swedes, and to participate in the everyday social life at school, the workplace and her residential area.

Theresa is pleased with the policy measures she has benefited from when she arrived to Sweden: the educational options available, including language tuition, and the financial assistance available. Theresa is also satisfied with the way the labour market treated her. She is fully convinced that a key to being socially included is education; she believes that with education and command of Swedish, an immigrant can have access to other areas of the Swedish society. To conclude, for Theresa lifelong learning is the key for immigrants to become socially included among Swedes and into the Swedish society.

Comments

The life story of Theresa indicates that she is socially included in the Swedish society: she has Swedish-born friends and workmates; she reads a daily newspaper almost every day and she follows the news and many other programmes on TV; she is fluent in Swedish except for a slightly limited vocabulary and an accent; she is aware of the implicit rules in the labour market and of her rights and responsibilities, including equality between men and women.

When Theresa arrived in Sweden she only had her son, her personal experience, a Bosnian education from upper secondary school and her experience from being a secretary. At that time she had many handicaps: she did not speak Swedish, did not know the Swedish society, did not know how to behave "like Swedes", she did not know how to look for a job, etc. Today she lives with her two sons in her own flat in a Stockholm suburb and is economically independent. Although she works in a low paid sector of the service economy, she is eager to improve her situation every way. After ten years in Sweden she is a fully socially included citizen of the Swedish society, and feels so.

Theresa was entitled to receive the "recruitment allowance". It is not possible to economically survive every month on this, but she also received a housing benefit. As a single parent with two children, she found it necessary to work in evenings while studying.



Theresa plans to continue her studies to become a nurse. But given the financial burden this will put on her, she is not prepared to start now. She is very reluctant to borrow money and that is why she does not want to use the option of the public study loan she is entitled to.

To conclude, for Theresa - and several other women who were interviewed, lifelong learning is the key -the route- to become socially included among Swedes and in the Swedish society. They are very well aware that there are opportunities for everyone through studies and stress the importance of being willing and having the courage to use the opportunities available.

3. LANGUAGE TUITION METHODOLOGY: THE CASE OF AN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR NURSING STUDIES

Introduction

The school studied is a private upper secondary school¹ for nursing studies. This education leads to being qualified as an assistant nurse (to be qualified as a nurse requires university studies in Sweden). The school is commissioned by the municipality of Stockholm to receive students and financial revenue according to what they produce. This is a common way for municipalities to offer a variety of public and private education facilities.

This school has a study programme especially directed towards immigrants who do not have sufficient command of Swedish in order to be able to participate directly in the regular programme of studies, which includes three terms. Swedish language tuition adds another half term to the first term. This study programme is the result of an initiative to help immigrants to enter vocational studies. All immigrants arriving in Sweden receive education in "Swedish for immigrants". After that, immigrants are encouraged to go on with adult studies in the Swedish language that is available free of charge in all municipalities in Sweden. The aim is to get a language qualification comparable to the level of compulsory schooling, which gives automatic access to upper secondary school. Many immigrants have sufficient knowledge for upper secondary school in other subjects but not in the Swedish language and interrupt their studies because their proficiency in Swedish is not satisfactory, especially regarding text reading and comprehension; this is crucial to enable participation in the regular studies and pass the exams. That is why the specific add-on Swedish language study was introduced.

Education for immigrants to be an assistant nurse

The specific direction towards immigrants is placed in the first study block, which is

¹ The Swedish educational system consists of three levels. The first level contains nine years and it is compulsory. The second level is three years in upper secondary school. It has different programmes of which some are only theoretical while others are theoretical combined with a great deal of vocational training leading to a certain profession. The third level is universities.



extended to one and a half term to allow half a term of extra time for language tuition. During the second and third term all students have the same curriculum. The gap between the basic level of Swedish for immigrants and the required language level for upper secondary school can sometimes be very wide for immigrants. That is due to the requirement for comprehending spoken Swedish as well as reading Swedish literature. It is necessary not only to be able to understand the course literature but a crucial function of it is becoming socially aware and socially included in the society.

When people come to a foreign country and try to read and understand the newspaper headlines, there are many nuances and associations that they will miss as they are not familiar with the codes of everyday language. It is the same for the immigrants arriving in Sweden. A long time is needed and in-depth knowledge of the language is required to know how the Swedes express themselves and the implicit meaning in what is said and what is written.

The additional Swedish language tuition given in this education has its focus on reading and listening in order to comprehend the inherent meaning of the language. The tuition consists basically of three parts. The first part is tuition in study technique based on the nursing study subjects. The second part is reading literature to increase the understanding of different phenomena the students will work with or meet in their workplaces later on. Examples of this are novels about hospital work, the elderly, disabled people, etc. The third part deals with reading and discussing news of the health care sector. All three parts support students in their actual studies to become an assistant nurse. The concrete nursing studies are integrated with the holistic comprehension base of the Swedish language.

When the students come to the school their proficiency level of Swedish language is assessed. In addition, special care is taken in the case for students with handicaps, e.g. impaired hearing or dyslexia, and special treatment facilities and help are offered to these students. The assessment of the language level combined with the tuition makes it possible for immigrant students to work individually and be trained for this. Although the assessment results in a grouping of the students, there are still substantial differences in learning capabilities between individuals. The individualisation of the tuition compensates for this. Such differences are due to various education levels and time spent in Sweden. Differences in background may be crucial as some students have only been a few years in school while others have university studies from their home countries. And some people are more motivated or more personally or intellectually equipped to study than others.

Just being at the school means they have got out of their old life and are on the way into something new. One thing all the immigrant students at this upper secondary school have in common is an extremely strong motivation for studying. But many of the students have private, often traumatic, problems that can be hindering their studies.

Individualisation of the tuition meets the immigrant students where they are, basically at their actual language level but also in many other respects. The purpose is to increase the



proficiency in writing and reading as well as comprehending Swedish. The ability to comprehend the Swedish language is a measure of how well the student is able to be informed of and to participate in the society. People with little reading and listening comprehension have a limited understanding of what is going on around them and are less socially aware. This tuition model for improving the student's learning of Swedish as a second language comprises three elements.

- The first element is to establish the level of the student's Swedish language capabilities. This is done by a set of tests in writing, reading, speaking, comprehension, and grammar knowledge.
- The second element is to get the student to recognise and realise his/her own actual level. This is done through a thorough discussion and counselling with the student, based on an evaluation of his/her test. Most important is to precisely point out in which areas the student has a solid knowledge and in which areas the student needs to improve by furthering the existing knowledge. An individual study plan is created for learning Swedish.
- The third element of individualization grows out of this. Students are given full responsibility of their studies and a menu of optional learning elements is offered to each student to choose the elements he/she wants. The tutor is there to advise, counsel and help if needed.

If the students are qualified after both the language and the nursing study parts, they pass the eye of the needle to go on to the second term and continue their studies without extra Swedish language tuition. If they are not qualified to continue to the second term, they need to attend another school to improve their language skills and come back for nursing studies when they are qualified. When (and if) they return, the students go directly into the second term.

Comments

The combination of extended language tuition with a vocational education leading to an occupational status demanded in the labour market makes this education highly valuable and meaningful for immigrant students. Extended language tuition creates social awareness and reading comprehension capability might be an indicator for assessing social awareness.

Learning a language -any language- takes time. More time is always needed for students to enter into the Swedish language thinking and in their studies to become an assistant nurse. But the language learning takes time from the nursing studies and vice versa. An interesting observation is that, the faster the student can improve his/her fluency in reading and comprehending (as well as writing and talking) the easier it is for the student to increase self-esteem. This in turn improves their prerequisites to study more independently.

The resources given to the school for producing the tuition, originates from the municipality as a traditional business contract given to the school after a common tender process. The school produces services for the municipality; it is competing with other schools of the



same kind and with the public schools at the same level. The school gets paid when a mark is established for the particular student, but does not get any revenue for students who drop out of their studies. Notably, the revenue to the school for immigrant students, during the first term with added language tuition, is slightly higher than for students without language tuition. This added revenue is used to lower the number of students per class in order to improve the learning environment for language tuition.

4. REFLECTING SOCIAL AWARENESS: THE CASE OF THE STOCKHOLM ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE

The Stockholm Adult Education Centre (SAEC) is part of the municipality of Stockholm and is publicly financed. SAEC has two main tasks. The first task is to provide information, guidance and counselling to adults living in Stockholm who want to start, or continue, studying, as well as vocational knowledge and language competence tests for mathematics, English and Swedish as a second language. The second task of SAEC is to manage the central adult study admission to basic education schools and to upper secondary schools in Stockholm.

Testing Swedish language comprehension and use is of vital importance for social inclusion of immigrants. The result of the tests opens up opportunities for different courses and studies. The person who assesses and evaluates the students and the director of the school were interviewed.

Testing language proficiency level

Tests help people to evaluate at which level they shall start their studies. Tests are available four days a week with a drop-in admission. This makes it easy for people to participate. Testing the level of proficiency in Swedish language is directed towards two groups of people:

- People who do not possess a mark in the Swedish language, possess marks in basic Swedish for immigrants² or possess marks older than 6 months.
- People who have been working or living in Sweden for several years, understand and speak Swedish relatively well, but need to improve their reading understanding and writing capability, or do not possess a mark in this subject.

Most of those taking the tests have had basic tuition of Swedish for immigrants, either recently or long ago. Some of them have dropped out of the course and do not possess a mark in this subject, whilst others have not practiced speaking Swedish and need a thorough update and restart. Between 75 and 80 % of the people taking the tests are unemployed. For

² Swedish for immigrants is the basic education in the Swedish language which is offered to all immigrants immediately they arrive, what ever their immigrant status is. This education provides the immigrant with rudimentary knowledge of speaking, reading and writing in the Swedish language.



them the first requirement for a job is improved command of Swedish language; the second is, unless they possess qualifications, to get vocational training. Municipalities provide language tuition but vocational training is provided by the local employment offices.

Swedish language tests cover competences in four aspects: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing, speaking. Reading, writing, audio and oral tests are used and after the test a compulsory interview and counselling session takes place. The language test measures both factual knowledge (semantics and syntax) and competence in using the language, i.e. the use of the Swedish language "in action". How do you handle the spoken language? How do you comprehend information you read? How do you understand information from different media (newspapers, TV, radio, books)? How do you express and formulate your thoughts and opinions in written text? These are the type of questions the evaluator tries to answer and value through the tests. Hence, it is not possible to study hard "the night before"; tests like this are not something you can pass through study, but only through experience of everyday practical usage of the language.

An important part of the tests is to understand the level of the social awareness of the person, i.e. how a person lives his/her life, the "software of life". This covers aspects such as personal aims and objectives, reasons for learning and using the Swedish language, the time horizon that the person expects to stay in the country, social awareness of the person's home country and culture carried with it etc. Three factors are important in this respect:

- First, and a key to social awareness, the level of listening and reading comprehension in the Swedish language, i.e. being able to read and understand the newspapers, listen to and understand TV and the radio, listen and follow a conversation with another person. Being able to do these things, makes one aware of what is going on around him or her, i.e. socially aware.
- Second, the educational level. In most cases the higher the educational level of a person the more socially aware he or she is.
- Third, whether the person has a job or had a job for some time. Being employed means that a person meets other people in the workplace, has interpersonal communication opportunities, and is able to understand the implicit rules of the labour market.

During the interviewing and counselling session with the immigrant a long time is spent on talking. Knowing the societal rules in Sweden is more important than knowing Swedish words; by understanding how the immigrant lives his/her life his/her level of social awareness can be assessed. This method for assessing social awareness has proven to be a useful tool for determining the level of studying that suits the immigrant best. If the person does not demonstrate social awareness and has low marks on the four tests, he/she is recommended to re-start studying Swedish at the basic level. Notably, it is very rare that immigrants who get good marks on the test do not demonstrate a sufficient level of social awareness.



At SAEC around 1000 immigrants every year take these tests. The recommended study level qualifies the person for the actual course. Most immigrants follow this advice but around 25-30 % do not show up again. After the tests these people are spread out to the relevant schools in Stockholm and join a shorter or longer course in education.

Comments

SAEC evaluates its activities every year. The evaluation includes two steps. The first step comprises a questionnaire to all students attending every school within the framework of the SAEC. The questionnaire contains 16 questions about the person's engagement in the tuition, the teacher's pedagogical competence, the curricula as well as overall impressions of the school as a study environment. The results of these questionnaires are mapped for each school into a spider-web chart and published on the internet site of the municipality of Stockholm, open for all to read. This arrangement gives the students-to-be an opportunity to investigate different aspects, before choosing a school. It is a kind of quality assessment.

The second step in the SAEC evaluation concerns the interdependence between the advice given by SAEC, the tuition adult students have chosen and the study results students (not only immigrants) have acquired. By this, it is possible to pinpoint whether students follow the advice given, whether the recommendation was relevant, and the study leads to results. The conclusion of this second step evaluation has been that the SAEC's level tests predict successfully the choices made by the students, that the recommendations given are of high quality and that the students achieve study results according to the recommendation.

Reading comprehension is of crucial importance for social awareness. After leaving the upper secondary school, the reading comprehension is on such level that the students have all the capabilities for social awareness. It is possible to acquire a satisfactory level of social awareness also without passing through the upper secondary school. That is the aim of the studies in the Swedish language for immigrants.

Views expressed in the interviews conducted, included some critical comments: that there is not enough focus on reading comprehension competences in second-language learning and that more discussion and conceptual learning are necessary; that tuition for immigrants in the Swedish language might need an improvement from being treated as just another language; and that less time is needed for simple word and grammar learning and more for social and societal aspects.

It should be noted that improving the students' reading and listening comprehension is a rather neglected area of second-language learning pedagogics. Even more neglected is the question of how to give tuition in the implicit rules of the labour market. This is due to the complexity of the matter, as these rules capture much of how the Swedish labour market has evolved over time. Overall, it can be said that there is little research on the subject of how to bring about social awareness through Swedish second-language reading and listening comprehension.



5. CONCLUSIONS

Adult education income financing

The desire to be socially included is conditioned by the willingness to learn the Swedish language and to overcome different types of barriers to enter adult education. Such barriers may originate by personal or family circumstances, but most common is probably the economic barrier, i.e. difficulties in having the income to provide for the daily subsistence costs.

All adult education is accompanied with measures for financing the income of the students while studying. These are publicly financed. In general there is a subsidy with strict income limitations in order to keep the adults in education with the simple message: if you get a public allowance for full time studying, you shall study full time. Above that the general system allows for borrowing a certain amount under the financial student aid programme together with a subsidy.

Public funding is demonstrated by the recruitment allowance to which the unemployed or those at risk of being unemployed are entitled. In their case, studies will give them a better status in the labour market and, hence, it is in the societal interest to provide them with this opportunity in order to avoid unemployment.

It is important to bear in mind that there are other possibilities. One is for example to use the financial student aid programme, mentioned above. Usually this is not an option taken by immigrants below university level, because they have a high risk aversion and borrowing money for study is seen as very risky. Another kind of risk aversion of immigrants concerns leaving a job to start studying. Few people are prepared to take this step without reasonable public financial support, whilst, if one is unemployed and lives on unemployment benefit, the shift to public educational funding might not be a drastic movement economically.

The recruitment allowance is allocated from the state to the municipalities who have to apply for the budget, based on the expected number of fulltime adult students entitled to this allowance. Hence, there is an annual budget limit, which means that the allowance may be interrupted during the year. The purpose of the recruitment allowance is to support people with low level of education in order to improve their chances to get a job or get a better job. This is why the recruitment allowance fits the adult immigrant students financing. The municipal budget for this allowance is not a part of the education budget.

In a recent pilot-evaluation of the recruitment allowance, it was found that this measure benefited almost exclusively people with low education, which confirms that it reaches immigrants. Around 40% of beneficiaries studied at the basic level of adult education and 60% studied at the upper secondary school. Interviews conducted for the evaluation confirm that that this financing enhances the self-esteem of students as they do not have to rely on social benefits, while the interviewees underlined that better self-esteem leads to better study results.



Triangular cohesion of policies

The Swedish policy system contains three important elements that provide the necessary requirements for social inclusion. One is the supply of adult education options available in all local municipalities all over Sweden, combined with the free of charge tuition principle. Another is the work and skills principle of the labour market policy ensuring that unemployed get vocational training if no job is available, instead of only cash payments. The third is the financing policy providing studying adults with sufficient economic support for daily subsistence costs. These policies are an inherent characteristic of the Swedish welfare system.

The interviews conducted have demonstrated how the system works for individual persons, especially female immigrants in the target group. An overall conclusion is that the system is working, both in accordance with the policy objectives as well as to the benefit of the immigrants. Hence, the necessary requirements are in place for lifelong learning leading to social inclusion. It has also been demonstrated that social inclusion is achieved in the particular cases studied. This can be seen as an indication, while to be able to generalise this as a conclusion, an evaluation at the broader level of social inclusion is necessary .

Measuring social inclusion

Two distinct stages of inclusion can be identified. The first is social awareness, which means to be aware of what is going on around by reading newspapers, looking at TV, listening to the radio and communicate with friends and workmates. Social awareness is possible to reach when enough knowledge in the Swedish language is acquired to understand the messages from different media. The second is social inclusion for which social awareness is a prerequisite, which should be complemented with willingness and an ability to participate in the social life of the Swedish society as well as gaining recognition from society.

Social awareness requires a person to be able to comprehend text of different types and to be able to comprehend conversations in different media. When an immigrant arrives in Sweden he or she does not automatically have access to such abilities. It requires second-language learning to a certain level and a certain amount of time is needed before one is introduced into the Swedish society in all of its many dimensions and facets.

As has been indicated, it is possible to assess the level of social awareness through the level of the command of the Swedish language, at least as a binary measure of "have or have not", but more studies are necessary in order to construct a scale for a more elaborated measurement of social awareness. The advantage of a measurement standard is obvious: indicators of gaps in social awareness can be derived; financial resources can be better steered for maximum effect; and social inclusion policies can be better evaluated by defining the span of the societal engagement in social inclusion policies for immigrants; important policy questions can be answered, i.e. how resources can be more precisely allocated, have maximum effect and be readily available.



In summary:

- Life long learning is available, as Sweden provides sufficient facilities for adult education in all municipalities around the country.
- Public funding accompanies adult education in order to lower the economic barriers of entry.
- Social inclusion can be achieved by immigrants through sufficient knowledge of the Swedish language.
- The key issue for immigrants in Swedish language studies is to acquire sufficient capabilities in reading and listening comprehension together with learning of concepts.
- It is possible to measure the level of social awareness and further studies are recommended in order to construct a scale for measuring social awareness.
- Possibilities to measure social awareness will improve social inclusion policies and make the allocation of public resources more effective.

APPENDIX II BIBLIOGRAPHY





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APPENDIX III QUESTIONNAIRES





QUESTIONNAIRE FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AGENCIES

The target group is: rural poor/socially excluded/immigrants

1. Name of the Organisation

Name of the member of the organization that takes part in the interview or fills in the questionnaire:

.....

2. Position/Function in the Organisation

3. Legal Entity of the Organisation

Ministry ☐

Agency ☐

Institution ☐

Other public equivalent body ☐ (please explain)

4. What is your organisation's understanding of policies relating to Lifelong Learning in relation to the target group?

.....

5. How does your organisation relate to policy making and institutions/agencies tasked with LLL provision?

.....

6. What programmes do you implement to meet the needs of the target group?

.....

7. How do you decide on what are the needs of the target groups?

.....

8. How do you monitor/assess the programmes?

a) do you keep statistics

.....



b) *do you seek the view of the beneficiaries?*

.....

.....

9. How is the provision working?

– What is successful - why?

.....

.....

– What are the obstacles?

.....

.....

– What impact is the provision having on the target group? Do you have measurable evidence?

.....

.....

10. Are you able to make changes to the programmes to meet the needs of the users?

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.....

11. Is your programme reaching the identified target group?

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.....

.....

12. Does the funding for the programmes set how many people should be helped?

.....

.....

.....

12a) *Does your institution/agency meet the target set?*

YES ☐

NO ☐

12b) *Does it exceed the target?*

.....

.....

12c) *Are there implications for losing/increasing funding according to the targets met?*

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13.How do you evaluate the results of the programmes?

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14.Do you offer recommendations to the agency responsible for the NAPs based on your findings /experience of programme implementation?

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Thank you for your cooperation



FOCUS GROUP: THEMATIC FIELDS

A. Introduction

(3 MIN.)

A1 Preliminary:

- Explain the purpose of the research
- Explain the purpose of the meeting
- Explain the role of the moderator
- **There are no wrong answers – confidentiality.**

B. Introductions

(12 min)

all the participants: name – role in the organisation –

C. Connect policies with National Action Plans: from conception to implementation (30 min)

C1 a) How do you decide on the **priority** target groups? (Needs analysis in relation to national policy priorities?)

priorities: employment, education, culture

b) what does inclusion mean?

c) what are the means of achieving inclusion?

C2 Once the target groups have been pinpointed, how do you decide on the best policies for inclusion?

a) Do you consult the representatives of the target groups?

b) Do you work with NGOs?

c) Experts in the field

d) other

D. Impact of Life Long Learning on Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups

(30 min)

Definition on inclusion according to the EC: The EU aims communicated in 2000 in the "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" define LLL as "all purposeful learning activity undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences". This tends to focus on lifelong learning as a tool to fulfil employment targets and to promote the knowledge economy. Other definitions stress lifelong learning as learning over the entire life span including all learning activity whether formal or informal, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and promoting personal fulfilment.

The Resolution on lifelong learning adopted by the Council of the European Union (Education and Youth) on 27 June 2002 stresses that lifelong learning must cover learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, "lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective".



D1 What kind of concept of LLL do you work with? Do you follow the EC definition?

How do the target groups understand the concept of LLL?

What role do education, training and Life Long Learning have in the social inclusion process?

D2 Could LLL help overcoming obstacles to training and employment? How?

D3 What are the key challenges and/or obstacles for the integration of vulnerable groups and how LLL could help in the following areas?

labour market

education and language skills

housing in urban/rural areas

health and social services

socio-cultural space

active citizenship

anti-discrimination and respect for difference

E Policies for Inclusion

(30 min)

E1 Who plans the policies?

E2 What makes them a success?

the available resources (funding and people)

the social climate in the area

cooperation between organisations

exchange of experience

other

F Assessment of policies

30 min.

F1 How do you assess the impact of policies?

a) using internal evaluation

b) external evaluation

c) seeking the opinion of the target group?

d) other

F2 Do you modify the actions according to the results of the assessment?

G Other

15 min.

G1 Is there anything else that has not been covered in our discussion so far?

Closure



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING DELIVERY AGENCIES or TARGET GROUP SUPPORT AGENCIES

The target group is: rural poor/socially excluded/immigrants

1. Name of the Organisation

Name of the member of the organization that
takes part in the interview or fills in the questionnaire:

Position in the Organisation

2. Legal Entity of the Organisation

- Cooperative ☐
- Foundation ☐
- Club/Society ☐
- Trade Union ☐
- Not-for-profit organisation ☐
- Public Body ☐
- Other ☐ (please explain)

3. Is your organisation a member of a higher-tier collective body (i.e. a confederation, etc.)?

- YES ☐ (which one?)
- NO ☐

4. When was your organization founded (Date)?

.....

5. What are the aims of your organization?

.....

.....

.....

6. Does your organization deal with?

- The target group's issues (in general) ☐
- The target group's issues (in particular) ☐
- Issues concerning the target group in rural areas ☐
- Exclusively with the target group's issues ☐
- The target group's and other issues ☐

7. What kind of services do you provide?(Tick all that apply and give a description)

- Social and Personal Advice ☐ describe:
- Legal Advice ☐ describe:



Information for specific issues

Active Support ☐ describe:

Employment Services ☐ describe:

Educational Services ☐ describe:

8. Where does the organization focus its actions?

National level ☐

Regional level ☐

Local level ☐

International level ☐

9. Which are your sources of funding? (Tick all that apply)

Membership subscriptions ☐

Legacies ☐

Donations ☐

State funding ☐

Other ☐ describe:

10. What methods are used to reach the target group? (Tick all that apply)

membership ☐

self referral ☐

service provider finds target group ☐

another agency refers the target group ☐

Other ☐ describe:

11. How do you assess the needs of the target group?

.....

.....

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.....

12. What incentives does your target group have to use your services?

financial ☐

opportunities to learn or be trained ☐

employment ☐

promotion at work ☐

to help their children ☐

other (describe) ☐

Other ☐ describe:



13. What obstacles are there to prevent the target group to use your services?

Travel difficulties

☐

Financial

☐

Time

☐

Location of programme

☐

Lack of motivation

☐

Other

☐

describe:

14 How do you evaluate the success of your services? (criteria)

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15 How does the target group assess the value of your services?

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16 What constraints are there for you as service provider?

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17 What recommendations would you make to improve your services?

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18 Is there something else that you would like to add that you believe it is important but it was not covered in this questionnaire? Please, do give us your views.

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QUESTIONS ASKED ONLY IN GREECE AND SPAIN

19. Do you believe that Lifelong Learning could contribute effectively in the social inclusion of the immigrants/repatriates/refugees?

YES ☐

NO ☐

20. Could you please rank the following factros in order of importance of their contribution to the social inclusion of immigrants /repatriates/refugees; Please tick each box by factor using all numbers from 1 to 6 where 1 is the most important and 6 the least important

Job security	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lifelong Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health-Social Welfare	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Identitz	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initial learning and training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> (please explain).....

Thank you for your cooperation

